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Office of the White House Press Secretary

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THE WHITE HOUSE

TEXT OF REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT  
TO BE DELIVERED TO THE  
NATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE  
OBSERVANCE OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR, 1975

THE EAST ROOM

I welcome this very talented group of women and men to the White House. You represent a rich diversity of political and cultural backgrounds and experience, but your common concern for upgrading the status of women transcends differences. I am glad you are here.

Your work to promote the observance of International Women's Year begins tomorrow. And with the broad challenge to promote equality between men and women, you have your work cut out for you -- to ensure the full participation of women in the social-economic development of this society, as well as to recognize their contributions to the development of world peace.

Although the growing concern about the special legal and social problems of women has paved the way for many new laws and important court decisions, real change will depend upon the caliber and degree of enforcement. Laws alone are not enough.

Statistics on the employment of women in federal government demonstrate the problems that remain in assuring true equal opportunity. While nearly one-third of all federal employees are women, only four point five percent of the top level employees are women.

This administration recently reminded the heads of all federal departments and agencies that strong affirmative action is needed to see that everyone has the opportunity to compete on a fair and equal basis.

The federal government has a special opportunity to set an example -- and this we intend to do. This administration will continue to vigorously pursue talented applicants on the basis of qualifications alone.

One of the most refreshing by-products of the search to secure rights for women is the emphasis on freeing both sexes from restrictive stereotypes. Liberation of the spirit opens new possibilities for the future of individual Americans and the nation.

There are several critical areas that can benefit from your attention. One of these is the Equal Rights Amendment, which I wholeheartedly endorse.

The debate over E-R -A has too often degenerated into frivolous non-issues. An amendment to the Constitution calls for serious evaluation of the impact and meaning of the proposed change.

As state legislatures convene this year, the ensuing debates over E-R -A should be a vehicle to inform legislators and the public of the many complex legal problems women still encounter.

(MORE)

Myths about the protected economic status of women can be dispelled through serious discussion. The way can be opened for the review of areas that will not be affected by E-R -A.

You have a challenging and critical task ahead. And you can do much to move the nation along toward making "justice and equality" a reality for American women.

The restrictions on the rights and responsibilities to one American affects all of us. A nation is only as strong and creative as its citizens. The better we use the talents of our people -- women and men -- the brighter and more secure the future of the Republic will be.

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