

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
TO THE
PRESIDENT FORD COMMITTEE VOLUNTEERS

THE BAHIA MAR HOTEL

8:25 A.M. EST

Thank you very, very much, Joel, Lou and all the distinguished public officials, all of you wonderful youngsters and oldsters, and everybody else.

We get the combination of energy from these young people, real experience and enthusiasm from all the rest of you -- we just have to win. We are bound to win.

We have had, as Joel said and as Lou indicated, a wonderful reception from the time we landed in Orlando, and this group here is another indication -- despite what some of the skeptics have said -- that we not only have the numbers but we have the talent, we have the enthusiasm.

Our organization is good and we are going to win with them.

The nicest thing for a candidate to have -- and I think Lou and the others would agree with me -- is to find when the chips are down, when the going, in the minds of some, is at least rough, that all of your old friends from a good many years back or some of your new acquaintances, or some of the neighbors that you lived next to, or people you went to school with or were associated with in business, come to help. And as I walked through this wonderful crowd this morning, I must admit, 50 people fitted into one category or another that were friends of the past or newly made acquaintances.

This is what makes a candidate feel good, because of their feeling of closeness, their feeling of knowledge about whether you are good or bad, and I want to thank not only all those old friends, but to thank all of you who have done so much and are so important in this crucial campaign.

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Let me just take a minute to talk about what has happened in the last 18 months. About 18 months ago, the burden fell on me to become President of the United States under very difficult circumstances. I think we have made a tremendous amount of progress. We have restored the public faith in the responsibilities of the Oval Office.

But as I look back in the month of August of 1974, we were suffering as a Nation from inflation of over 12 percent. We were on the brink of a very serious economic recession. Our allies abroad had some fear and apprehension as to whether or not a new President could rally the American people and contribute to the growing and essential strength of our alliances abroad.

Instead of panicking, we took a firm, steady, realistic, common sense course of action. The net result is we made tremendous progress, and we are not coming up with any quick fixes that look good on paper, but burn up about as quickly as it possibly could.

So here we are in February of 1976, roughly 18 months after those circumstances faced us squarely in our eye. I would like to add a little extra comment. I know from the mountains of mail that I have received and Betty has received over this 18 months, we have had the prayers of young people and old people. We have had the prayers of the American people, and that has been extremely helpful to us, and we thank all of those who were kind enough and thoughtful enough under those circumstances.

But here we are, in February of 1976, and the skies, all of a sudden, seem to be opening up and brightening considerably and they are that way because we have done the right thing. We are coming out of the recession. Employment is going up. Since March of last year we have added 2 million 100 thousand more jobs. We regained 96 percent of the jobs lost during the recession. The unemployment trend is down and it is going down.

We had some encouraging news just yesterday in two respects. One, the wholesale price index, which is the basis of the consumer price index -- if you get that under control, you have a great big handle on trying to cut back the cost of living for the consumer -- for the month of January there was no increase in the wholesale price index. The month before there was a 1.6 drop. The month before, it was zero, so we are really doing something effective in the wholesale price index and that will have a beneficial impact for young and old and people in every one of our 50 States.

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But to create jobs we have to have our economy really moving, and, again, yesterday we got some excellent news, that industrial production was up again.

So as we look across the domestic spectrum, I find a great reason for encouragement, even more so than I tried to say during the State of the Union Message about a month ago. But it does not do us much good to get things straightened out and problems corrected at home unless we are sure that our national security is in the right direction.

I said last week, and I reiterate it here -- the policy of this Administration is one of peace through strength.

I submitted, in January, the largest defense budget, I think, in the history of the United States -- \$112.7 billion. This is the first real step to make certain that we have not only the capability to deter war, but the capability to make certain that our security is secure.

More importantly, we are making the right kind of headway because we are strong in our re-establishment of our alliances abroad. I have had some excellent personal contacts with the heads of government in Britain, in France and West Germany and other Western European countries. Today, the NATO alliance is in the best shape it has been since its inception.

It is important that we keep a strong partner and many friendships in the Pacific. Our relations with Japan today are the best they have ever been. That is a bulwark of strength in that vast ocean area.

At the same time, we can look with great pride in what has been accomplished in the Middle East. We have moved forward to a just and permanent peace in the Middle East. Why? Because the Israelis trusted us and the Egyptians trusted us. And it is the trust they have in us which convinced them they could move toward a settlement of some of their differences. This is the result of America being strong and America being trusted.

But we do face some adversaries around. We face the People's Republic of China. It is important that we continue the negotiations and the open relations that we have with them. We recognize that their ideology, their political philosophy, is totally different from ours, but you can't ignore 800 million people. And we will deal with them in a way that we benefit and in a way that is good for the world as a whole.

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We face the problem of dealing with the Soviet Union. Let me say one thing categorically. I am a good Yankee trader and we are not going to get out-traded in dealing with the Soviet Union.

I think it is important, as we negotiate with the old traditions of American Yankee traders, to recognize that if we can put a cap on the nuclear arms race and push back the vast expenditures for more and more and more nuclear arms, it is in the best interest of all of us. We will keep our powder dry, but we are going to be darn sure that that agreement comes about. It is in our interest and in the interest of world peace as a whole.

I don't think it is in the best interest for us to do two things: One, to increase the proliferation of nuclear arms all over the world, and I don't think it is in the best interest of the world to deal in this area with your finger on the trigger. I think it is better to be strong and keep your powder dry.

Now, let me close with just one final comment. I reiterate my appreciation for your all being here. I know how hard you worked and I know how much of an impact you have had. You have about a month to go. What we do in the weeks ahead, the days before us, is vitally important. The reception we have received here in Florida has been tremendous and I am deeply grateful, but campaigns are won, and this kind of a campaign will be won, by what all of you do and the policies that we pursue.

We are going to try, as we move ahead in the policy decisions of this Administration, to have just a kind of a balance. I want a balance between the taxpayer on the one hand and the recipient of Federal assistance on the other. I want a balance between the private sector and the Government sector. I want a balance between the Federal Government and the State Government and local units of Government. It is vitally important that we have that balance. I want to free the individual from as much Government control as possible.

I will make one statement that sort of puts all of my philosophy in a very simple fashion. I say it often because I believe it. Some of you may have heard it, but it wraps it all up. A Government big enough to give us everything we want is a Government big enough to take from us everything we have.

We want that balance. We want honest Government. We want strong Government. We want fair Government. And let me conclude with this final comment -- as we move ahead, as we are moving ahead, I get prouder and prouder of the fact that I am an American, and I get prouder and prouder of America. I know you do, too.

Thank you.

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(AT 8:42 A.M. EST)