

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSES PRESS SECRETARY  
(Ft. Myers, Florida)

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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
AT THE  
PRESIDENT FORD COMMITTEE  
VOLUNTEERS' RECEPTION

CASSIUS PEACOCK RESIDENCE

5:40 P.M. EST

Thank you very much, Lou. It is wonderful to be here with your Congressman, Skip, and to have spent the last day and a half with Lou Frey and in between we have had Bill Young from down around St. Petersburg. It has been an amazing trip.

I have heard from certain people, and I have read some newspapers, and I have read some columns that we did not have any organization down here, we did not have any workers, we did not have any enthusiasm. I find just the opposite true.

Let me say I will put the organization we have against any opposition I know on the Republican or Democratic side--either one.

It has just been a fabulous day and a half and the culmination of coming here, down in Southwest Florida, at Ft. Myers has just been tremendous. We had a wonderful meeting -- I have forgotten the name of the building, Skip -- Exhibition Hall -- I knew I was in Ft. Myers -- but it was wonderful. And let me just make one or two points.

I think it is vitally important for a person with the moderate Republican philosophy that I think I believe in, have fought for, to win the election and to make certain that this kind of a philosophy prevails for the next four years.

Now let me give you a couple of quick ideas as to what it relates to. If I might, with your permission, I would like to go back to August, 1974, when, very suddenly, under very difficult circumstances, I became President. What did we find? We found that inflation was something over 12 percent, much too high, runaway. It seemed uncontrollable. We had all kinds of proposals for wage and price controls. We had all kinds of other quick fixes that everybody here knows would not have done the job and probably would have compounded the problem.

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We decided the best way to meet the challenge of inflation was to have a cool, steady policy of restraint as far as the Federal budget was concerned, and I think we have accomplished that despite some of the problems we have had with the majority party in the Congress of the United States.

Then almost as soon as I had taken the oath of office, we saw these darn clouds coming over the horizon of a recession and it turned into a very serious one -- the worst since the Depression of the 1930's. It could have caused all of us to panic and to, again, do some gimmickry to try and resolve the problem.

Unemployment soared, employment went down. I knew from the days when I and my family and friends of mine went through the Depression that all of these make-work projects, or most of them, don't really work.

So we decided that we would put the emphasis on trying to restore the confidence in the private sector where five out of the six jobs in this country exist anyhow. Those are permanent. Those are inspiring. Those are meaningful jobs. And the net result is without all the extra Federal spending that so many wanted, we were able to add 800,000 more jobs last month and over the last seven or eight months we have added 2 million 100 thousand jobs.

That is not good enough yet, but we have regained 96 percent of the jobs lost during the recession and we are going to do better. We have to find job opportunities for roughly 2 million new job entrants every year into the economic mainstream of our society. The best way to do it, the only honest way to do it, is to try to do it in the private sector, and everything we do is going to be aimed in that direction, I can assure you.

Now let me make one or two comments about foreign policy. I have said -- and I would like to repeat here -- our whole foreign policy has to be predicated on peace with strength, and what does strength mean? It means having a Defense Department, Army, Navy, Air Force, that is second to none. Modern weapons, the best training, the best -- and let me put this in very emphatically -- we have to have the best intelligence capability in the world.

Frankly, I am getting fed up with those who want to destroy it and dismantle it on the one hand, and those who, for one reason or another, want to leak all our classified information on the other.

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We are going to put a maximum effort to maintain the capability of this country to deter war and to be able to maintain our national security against any threat. That means we have to spend a lot of money. It means we have to buy the best hardware, we have to provide the best training and we have to give it public support.

And that is what I am asking all of you to do. The Congress cannot and must not slash the Federal military budget this year.

Let me just conclude with this. All of you have, obviously, helped tremendously already. We have got -- what, 30 days to go, Lou? Twenty-four, all right. March 9. I have not had time to add it up. I did not take new math so I can't do it. But, any how, we have got a short time. We have to do a lot of doorbell ringing, telephoning. We have to do a lot of persuading.

I think it is vitally important that we are successful March 9 so we can be successful November 2nd.

Thank you very, very much.

END (5:46 P.M. EST)