

**The original documents are located in Box D30, folder “Debate with Mrs. Jean McKee Before the Grand Rapids Bar Association, Grand Rapids, MI, October 14, 1970” of the Ford Congressional Papers: Press Secretary and Speech File at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.**

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OPENING STATEMENT BY REP. GERALD R. FORD OF GRAND RAPIDS  
IN DEBATE WITH MRS. JEAN McKEE  
BEFORE THE GRAND RAPIDS BAR ASSOCIATION  
AT 12 NOON, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 1970

FOR RELEASE AT 12 NOON WEDNESDAY, OCT. 14

My opponent is a Democrat--an active, participating Democrat. She is proud of it.

I am a Republican. I am proud of it. But on the other hand I am just as proud that in 11 elections I have received the support of many Democrats in the Fifth Congressional District. I am also proud that I have supported, on many occasions, three Democratic Presidents. I have supported Democratic Presidents more often and on tougher issues than many Democrats in the House and the Senate. I have letters of appreciation from those Democratic Presidents.

This campaign is an adversary proceeding in the best tradition of American politics. Therefore, as Al Smith was fond of saying, let's look at the record.

What was the legacy left behind by the previous Democratic Administration?

A war in which the United States had been massively involved for four years.

Federal deficits which totalled \$60.6 billion from 1961 through 1968.

Nearly runaway inflation which has reduced the value of the 1960 dollar to 76 cents.

Air and water pollution that grew steadily worse during the eight years that Democrats controlled both the Congress and the White House.

A crime rate that rose 10 times faster than the population during the eight Democratic years of the Sixties.

It's tough to deal with that kind of legacy but Republicans are making progress. We could have made far greater progress if the Congress for the past two years had been controlled by the Republican Party.

As lawyers, you gentlemen are accustomed to dealing with evidence. What, then, is the hard evidence of progress under the present Administration on the war, control of Federal spending, air and water pollution control, and crime control? First, Vietnam.

We have reduced the authorized strength of our armed forces in Southeast Asia from 549,500 as of Dec. 31, 1968, to 384,000 as of Oct. 15, 1970, and we will be reducing our authorized strength to 284,000 by May 1, 1971. This means that reductions in authorized strength by next May 1 will total 265,500.

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President Nixon did not put half a million men into Vietnam, but he is clearly getting them out. And he is doing so with reduced losses, with an increase in the ability of the South Vietnamese to resist Communist aggression, and with a decrease in the ability of the North Vietnamese to achieve military success in Southeast Asia.

The Presidential candidate my opponent supported in 1964 escalated the Vietnam War. The Presidential candidate I supported in 1968 has deescalated the Vietnam War and is ending the U.S. role in it.

What additional progress can we point to in Vietnam?

During the past several months, the weekly toll of Americans killed in Vietnam has dropped steadily to a point that in the week ended Oct. 3 was the lowest in 4 1/2 years. While any Americans dead in Asia are too many, that toll of 38 is vastly better than the 562 killed in the most deadly week of the war--the week which ended May 11, 1968. In 1968, the average weekly loss of American lives was 300. In 1969, it was 200. Since July 1, after Cambodia, the number of weekly war deaths has averaged 61.

At the same time, draft calls have been reduced from 299,000 in 1968 to 163,500 this year, a drop of 42 per cent. Military manpower, meantime, is being reduced from 3.5 million in mid-1968 to 2.9 million in mid-1971--a reduction of 639,000.

The same political candidates who demand a precipitate U.S. pullout from Vietnam are demanding a reordering of our priorities. The truth is that we have already accomplished a massive reordering of our priorities, and we are continuing to shift priorities.

My opponent is correct in pointing out that our priorities were all askew during the Sixties while the Democrats controlled both the White House and the Congress. Why didn't she speak out then?

In 1962 the Federal Government spent 48 per cent of its budget on national defense and only 32 per cent on human resources. In 1968 we were still spending 44 per cent of our budget on defense and only 34 per cent on human resources. Now, in fiscal 1971, under a Republican President, we have reversed our priorities. We are spending 41 per cent of our Federal budget on human resources and 37 per cent on defense. I might mention that defense spending has declined to 7 per cent of our Gross National Product, the lowest percentage since 1951.

At the same time that we have reordered our priorities, Republicans have sought to hold down Federal spending to help fight the inflation we inherited from

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the previous Democratic Administration. The present Administration cut the expansion rate of Federal spending in half in 1970 and will reduce it by half again in 1971. This has enabled us to keep the Federal budget close to balance while at the same time recognizing important national priorities in the fields of environment, welfare and transportation. We have exercised firm control over defense spending. We have cut back less urgent non-defense programs. And we have employed greater efficiency throughout the Federal Government.

We have made substantial progress against inflation through policies of restraint, both fiscal and monetary. There is dramatic proof of this in the fact that the cost of living rose just .2 of 1 per cent in August 1970--an annual rate of 2.4 per cent--as compared with a rise of .4 of 1 per cent in August 1968--an annual rate of 4.8 per cent. The rise in the cost of living in August of this year was the lowest in 20 months and just one-half what it was in the comparable month in 1968. And the three-month period of June, July and August 1970 showed the lowest cost of living rise for any three-month period since the fall of 1967.

While Republicans in Congress have sought to hold down Federal spending to aid in the fight against inflation, the Democrats have pressed for budget-busting appropriations.

During the same period that they have sought to escalate Federal spending, the Democrats have refused to act on President Nixon's plans for financing a \$10 billion Federal-State-local water pollution control program for the construction of municipal waste treatment facilities over the next four years. The program calls for the establishment of an Environmental Financing Authority to make sure that all municipalities needing treatment plants would be able to finance local costs. The Democrats have even refused to hold hearings on this legislation--and yet some of their candidates accuse the Administration of lack of action on environmental problems. President Nixon has promised to put modern waste-treatment plants in every place needed to make our waters clean again. But he needs the help of a cooperative Congress to keep that promise.

What of my own record on the environment? In 1965 I voted for the Water Pollution Control Act and the Air Pollution Control Act; in 1966, for the Water Pollution Control Act and the Clean Air Act; in 1967, for the Clean Air Act; in 1968, for establishment of the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the Water Pollution Control Act; in 1969, for the Water Pollution Control Act, the Clean Air Act, establishment of the Council on Environmental Quality, the Water Resources Development Act, the Public Works Appropriation Bill; in 1970, Clean Air Act Amendments, the Clean Air

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and Solid Waste Disposal Act, the Resource Recovery Act of 1970, and the Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1970.

Here are copies of environmental bills I introduced or co-sponsored in the 91st Congress, including a bill to prohibit the dumping of dredgings and other refuse into the Great Lakes or any navigable water and a bill to establish the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore.

Here is a list of National Park bills I voted for, with photos of these national park areas.

Here is a list of Federal grants I was instrumental in obtaining for Kent and Ionia Counties, including \$3,106,837 for additional parklands and \$1,480,610 for sewer and water improvements. And this is just for the period 1968 through 1970.

I and other Republicans in Congress have also made the war on crime a top priority. Here there has been heel-dragging on the part of some Democrats in the Congress. But despite the heel-dragging, it now appears that the bulk of the Administration's 13 major anti-crime bills will be enacted into law. To that I say better late than never.

I sponsored the major anti-crime legislation which has been enacted or is nearly through both Houses of the Congress--the District of Columbia Omnibus Crime Bill, which is a model for the Nation; the Law Enforcement Assistance Act of 1970, which more than doubles law enforcement aid to States and local communities; and the Organized Crime Control Act, comprehensive legislation which puts new crime control tools in the hands of authorities.

Speaking of the war on crime, I might also mention that in 1969 the rise in the nationwide crime rate was 11 per cent as compared with a 17 per cent rise in 1968. Here is a graph which clearly shows how the rate of increase fell in 1969 in all categories but one.

This year there has been a marked upturn in Federal indictments and prosecutions of key organized crime figures as a result of the Administration's stepped up attacks on the syndicate.

This, then, is how Republicans have dealt with the legacy left by the previous Democratic Administration.

I think we have made substantial progress in the face of tremendous difficulties. We are on our way to solving problems that have defied the most generous spenders ever to handle the taxpayers' money. And that is an accomplishment.