

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONFERENCE WITH THE PRESIDENT



Cabinet Room, November 19, 1958

Attending: The President, Secretaries McElroy and Anderson, Under Secretary Herter, Mr. David Finley, Mr. Merriam, Mr. Hagerty, group of QMC officers, Major John Eisenhower.

Colonel J. D. Martz, QMC, made a fifteen minute presentation on the design of the flag in past years. This brought out that uniformity of design did not exist up until the 20th century. In the early 19th century President Monroe ordered a uniform design for the military services but civilian flags continued to feature alternative designs.

The presentation also revealed that the stars have been arranged in many different patterns but that the most common patterns were (1) a regular arrangement of stars in horizontal and vertical rows whenever this was arithmetically possible, and (2) arrangement in staggered rows.

Following the presentation, the President indicated his preference for a new design of 7 rows of 7 stars each in a staggered arrangement. He stated that this arrangement was more flexible and would allow greater uniformity and continuity through the years, since the alternative of horizontal and vertical rows could be used only occasionally when the mathematics permitted. He wished to give the general impression throughout the world of the greatest possible uniformity in our flag from now on.

Mr. Finley had a personal preference for the non-staggered design but thought both possibilities were very handsome, and he emphasized as most important the need for maintaining the relative size of the blue field. Mr. Herter stated Secretary Dulles' acceptance of either design so long as there would be 7 rows of 7 stars, staggered or not staggered. Secretary Anderson and Secretary McElroy both liked the staggered arrangement because it would allow a 50th star to be added with a minimum of change. The President indicated that he preferred the staggered arrangement even without taking into consideration the prospect of additional stars in the future, for straight rows horizontally and vertically seemed too stiff.

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The President inquired as to whether the QMC experts in design and heraldry had any strong opinions and was assured that they did not -- that it was primarily a matter of personal preference.

The President wanted publication of the decision in this matter to take place as soon as possible. Mr. Merriam pointed out that an Executive Order could not be issued until after the President's proclamation of Alaska as a State, which would be sometime after November 25th. Mr. Hagerty suggested that it be announced informally in the very near future, but the President wanted the first announcement to be by Executive Order so as to obviate agitation for reconsideration and revision.

The President directed that announcement of the design should be accompanied by a statement setting forth the procedures and considerations involved in reaching the decision.



LAM
L. A. Minnich, Jr.