

“The Washington Environment”

Date: November 29, 1982

Participant: Jimmy Carter

Project: Jimmy Carter Oral History

SCROLLER TITLE: “The Washington Environment”

SCENE SETTER: President Jimmy Carter was governor of Georgia from 1971 to 1975. When he became president of the United States in 1977, he discovered that governing in Washington, D.C., was different from governing in his home state. In trying to accomplish his administration’s goals, he ran up against legislative and media forces in Washington more powerful than their counterparts in Georgia.

President Carter: I was experienced as a Governor. I think I did a good job as Governor. I did a lot of innovative things, all of which have stood the test of time. So I took that experience to Washington [D.C.], but there were at least two remarkable differences. One was just that the Washington environment was much more of a major factor than was the Atlanta environment on a comparative basis. I could ignore the people in Atlanta who were the social, business, and media leaders, if I so chose, with relative impunity and deal primarily with the members of the legislature. There was a much more isolated relationship between the legislative and executive branch on the one hand, and the general public and the news media on the other, than was the case in Washington where the lobbyists and the law firms and the news media leaders, in particular the columnists and others, were such an important element of government in Washington. And I underestimated that. I don’t think there’s any doubt about it.

End of excerpt.

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