In 1962, President John F. Kennedy sent a Consumer Message to Congress. It was to be the first of eight Consumer Messages by five Presidents, a tradition that lasted until President Reagan took office in 1981. Kennedy's Message is by far the most well-known. The introduction gave us the Consumer Bill of Rights: the right to safety, the right to be informed, the right to choose, and the right to be heard. The thrust of this message, and all the subsequent messages, is programmatic. The messages outline what the President believed were the pressing consumer issues of the year and what steps Congress and the administrative agencies should take to alleviate the problems.

The following Table identifies the proposals made in each of the eight Messages and lists the resulting legislative and administrative actions. Additional actions are also given which expand upon the proposals or follow in the spirit of the proposals. This is not an attempt to identify every regulatory action in the consumer interest since 1962. Most conspicuously absent are the many energy and environmental actions as these were mentioned in the Messages only in relation to auto air pollution and utility costs.

These eight Messages provide an excellent historical framework for reviewing the important consumer issues of the 1960s and 1970s. Following proposals through subsequent Messages provides a vehicle for assessing the degree of opposition to certain proposals. For example, the call for Truth-in-Lending legislation appeared in four Messages. Some proposals have never been enacted. The Messages can also be used to analyze the timing of certain proposals. Also, the progression of legislative actions on a particular proposal can be assessed. In an number of cases, Congress went beyond what a President had proposed to handle a certain issue.

The Presidential Consumer Messages to Congress serve an important historical function. They served to direct Congress toward what the President considered to be the vital consumer issues. And now we can look at the proposals as providing a framework from which to view the legislative progress of the third wave of the consumer movement. The Table can be utilized by consumer educators in a number of ways.

REFERENCES


National Commission on Consumer Finance to review credit practices (Nixon,1)

Employee protection in private pension plans (LBJ,3)

Stepped-up enforcement of mail fraud statutes (FPR)

V. Information and Representation at the Federal Level
Make current information more available to consumers (FPR, Nixon,1)

Council of Economic Advisers to create a Consumer's Advisory Council (FPR)

President's Committee on Consumer Interests and the Consumer Advisory Council (LBJ,1)

Create Office of Consumer Affairs (Nixon,1,2)

Each federal agency to designate a special assistant for consumer affairs (FPR)

Appoint a consumer division within Justice (LBJ,4; Nixon,1,2)

Consumer Advocate at the federal level (Nixon,2; Carter)

Postmaster General to begin a pilot program for dissemination of consumer information in post offices (FPR)

Expand consumer education programs especially in adult education (LBJ,1; Nixon,1,2; Ford)

Consumer education programs for those in poverty (LBJ,2; Nixon,1)

Funds for citizen participation in agency & judicial proceedings (Carter)

Expand opportunities for class action lawsuits (Carter)

VI. Vigilance Against Monopolies
FTC to be given power to issue cease and desist orders (FPR, LBJ,1; Nixon,1,2)

Companies must give notice of mergers in advance to Justice (FPR)

VII. Effective Regulation of Business Practices
CAB: airline overbooking (FPR)

PCC: television program selection and promotion of educational television (FPR)

FPC: regulation of utility rates (FPR)

FTC: deceptive trade practices and false advertising (FPR, LBJ,4)

ICC: household moves (FPR)

Truth-in-packaging (FPR, LBJ,1,2)

Improve electric power reliability and service (LBJ,3)

DOT to study state auto insurance rates & regulations (LBJ,4)

Improve warranty programs (LBJ,4; Nixon,1,2)

Right to sue in federal court to recover damages from fraudulent or deceptive practices (Nixon,1,2)

FTC to have jurisdiction over consumer abuses "affecting" interstate commerce (Nixon,1,2)

Create consumer fraud clearing-house (Nixon,2)

1968 Consumer Credit Protection Act & 1969 FRB Regulation Z
1970 Credit Card Act
1970 Fair Credit Reporting Act
1974 Equal Credit Opportunity Act & 1975 FRB Regulation B
1976 Equal Credit Opportunity Act Amendments
1976 Federal Deposit Insurance Act
1976 FTC Holder-in-Due-Course Rule
1977 Fair Debt Collection Practices Act
1978 FRB/FTC Consumer Fund Transfer Rule
1980 Truth-in-Lending Simplification and Reform Act
1985 FTC & FRB Credit Practices Rule
1985 FRB Rule Limiting Telephone Credit Card Liability
1986 Fair Debt Collection Practices Act Amendments
1974 Employee Retirement Income Security Act
1970 Mail Fraud Act
1977 Mail Fraud Solicitation Act
1987 USPS COD Payment Rule
1970 Executive Order 11566, Consumer Product Information
1962 President's Consumer Message to Congress
1964 Executive Order 11136, Establishing the President's Committee on Consumer Interests
1967 Executive Order 11309, Amending Executive Order 11136
1971 Executive Order 11283, Office of Consumer Affairs
1979 Executive Order 12140, Enhancement and Coordination of Federal Consumer Programs
1972 Education Amendments
1974 Education Amendments (creating position of director of consumer education in Office of Education)
1973 President's Consumer Message to Congress
1974 Anti-Trust Procedures and Penalties Act
1976 Hurt-Scott-Bodino Anti-Trust Improvement Act
1978 CAB Airline Overbooking Rule
1982 CAB Airline Overbooking Rule Modification
1962 All-Channel Receiver Act
1978 Public Utilities Regulation Policy Act
1978 Natural Gas Policy Act
1963 FTC Sleeping Bag Advertising and Labeling Rule
1965 FTC Pernicious Use of Lubricating Oil Advertising and Labeling Rule
1969 FTC Games of Chance Rule
1971 FTC Advertising Substantiation Program
1971 FTC Availability of Advertised Specials Rule & 1989 Revision
1975 Magnuson-Moss Warranty and Federal Trade Commission Improvements Act
1978 FTC Franchise and Jobs Opportunities Rule
1978 FTC Advertising of Cigarettes & Tobacco Products
1978 FTC Advertising of Cigarettes & Tobacco Products
1978 FTC Vocational Schools Rule
1984 FTC Funeral Practices Rule
1984 FTC Used Car Rule
1980 Household Goods Transportation Act
1966 Fair Packaging and Labeling Act
1968 Automobile Insurance Study Act
1975 Magnuson-Moss Warranty and Federal Trade Commission Improvements Act
1973 Trans-Alaska Pipeline Authorization and Federal Trade Commission Improvements Act

Related Actions in Information & Representation at the Federal Level
1966 Public Information Act
1974 Freedom of Information Act
1974 Privacy Act
1976 Government in the Sunshine Act
1971 Cigarette Labeling & Advertising Act
1972 FTC Incendiate Lamp Disclosure Rule
1972 Posting of Octane Numbers at Gasoline Pumps Rule
1976 Little Cigar Act
1977 & 1984 DOT Air Carrier Baggage Liability Rules
1977 CAB Timely Notification of Baggage Loss Rule
1978 FDA Vitamins & Mineral Labeling Rule
1979 FDA Patient Package Insert Rule
1980 1904 Mail Order Alcohol Labeling Rule
1986 Comprehensive Smokeless Tobacco Health Education Act
1977 National Energy Conservation Policy Act
1975 & 1977 Federal Credit Union Amendments
1976 Consumer Leasing Act
1976 Real Estate Settlement Procedures Amendments
1978 Electronic Funds Transfer Act
1980 Depository Institutions Deregulation & Monetary Control Act
1982 Depository Institutions Act
1987 Expedited Funds Availability Act