



MISS UNIVERSE HOPEFULS — Susan Molina, left, Miss Hawaii, and Lalaine Bennett, Miss Philippines, strike happy poses as they prepare for the Miss Universe pageant at Miami Beach, Fla. (UPI)

Billboard Foes Press To Restore Control Program

Washington (CQ) — Congress continuing to move at its own pace, allowed the program of federal incentives for billboard control to expire June 30.

It was just at this time that Kentucky, the first state to carry out control provisions in the original 1958 Act, received approximately \$65,000 in "bonus" payments for its portion of the Interstate Highway System. A \$2 million 1962 appropriation remains available to the 10 other states which have signed up for the program, provided they meet necessary requirements.

Chances are that Congress will get around to renewing the program although the hotel and billboard lobbies are sure to put up a fight.

In the House, the Public Works Committee has reported a Federal-Aid Highway bill including a two-year extension of the billboard bonus, and Sens. John Sherman Cooper (R-Ky.) and Maurice B. Neuberger (D-Ore.) have introduced a two-year extension in the Senate. Mrs. Neuberger has long led the anti-billboard fight, begun in 1958 by her husband, the late Sen. Richard L. Neuberger.

Complicating the picture is a draft bill submitted by the Commerce Department which would extend the program until 1971 and tighten its standards. Proponents of the "bonus" fear the Commerce proposal would stir such opposition that the program would be dropped altogether. So far, no one has volunteered to sponsor it in either House or Senate. In addition to providing a "bonus," the Commerce plan would penalize states which did not agree to participate. Their federal highway funds would be cut by one per cent after June 30, 1965.

Under the present system set up in 1958, a state must pass legislation prohibiting billboard advertising within 660 feet of new rights-of-way along the Interstate Highway System acquired after July 1, 1956. Certain exceptions were permitted for businesses within the 660-foot area and concerns in near-by communities.

Once the state law is approved by the Commerce Department and the state signs an agreement with the Secretary of Commerce ensuring proper enforcement of the federal requirements, the state is then eligible for bonuses based on the number of miles of Interstate Highway within the state which are actually subject to billboard controls. The bonus represents one-half of one per cent of the state's regular federal highway allotment for these roads.

As of June 30, 1963, twenty states had signed the agreement with the Secretary of Commerce, and only one, Kentucky, had received the bonus.

Pressure Groups
The billboard and hotel-motel lobbies have actively opposed the program in state legislatures as well as in Washington.

A spokesman for the American Hotel and Motel Association said that his organization favored dropping the program because it had a "horrible impact on those who can't let the traveling public know where they are." He said the fact that only one state had received a bonus proved that the regulations were generally unpopular.

Critics of the outdoor advertisers, including garden clubs and the American Automobile Association, say that self-regulation has been unsuccessful in the past and therefore billboards must be controlled by federal and state governments.

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