

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE
AMERICAN FREEDOM TRAIN CERTIFICATION

ALEXANDRIA RAILWAY STATION

10:45 A.M. EST

Thank you very much, John Warner, Don Kendell.

Let me say at the outset I am most grateful for the participation by the Jefferson High School Band and the T. C. Williams High School Band, and I thank very deeply those who have participated and made it possible for this Freedom Train to undertake its journey throughout the United States.

Obviously I am tremendously pleased to participate in the official ceremonies recognizing the American Freedom Train as a major Bicentennial effort.

When this train begins its 17,000 mile journey through 48 of our 50 States this spring, the Freedom Train will serve as one of the hopeful points for our Bicentennial commemoration.

It will visit 76 cities and give Americans a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to view some of these historic national documents which relates directly to our history for the last 200 years.

I strongly urge parents and teachers to make sure that your children and students take advantage of this wonderful opportunity. The cargo on this train represents much of our Nation's past history and our hope for the future.

This exhibit touches virtually every phase of the American experience. The train will carry, for example, George Washington's personal copy of the Constitution. It will contain the handwritten draft of President Kennedy's first inaugural address. There will be moon rock samples, the first Bible printed in America, Paul Revere's saddlebags, as well as exhibits representing the Nation's culture, technological progress, professions and trades, sports and the arts.

During the next year and one half, 40 to 50 million Americans are expected to view these exhibits as we near our 200th birthday as a Nation.

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I sincerely hope that every American, as he or she contemplates these historical reminders, will reflect on how far we have come through the short span of 200 years. And as we take a long look back, let us also take a long look forward. If we do, we will be able to see the problems facing us today in a much clearer perspective.

Our problems are serious ones -- especially our energy problems, and those of our economy.

But think of the problems our forefathers had. Think of those 13 tiny colonies taking on the mightiest nation, the mightiest empire in the world. And think of them winning their liberty as well as ours.

Very few people back in 1776 would have thought that in just 200 years those 13 colonies would provide the jumping off spot from which, eventually, 50 united states would span a vast continent and be ours -- tame a mighty wilderness -- construct a technological society of enormous scientific complexity -- and then set out to explore space itself. But if we look back over this span of time and see what we have today, that is exactly what took place and transpired.

As we reflect on these historic accomplishments, let us look ahead to the future that we are building. Let us reaffirm our faith in the American spirit.

As one of the great nations of the world -- spiritually, diplomatically, and economically, we in America have the best of many worlds. We have nearly all the resources which we desperately need. We have the technological resources. We have the human resources. Now, what we need in this period of critical times, we must have the will to win. And win we will in the months ahead.

By the year 2000, I see a people living in a community of peace with other nations, with a standard of living still the highest in the world, with disease greatly conquered, with individual liberty secure for everyone, with wide opportunities for good education and housing, and with our national will and spirit still climbing as we move toward celebration of our bicentennial.

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I see the Bicentennial of 1976 as a rebirth as well as a birthday -- a rediscovery of our strength and of our potential. It will strengthen our resolve to fulfill the promises of our forefathers. It will fortify our determination to continue to build a freer, more just, and more humane society.

This American Freedom Train will be a fitting symbol for what the Bicentennial really represents. Since the day the golden spike was driven, the railroad has symbolized our unity as a nation.

On behalf of all Americans, I thank the American Freedom Train Foundation, and the corporations that provided grants for this Freedom Train. I know that your contributions will inspire others to participate in the Bicentennial. I would like to say a very special word, a special word of thank you to the people of Portland, Oregon, who provided the iron horse that will pull the Freedom Train.

I look for the Freedom Train to provide a unifying symbol of the heritage that made America's great past a great one, and will make its future an even greater one.

Now if I might, I would like to pick up this and present it to the Freedom Train for display, which is a document of tremendous historical significance, symbolic of what America really stands for; freedom.

END

(AT 11:05 A.M. EST)