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Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AT THE UNVEILING OF THE PORTRAIT OF
CONGRESSMAN GEORGE H. MAHON
THE CAPITOL

I'm proud to say that George Mahon, and his lovely wife Helen, have been my friends for all of the time I have been in Government. In the House, he sat on the other side of the aisle--but that's one of the great things about our system of Government: The aisle separating Republicans and Democrats isn't so wide that a warm friendly handshake can't reach across it.

In fact, it was only the second weekend after I became President--that George Mahon, Les Arends, Mel Laird and I played golf together out at Burning Tree. I won't say how I did that day--but I think I was in a veto-proof foursome.

I understand that a lot of people subscribe to the theory that when you play golf with the President, you don't try too hard to win. Well I have news. I don't think George Mahon ever heard of that theory. Come to think of it, I haven't played with anybody who has.

But my respect and admiration for Congressman Mahon goes far beyond the golf course. George may have an interlocking grip on a putter--but he has a hammerlocking grip on unnecessary government spending. We served together on the House Committee on Appropriations. As Chairman of that Committee for more than ten years, George Mahon has done an outstanding job. He has devoted all of his energies and boundless resources to keeping America morally, militarily and fiscally strong. He is a man who not only rises above party politics--he soars above them in his pursuit of what is right for all Americans. If there were no such word in our language as "statesman"--it would have to be invented to adequately describe George Mahon.

George, thank you for allowing me to be a small part of this very special occasion. Your friendship, example and support through the years has meant a great deal to me--but words alone provide only a passing tribute. And so, I welcome this portrait as a lasting reminder of the firm, sure leadership you have brought to the Congress for the past four decades.

Texas has always been known for its bigness. In George Mahon, it has certainly lived up to its reputation.

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