

EMBARGO FOR RELEASE
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Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

TEXT OF REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO BE DELIVERED TO THE
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION
GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS CONFERENCE

Ladies and Gentlemen... welcome to the White House.

The East Room is a particularly appropriate place for us to meet -- and talk about the Nation's problems. This room is rich in history -- full of happy and sad moments in the lives of the residents of this house and in the Nation's past.

The first First Lady in this house was Abigail Adams -- who wrote her family of hanging laundry in this room and of the problems of the new Federal City. Mrs. Adams sent news to her family of the large and small problems she faced -- the same kind of news that you in this room share with your readers.

I have fond memories of the non-metropolitan weekly and daily newspapers in the 5th District of Michigan. During my Congressional campaigns, I advertised heavily in small city newspapers and relied on the knowledge the publishers and editors had of their areas. I know first-hand that the people who know a town best are those who run the local newspapers.

And in recent years, the growth in the number of suburban newspapers reflects the importance of this brand of personal journalism. In an age of mass communications -- you are in the business of local communications. You fill an important need of your readers; their need to know about the problems of their communities.

While the world has grown small and interdependent in many ways, the fact remains that the news around the corner and down the street is still important to all of us.

We live in a mobile society -- and too many of us have been pulled away from our roots. Your newspapers put us in touch with our new communities and give us links to our hometowns.

You are part of the dialogue that keeps self-government going. I admire your work -- and I need your help. A meaningful discussion of national problems cannot take place only on network television or in large metropolitan newspapers -- because these forums do not provide sufficient opportunity for audience response and participation.

One of the reasons it is important for me and members of this Administration to travel around the country and to meet in Washington with groups like this one -- is to listen as well as talk about the Nation's problems.

Perhaps my Congressional background convinced me of the value of face to face contact -- but there is no substitute for the discussion of ideas in person with community leaders like you. The best briefing paper in the world cannot explain problems as well as someone who deals with them daily and directly -- governors, or the mayors or publishers.

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Government officials need more talk-back from the people they serve -- and that is particularly true of those of us in Washington. This town can be just as parochial as a town of 250 people.

One of our ways at the White House of getting talk-back is our briefing sessions. But another is for you to send your comments and editorials to Ron Nessen in our Press Office.

We need to hear from you and the readers you serve. And we also need your help in describing the problems and solutions of the day. But, the economic and energy debate underway now must not become simply an exchange of rhetoric. The debate must produce action.

In January, the Administration outlined a comprehensive program to deal with some very harsh realities facing our nation economically and in energy. We made some stern choices in drawing up the Administration plan -- the kinds of choices that some politicians would rather talk about than make.

You deal with deadlines in your business. If those deadlines aren't met -- then you cannot serve your readers on time. The Congress must respond to some very real national deadlines. I asked for action by April 1st on a rebate of 1974 income taxes -- for individuals and for businesses. There has been much discussion on who should receive the tax rebates. -- a discussion based too often on purely political considerations.

We cannot look at this rebate on a political basis -- we have to look on how a rebate will affect all Americans. It is sometimes fashionable to talk as if what is good for the American economy is not good for the American people. This tendency to treat the economy as an abstract idea divorced from the lives of the citizens leads to some unfortunate piecemeal proposals.

When the economy is sound -- it means the people of this Nation are able to live comfortably without fear of inflation and with jobs.

To meet the proposed April 1st deadline on the tax cut -- the Senate must act before it recesses March 21st -- and the House before its March 26th Easter recess.

The tax cut is only part of the program this Administration has proposed -- and there has been more response from Capitol Hill on this proposal than on many others. But as necessary as the tax cut is -- it is only a small piece of the action that must be taken.

The Congress must act on other parts of my proposal -- especially in the area of energy. In my State of the Union address, I called for action in 90 days on a more comprehensive energy tax program. The first response by the Congress to this plea was to negate any action by the President to increase the oil tariffs -- and suspend the Presidential authority for 90 days. I have vetoed that bill -- but I did delay the imposition of the tariffs until May 1st to give more time for the Congress to act.

The Nation's current economic and energy situation is so critical -- that the deadline for action cannot be pushed back indefinitely. As you know well, the time comes when there is a final deadline. We in America are approaching that point.

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There is national agreement on the need for action. There is within the spirit of the American people a willingness to accept the hard choices required to regain economic stability and achieve energy independence.

In many ways -- the President and the American people now wait for the Congress to catch up with us.

As Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "In skating over thin ice our safety is our speed." The spring thaw is coming -- and the Congress must pick up its speed.

Thank you for coming today -- and I close with a traditional and heartfelt saying -- "Let us hear from you." You already know you'll be hearing from us.

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