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New commission posed to reform government

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Senate hearings will begin soon on legislation to establish a Commission on More Effective Government, Georgianna Rathburn, Common Cause vice president, announced Wednesday.

The commission, proposed by Sen. William Roth, R-Del., and Rep. Richard Bolling, D-Mo., would be modeled on the Hoover Commission of the late 1940s, which improved the workings of the executive branch 30 years ago, she said.

She said it would have a wider mandate to deal with the growth of federal, state and local programs and with Congress' policy-making organization, and with executive agencies and organization.

She said a "strong and remarkable effective citizens' committee mobilized public support for the Hoover Commission's recommendations. That is a key element of Roth and Bolling's plans. They believe a new commission cannot succeed unless a coalition of private groups and citizens works to overcome the vested interests who benefit from the special interest state."

Ms. Rathburn said "government isn't working. The voters, Ronald Reagan, Common Cause, liberal Democrats and the Conservative Caucus believe that.

"That is the idea of a prestigious new Hoover Commission to suggest steps to improve the operations of government is gaining substantial support."

Bolling, chairman of the House Rules Committee, is a 30-year student of government, and Roth, chairman of the Senate Governmental Affairs

Committee, first made a name for himself in the House by attacking overlapping domestic programs.

The two have suggested ex-president Gerald Ford as chairman of such a commission. A prominent Democrat, such as former Sen. Edmund Muskie, and former secretary of state, would be sought as the vice chairman.

"The political timetable suggests that both parties, as well as the public, would benefit from the proposed broad, two-year study of government operations," said Ms. Rathburn. "The Reagan Administration will need a lot of time to get its economic program under way. A breathing spell before it tries to institute wholesale reorganization of government functions must be welcome.

"The Democrats are searching for a new party agenda. A bipartisan study of where government has broken down could help focus their program."

She said a leader in that effort, Sen. Paul Tsongas, D-Mass, has said the party "must look at the world with fresh eyes."

In 1987-88, the nation will celebrate the bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution, she said, adding "to have infused a new breath of life into government at all levels would be a deeply satisfying way to celebrate the founders' hopes."

Common Cause Chairman Archibald Cox said he believes that the 1980 presidential election represented "a revolt of the moderates" who hoped that a change of leadership would produce both a government that works and one that could galvanize a sense of common purpose throughout the land."