Georgia Studies

Name: _____

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Printable 21-2: State Government Reorganization

The following information is provided as background material for the discussion of Jimmy Carter's efforts to reorganize the executive branch of Georgia state government in the early 1970s.

What did Carter seek to accomplish by reorganizing the executive branch? Eliminating agency duplication and overlap was one important objective. Of the 250 agencies in existence when he took office, many had similar functions.

Two other objectives of Carter's reorganization were economy (saving money) and efficiency (performing a task or service more effectively). A reorganization study team appointed by Carter in 1971 discovered numerous examples of duplication and inefficiency in the way government operated. As an example, before reorganization each state agency operated its own print shop or sent its work to private companies. After reorganization, separate shops were replaced with a single print shop for all agencies to share. This not only saved money but allowed the large shop to obtain expensive but much more efficient printing equipment.

A fourth objective was to improve services provided to Georgia's citizens. For instance, at the time there were separate departments for physical health, mental health, and welfare. Yet, studies found that a citizen who needed one department's services often required related services from another. This was the primary purpose for creating a new state agency called the Department of Human Resources.

Carter submitted his reorganization plan to the 1972 session of the General Assembly, where it was approved. The newly restructured government consisted of about 30 large departments. Several old departments were kept, while new ones were created (including the Department of Natural Resources, Department of Human Resources, and Department of Administrative Services). But all departments underwent various changes in order to be managed more efficiently.

Yet, Carter's reorganization successes came at a price. For a variety of reasons, he and former governor Lester Maddox remained political foes throughout the entire four years. As presiding officer of the Senate, Maddox continually attempted to derail Carter's reorganization proposals. He almost succeeded; the final bill passed by a single vote in the Senate. Throughout the remainder of his term, Carter had repeated battles trying to get his legislative proposals through the General Assembly. In addition to the Maddox feud, some legislators privately complained that the governor was often unwilling to compromise and that he tried to do too much too quickly. Carter, on the other hand, felt that he had to be tough. The constitution prohibited him from running for reelection, which meant he only had four years to get his program through.

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