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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
TO
MEMBERS OF THE CLOSE-UP PROGRAM

THE ROSE GARDEN

12:33 P.M. EDT

Let me say just a few words and make an announcement so that what I say does not preclude the opportunity that we will have to get acquainted.

After a few remarks, I thought it would be best if I had an opportunity to shake hands with each one of you and, therefore, I am asking all of you at the conclusion of my remarks to come through the Oval Office and I will shake hands with every one of you.

As I understand it, there are some 600 young people from two of my favorite cities. Naturally, I am a little prejudiced on behalf of Grand Rapids, Michigan, but Atlanta is a great community. I have always enjoyed visiting Atlanta, and I know some wonderful people from there. I know all of you are of the same caliber of those that I have met and those that I know and enjoy from Atlanta.

I think CLOSE-UP is a great program. I know how much all of you have done on an individual and a collective basis to make it possible for you to come to Washington to see close up how your government works.

I am convinced as I look in your faces, know of your record, that all of you have the creativity, the imagination, the dedication and the desire for involvement to make this country an even better place in which to live.

You, as individuals, and you, as a group here this morning, are indicative of the young people of America today.

I have great faith in your generation. I have faith that you will take the problems that we don't solve and actually come up with solutions so that the America of tomorrow will be a better place for all of you and all of your children.

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We have a great country. We have some problems both at home and abroad. We want jobs for Americans -- young people, old people, and all other people -- and we are going to find an answer to the economic problems we have today.

It is going to be a little tough for a while, but to show my deep personal concern, I asked the Congress for \$412 million so that roughly 800,000 young people this summer will have meaningful employment. This is important.

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And I signed the tax bill that will help stimulate the economy. I am going to insist that the Congress act responsibly in the handling of financial affairs so we don't go from the success we have had in moderating inflation to a revival of the inflation that caused most of our troubles today on the economic front at home.

We want to help the people who are less fortunate than others in America, but at the same time, we want to reward our middle income people who have the desire.

We must provide an incentive for them so that they will continue their hard work, their dedication to making our country a better place in which to live. And that middle income group that now pays better than one-third of the Federal taxes includes school teachers, firemen, working people, and a lot of other people in our society. We want them to have a fair break as we design, as we revise our income tax laws at the Federal level.

As I was sitting in the Oval Office a minute ago looking out and seeing all of you assembled, my own mind went back to an incident that I had back in June of 1931, the first time that I came to Washington, D. C. I was a graduate of South High School in Grand Rapids -- it no longer exists -- but it is now South Middle School. When I came to Washington, D. C., with 50 or 60 other young people from all over the Middle Western part of our country, I was given a tour like many of you have, or will while you are here.

And I have a picture taken up in front of the Capitol of the United States with all of the 50 or 60 of us who came to Washington on that occasion.

As I look back, I must have gotten an inspiration then to want to be involved in our government. I suspect that was where the seed was planted, of course never expecting to have the opportunity of living in that great historic house.

But let me say to each and every one of you, if a 17-year-old from Grand Rapids, Michigan, could come from that to this, the same opportunity exists for each and every one of you, both male and female.

A few years ago -- I think it was about two years ago -- somebody in this town made the comment when asked the question, what was his advice to young people today about getting involved in government, his words, if I remember them accurately, were, "Stay away."

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That was poor advice then, and it is poor advice now. Your participation in CLOSE-UP is your answer. The right answer is to get close up, be involved at the local, the state and the Federal level. And if you do, you will be happier. You will feel that you are making a great contribution to your government, to your country.

And our country today, as we face the problems both at home and abroad, needs your involvement, your dedication, your wisdom, your creativity.

We have a great country and the problems we have can and will be solved. But as I look at this great group of young people, I am encouraged and I know that your enthusiasm can be infectious.

You can go back to Grand Rapids, to Atlanta, to Michigan, to Georgia, and your impact will be significant. Just keep it up.

Thank you very much.

END (AT 12:42 P.M. EDT)