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Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

TEXT OF REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
 TO BE DELIVERED AT THE
 WEST VIRGINIA REPUBLICAN FUND RAISING DINNER

CHARLESTON CIVIC CENTER
 CHARLESTON, WEST VIRGINIA

I'm very pleased to be with you tonight--pleased with this fine turnout, pleased to be back in a State that is known by natives and visitors alike as "Almost Heaven." The first time I came to West Virginia was back in 1949 to make a high school commencement address in Berkeley Springs. I don't remember what I said on that occasion, and probably nobody else does either. But I distinctly remember my first impressions of West Virginia, the beauty of its mountains, the warmth of its people.

The impressions haven't changed a bit over the years. But West Virginia has changed a lot. The West Virginia I see today is a new State. The beauty of the mountains remains. The warmth and hospitality of West Virginians continue to strike the visitor like a summer breeze. But through all of these impressions, something new has been added. That is the feeling of the people here striding confidently into the future while retaining the heritage and charm of their past. The reasons may be complex. But they have a great deal to do with coal. Your State is one of the largest bituminous coal producers in the Nation, and among the leaders in coal exports. This great natural resource has improved the living standard of many of your citizens, enriched your State treasury through an increased tax flow and provided much of the fuel to keep this Nation warm, its lights burning and its factories humming.

But beyond the surging demand for coal, West Virginia's present prosperity can be attributed in large measure to the energy, the self-reliance and the imagination of your citizens and public officials. Under the enlightened leadership of your Governor, Arch Moore, you have vastly improved your highway system, raised the quality of education at every level, built tourism into a \$600 million-a-year business, and conducted a highly successful drive for new industry that has paid off in thousands of jobs and an unemployment rate below the national average. I congratulate all of you on your State's new prosperity--a prosperity which now ranks West Virginia fifth in per capita income growth in the Nation--a prosperity which springs primarily from the rugged self-reliance, the inexhaustible energy and the fierce independence which led the first hardy settlers in the 1730's to penetrate this wilderness. Tonight, I would like to talk with you about another form of independence.

Ten months ago, when I addressed the United States Congress and the American people, I said the State of the Union was not good. I called on the Congress and the country to move in a new direction. I pointed out the "whole world is watching to see how we respond." This evening, let us look at the state of our economy compared to that very uncertain time last January. While the economy is not my central theme--it is energy--nevertheless the health of our economy is unalterably linked to a stable and adequate supply of energy. Last January, simultaneous recession and inflation whip-sawed the American people--caught in the middle. The money of millions of people was being eroded by double-digit inflation while recession cut deeply into our national production and employment.

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Today, although we still have a ways to go, the economy is well on the road to recovery. We are making marked progress. The signs of this progress are clear for all to see. Our Gross National Product for the third quarter of 1975 increased by more than 11 percent--the biggest quarterly increase in two decades. That's progress. Industrial production rose at an annual rate of 20 percent during this same period--the biggest quarterly increase in more than a decade--and productivity among American workers has been steadily improving for months. And that's progress.

The number of Americans with jobs went up by nearly 1.8 million from March through October alone--and that's progress. For the last eight months, we have averaged a billion-dollar-a-month balance of trade surplus in the United States--and that's progress, too. Inflation has been cut almost in half between 1974 and 1975--down from the 12 percent range to the six percent range. That's not good enough--but it's progress. These are all signs of growing economic strength and stability and vitality.

This past year has not seen the decline of America predicted by so many last January. It has witnessed a resurrection of the traditional values of hard work and toughness-of-spirit that have always characterized the American people in times of adversity. No one on earth will bury us unless we bury ourselves. The economic difficulties of 1975--contrary to the forecasts of fear--were a simple and straightforward challenge to achievement. Tonight, I remind you: We not only accepted that challenge, we did something about it.

But I must frankly admit disappointment in getting the Congress to move on energy. Last February, the leaders of the Congress met with me at the White House and solemnly assured me they would have an energy program on my desk by the end of April. When they failed, they asked for more time, promising again to have an energy program on my desk within 45 days.

As we meet here tonight, the wind and snow of a new winter are beginning to whip across some areas of the country. Like the flowers of spring, the energy promises of the Congress are faded and gone.

So far this year, proposed energy legislation has been incorporated in nearly 2,500 bills and tied up in 29 different committees.

Tonight, I call on the Congress once again to act responsibly to provide this Nation with a program which will put us on the road to energy independence. We must move on this program now -- not after next year's national elections -- now. The American people must have responsible and realistic legislation that will accomplish our national needs and goals.

As part of this program, we must develop our most abundant and most known energy sources -- and, as all of you here in West Virginia know, that's coal. Coal resources total more than three trillion tons -- a supply that guarantees the United States literally hundreds of years of energy.

The fact is that we are not so much squandering our fuel resources as we are ignoring them. We are like a man in a desert who is dying for water while an oasis lies just beyond the horizon.

Unless we develop the energy sources that surround us, take the difficult steps required to make them usable, our thirst for fuel will create severe hardships for ourselves and for generations to come.

While I am President, the fate and future of America will not be left to undependable foreign sources of energy. In the next 25 to 50 years, oil and gas -- constituting more than two-thirds of the fuel we now use -- may be far too costly to burn at any price.

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The fact is our national coal reserves have more potential and are more precious to your future -- and your children's future -- than all the Middle East reserves of fuel and all of the fuel throughout this vast globe. The fact is the United States can never base its national destiny on energy that belongs to other nations. That is not our national future. That is our national folly.

We can and we must develop our own national energy resources without despoiling the environment. Improved mining technology can ensure safe and environmentally sound production of coal. We can and must produce technology to burn coal directly without producing environmental damage.

We do not have a shortage of resources. We do have a shortage of usable energy -- and a shortage of determination in the Congress to act, because the development of an energy program involves politically difficult decisions. But the Congress must carry out its responsibilities.

We can produce American energy with American money ... an American work force and American technology ... for an American future. As I said earlier, the "whole world is watching to see how we respond." Economically, we are on the road to recovery. In energy, we are still at a standstill. The choice is up to the Congress: To stand still in energy -- to retreat from responsibility and reality -- to threaten our economic recovery -- or to move forward with legislation that will produce energy and economic stability for this Nation.

I believe the American people want -- as they always have -- responsibility and reality. We in the Republican Party are prepared to provide it -- to provide this Nation with strength at home and abroad.

From my travels across America, I am convinced of this: The Republican Party is in tune with the hopes and aspirations of the American people -- with their desires and their wants.

In particular, I have found the American people want energy independence -- and so do we in the Republican Party. They want a sound economy -- and so do we. They want good housing, good food, and a good future for their families -- and so do we. They want the \$28 billion tax cut I proposed to Congress so they can spend their own money rather than have the government do it -- and so do we. At the same time, they want a \$28 billion reduction in the growth of Federal spending as a start toward a balanced budget -- and so do we. They want the government to help meet their needs without ordering their lives -- and so do we. They want an America at peace and actively promoting peace with a strong intelligence capability to insure our protection -- and so do we. They want an American defense second to none -- and so do we.

If we successfully carry this message to the people of West Virginia and to voters across America in the next 12 months, we can make 1976 a great year for the Republican Party -- and for this great country of ours. But we need the kind of continuing support you are providing by your presence here tonight.

The decisions the American people make in less than one year from now will shape the course of this country well into our third century of independence.

Let's make sure we decide for an America at peace, for a Nation renewed, for a people with pride, for a future that summons us to new achievement and glory and greatness. With your help, we can do it!

Thank you all very much.