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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
AT THE  
REPUBLICAN SENATE-HOUSE DINNER

WASHINGTON HILTON HOTEL

10:15 P.M. EDT

Mary Louise, Guy Vander Jagt, distinguished Republican leaders in the House and Senate, Members of the House and Senate, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

Really, it is a tremendous privilege and a pleasure for me to be here tonight, especially with Betty, and both of us thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your warm welcome and your contributions to what both of us think is a great cause, the cause of a better America through the kind of political participation that you can make -- and many others we hope will make -- in the months and days ahead.

Ted, I am especially pleased with your kind observations and introduction. Personally, I have always felt a very special affinity for the great State of Alaska because there is something about Alaska's weather that always makes me a bit nostalgic.

Alaska's weather always reminds me of all those Democrats who used to say it will be a cold day when Jerry Ford becomes President. (Laughter)

Well, I might just keep this cold wave going a little longer than they think. (Laughter)

Incidentally, you may be interested to know that another one of the Democratic candidates is getting ready to give up the race. I won't say who, but yesterday he told Bob Strauss, the Democratic National Chairman, "I am getting very discouraged."

You know Bob Strauss is a great guy and, as Mary Louise knows, a fine Chairman, and he is an optimist. He said, "Why?" The candidate said, "Why? I will tell you why. In the last Gallup Poll, 1500 votes were cast, and I got 13." Bob Strauss said, "This is no time to get superstitious." (Laughter)

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' As I indicated at the outset, it is a great privilege and pleasure to be here tonight.' And in the great spirit of the times, let me welcome each and every one of you to the Republican Party's first, no frills, economy, \$1,000 a plate dinner.

But thinking positively, how often can each and every one of you go home from a dinner like this and realize that every carrot you left on your plate cost you \$14.75.

But before proceeding one word further, I want to make an announcement -- and I haven't consulted with Betty -- but she, you know, feels very strongly about the Republican Party, as I do, and very strongly about equal rights. I have her check book here. (Laughter) And by law, I am authorized to sign her name. She has authorized me to sign her name for a \$1,000 contribution for her part in this dinner tonight.

But to prove my own willingness to be a participant, and I believe so strongly in the Republican Party that I am as delighted as Betty is, and to set a precedent, here is my check out of my bank account for the Republican cause.

Marv Louise, I haven't filled in anything except our signatures, but I will rely on your good judgment to do just that. I don't believe in freeloaders.

Obviously, I am delighted to see so many old friends here tonight, as well as some new ones, both from the House as well as from the Senate. And I congratulate those who are new in the Legislative Branch.

May I express a very special welcome to all of those who have made a contribution and participated in making this dinner possible.

I think all of us recognize that the new campaign laws created a new ball game in financing House and Senate races. As a contributor, each and every one of you are limited to a maximum contribution of \$1,000 for each candidate for each Federal office.

In practice, this means -- and I think we have to be cognizant of the problems -- that our party must attract even more thousands of small, individual contributors.

Our record in the past of such broad support is really excellent despite some of the things that are written. And as I look at what I know has happened in my own Congressional district and in our State and even nationally, I am proud of what we have accomplished.

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But the facts of life are that if we are to compete we must do infinitely better. I believe this trend to a larger number of small contributors will be a great blessing.

It has long been my conviction -- and I am sure Ted, Guy and Marv Louise share it -- that anyone who gives as little as \$1.00 becomes committed by this individual action to helping either a candidate or a party.

By your presence here tonight -- and I thank you and I am most grateful -- each and every one of you are demonstrating the long-time faith all of us -- those of us here on the platform as well as you -- share in a party with principles and its most fundamental goals.

Obviously, I am delighted to have seen so many young people. I had the privilege during dinner, and before, to meet so many of them, so many young people from many states here this evening.

I don't like to say something that isn't a matter of record, but it is. I was an early sponsor of lowering the voting age to 18. Now, some throughout the country disagreed with that point of view in those days when we were battling that issue, fearing that young people would automatically vote for the other party.

But I felt then, and I feel even more strongly now, that the intelligent judgment of youth would attract very, very many -- in fact a majority -- to our party. And I must say, as I have looked at some of the statistics that I am gratified with the results and I am optimistic that we will do even better in the future.

Young people today are a vital source of new Republican energy, Republican idealism and Republican ideas. To young Republicans everywhere, I say we welcome you, and most emphatically, we need you.

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As Ted, Guy and Mary Louise have said, the proceeds from this dinner go to the Republican National Committee and to the House and Senate campaign committees, whose combined efforts are vital to our goals.

After eight months in the White House, I know better than anyone -- and I mean anyone -- the importance of Republicans in the Congress of the United States. I promise you this: I do not choose to run in 1976 for myself alone. My 1976 campaign will be for all Republicans everywhere, from the local to the State to the national level.

This dinner tonight brings a broad resurgence of Republican strength everywhere, but especially in the House, the Senate and the State Capitals. It is vital to our Administration and to our entire Nation that we work at every stage and every precinct to restore balance, which I think is essential in our national political system.

We will be partners in a common and a very crucial cause, the cause of a Republican victory.

The one thing that I learned in the hard contest once every two years, in more than a quarter of a century of political involvement, that prospects for victory are seldom so bleak or so good as they seem when you are in the thick of a fight.

Time after time after time a supposedly ruined party has been rebuilt and returned -- stronger than ever on each occasion--and repeatedly, candidates once considered unbeatable have been beaten.

Quite frankly, looking over the hopeful Democrats in the Presidential sweepstakes, I don't see any who are unbeatable.

As some of you may remember when I, in January of 1965, became Minority Leader, we were outnumbered 295 to 140 in the House. Those odds were unbelievable, and Ev Dirksen had even, as I recollect, worse odds in the United States Senate.

Yet, two years later, when the House next assembled, there was 248 to 187, a net gain of 47 seats for Republicans, and in the Senate we made some gains as well.

What I am saying is -- and we should remember this as we challenge the philosophy, the views of those that are in the political arena -- if we have good candidates, if we have the right principles, we have done it in the past, we can and we will do it again.

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So, if I might, let me make a prediction or two. This is based on some experience.

As the economy continues to improve this year and next, and it will, we will be in good shape in November of 1976 to win local, State and national seats and Governorships all over this great country, and they are vital and important as we look down the road.

But for 1975, there is a lot of spade work to be done. By your being here tonight, you have contributed a significant amount.

The Republican Party, as I see it, must reach out as never before to attract new voters, nonvoters, Independents and Democrats deserted by their leadership. Our task is not merely to strengthen our party and to broaden its appeal, as we must, but also to reverse a very dangerous trend, which finds Congressional elections won or lost with less -- and it is almost unbelievable -- won or lost by less than half of our voting age citizens actually voting.

The natural question is, what should we do about it? What can we accomplish as we look at the problem?

As a starter, we can use this time before the next national election to rebuild the Republican Party into a strong competitor in the two-party system, which has proven over many, many years in the long haul, if you want to call it, to be the best political system in the history of mankind.

Let us resolve from this night on, if we may, that our party's primary goal should be to attract the broadest spectrum of people sharing our basic beliefs.

It is my judgment -- I have no apologies for it. I really believe it -- for the strength of America lies not only in its diversity, but also in its unity.

The ultimate strength of our party lies in its commitment to principles. Our effort to broaden the base of our party does not mean that we must abandon traditional Republican principles. Far from it. It means instead that we have to clarify and emphasize those principles so that all persons of like political interests can join in supporting the candidate of the Republican Party because if we don't have candidates and we don't have elected candidates, all of our efforts really are to no avail.

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So, let me give you just -- if I might -- three principles or thoughts, if I might, on some fundamental Republican principles.

First, Republicans have a long demonstrated commitment to the free enterprise system and fiscal responsibility by the Federal Government. The record is replete, and the facts are that you can't have one without the other.

For too many years the country has been headed in the wrong direction. Constantly increasing deficits and unchecked spending have been milestones on the road to economic disaster.

As I see it, despite our present traumatic experiences both at home and abroad, we must move in a new direction, a Republican direction, toward budgetary discipline and fiscal restraints.

That doesn't mean fiscal restraint one day and fiscal irresponsibility the next. It is a consistent, strong pattern of fiscal responsibility day after day, after day, after day, after day, and that is the way we will win.

The one thing we must do -- and I speak very candidly -- is to slam the brakes on some of the spending schemes that I see coming down the legislative agenda in the House, as well as in the Senate, promoted primarily by the Democratic majority in the Congress, schemes which could, as I add the figures, run the 1976 budget -- a 12-month budget -- up by as much as \$100 billion.

Can you imagine a deficit which is totally possible, if we don't put the clamps on, of \$100 billion? What concerns me is that if we add a little every day, a little every day, a little every day, a little more every day, all with individual good promise and good prospects and good intentions, pretty soon it is a \$100 billion deficit. That ought to scare us all. It scares me.

A \$52 billion deficit is bad enough, and I am not proud of it, but every time Congress acts to add a little, a little, a little, it gets worse and worse and worse.

So, I ask you in all honesty that we end these schemes, that we hold the lid. If we don't -- and I say this with the deepest conviction as I look down the road with all the prognostication of experts -- if we don't do something in a relatively short period of time, one-half of all Americans will be living off the taxes of the other half of Americans. Is that what you want your Government function to be? I don't think so.

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May I add very quickly, never forget: A Government big enough to give us everything we want is a Government big enough to take from us everything we have.

A second principle upon which Republicans are agreed, although I don't want to suggest it as a partisan principle because many fine Democrats also support it, and I thank them, is the need for a strong national defense posture as the only sure way to a peaceful world.

At a time of international uncertainty and stress such as the immediate present, the need to keep our military forces strong and alert should be obvious to every American.

We must guard our own national security and maintain the mutual strengths of our alliances in Western Europe and in the Far East, keep our vital commitments to long-term friends and keep pace in research and development of future defense systems if our recent progress toward reducing the dangers of war is to continue.

Obviously, an essential element of our modern national security system is a sound intelligence system -- and I do not intend to permit ours to be either publicized or paralyzed in times like these.

The third Republican article of faith I would mention is our basic theme or our basic belief in freedom -- the freedom of State and local governments to make their own decisions in the best use of their resources, the freedom of employees and employers to reach their own economic terms without Government coercion, the freedom of every individual to aspire and to achieve his own goals within his own concepts of a good life.

I say that freedom is an article of faith because it is on trial throughout the world tonight. It is no more certain now than it was for our forefathers who founded this great Republic.

When the drafters of that historic document -- the Constitution of the United States -- finished their work in Philadelphia in 1787, Benjamin Franklin was recognized as he left the hall, that historic hall, by a crowd of curious citizens gathered outside.

"What kind of a Government have you given us, Dr. Franklin?" a woman's voice called out.

"A Republic, Madam," Benjamin Franklin replied, "if you can keep it." We have kept it now for almost 200 years through many triumphs and quite a few tribulations.

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Once, when it seemed almost lost -- and history tells it vividly--the Republic was saved by a man who came from the people and whose faith in the people -- in all people -- never faltered. I will not claim that Abraham Lincoln belongs to our Republican Party, for actually, I think he belongs to all Americans.

But I do urge, and I say it as strongly and as emphatically as I can, that our Republican Party remain faithful to the principles of Abraham Lincoln.

On these principles, Republicans can and will unite, Republicans can and will increase their numbers and their political strength, Republicans can and will come back to win in 1976.

Thank you very much.

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(AT 10:40 P.M. EDT)