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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 AT
GUILFORD COURTHOUSE NATIONAL MILITARY PARK
GUILFORD COURTHOUSE, NORTH CAROLINA

I am honored to participate in this anniversary of a memorable battle that typified the deeds that we so proudly celebrate in our national Bicentennial. It was here on this battlefield that North Carolina's famous Tar Heel spirit inspired the men of many States to stand together against the common foe. The enemy came on with drums beating and feathers in their caps. But the Tar Heels provided the tar. The feathers flew, but the tar stuck. Our farmers and frontiersmen dealt Europe's best professional soldiers a blow that led to their ultimate surrender. The North Carolinians posted on the front line made the difference.

Today, Tar Heel tenacity remains a model for America's tenacity. Tar Heel pride is America's pride. And Tar Heel common sense and moderation symbolizes the new realism of the United States of America. When I leave here today, I hope that some of your magic tar sticks to my heels.

I congratulate you, not only on your State's courage, but for your modern North Carolina lifestyle. You combine the best of the present with the finest values of the past. And you do this with genuine humility.

I like the North Carolina approach. Two hundred years ago, the Founding Fathers favored what they called "mild government." They believed that you can only achieve "mild government" if you maintain State and local government so responsive that the national government is limited in scope. They believe in the ability of individuals to govern themselves.

In this Bicentennial year, North Carolina, and other States, are striving to restore the necessary and effective balance between the States and the massive, centralized power of the Federal Government. You know all too well how State and local authority has eroded as the Federal establishment has grown and grown. When your State constitution was adopted, you took great care to preserve the basic of self-government. But power has been drawn away from your State, your country, your city, your town, your farm to an increasingly centralized national government -- always bigger, always more meddlesome -- but not always more efficient nor more responsive to local needs.

This process undermines individual resourcesfulness and pride. It threatens our economic prosperity. It dims our vision of a future in which you can control your own life.

I pledge that I will never transfer serious problems from the Federal Government to State governments without regard for human needs or fiscal realities. I will preserve a constructive partnership with North Carolina. But I am also determined to cooperate with North Carolina to move the decision-making process back to the people.

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If the Bicentennial is to have real meaning, we must restore to you, on a State and local level, a real voice in your own destiny. Should this Bicentennial year accomplish nothing else, this alone would be a fitting triumph.

What was the Battle of Guilford Courthouse all about? Americans dared to challenge the oppression of a distant and unresponsive government that tried to govern without the consent of the governed and to impose taxation without representation. Our struggle for independence was really a fight to assert the elementary principle of local control over the fate of local people.

The soldiers who stood here under General Nathanael Green did not dribble away their resources in foolish experiments. They made wise use of their terrain. They made every shot count.

The time has come for a resurgence of the common sense that made men become heroes on this battlefield. To keep the faith with the Americans who died here, we must strive for the responsible self-government they sought.

A self-governing republic requires responsible citizens. They must have the traditional virtues of self-discipline, self-reliance, and a patriotic concern for the public good. These qualities must be nurtured and rewarded. They must not be penalized and exploited. I believe in America and in the capacities of all Americans. North Carolina provides us with a showcase of progress. You have made great breakthroughs in industry, in agriculture, in education, in harmonious rural and urban development, and in helping all citizens achieve their highest human potential. Southerners, including Tar Heels, must be doing something right.

You know it and I know it. A lot of others must know it, too, as we watch the trend of people moving toward the South rather than away from it. Your region is growing more rapidly than any other part of America. In North Carolina, the rate of high school graduates has increased faster than in most of our states. There are significant increases in students attending your excellent institutions of higher learning. Two generations of the Ford family have come here to study. I attended Naval Flight School at the University of North Carolina for nine months during World War Two and my oldest son attended Wake Forest. We share with you an affinity for the enlightened spirit of your state. The patriotism, the dedication, and the willpower of the thirteen original states still burn brightly throughout the Old North State. Two hundred years ago, some individuals said that it was unwise to make a stand here against the enemy. They said that we lacked adequate experience, that we were short of weapons, and that we would be wiped out. But there were many more who said, "We are North Carolinians. We are Americans. We can do it." They did it. And we can do it.

Our challenge -- yours and mine -- is to foster new courage and new realism at home, new moderation in the relationship of government to the governed, and new American strength throughout the world.

Together we welcome America's third century. Together, we offer our optimism to all our fellow countrymen. Together, we will build a better America.

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