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Ford Speech

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CALPAC POLITICAL WORKSHOP
LACMA Headquarters, Los Angeles
Saturday, April 1, 1967

By: Congressman Gerald R. Ford

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It's wonderful to be here breathing the pure air of Los Angeles again — seriously, the air pollution experts now tell us that Washington, D. C. has more smog than you do, although I think when they analyze it they will find that we suffer from a different kind of pollutant. The smoke from the White House has been so thick lately that some days you can hardly tell Bobby Kennedy from the Ambassador to North Viet Nam.

I suppose I should take it easy on Bobby, since he is recovering from surgery. It's a very well-kept secret, but after the Junior Senator from New York said the other day he would swear he wasn't running for President, they had to rush him to Bethesda Naval Hospital and operate immediately to get his fingers uncrossed.

This is the fourth time I have flown to California in about as many weeks. Some people have asked me why I go to California so often. Any my answer is, I think California offers a preview of what is going to happen all across America in 1968. As usual, you Californians are a little ahead of history, and you demonstrated last November how people can rise up — despite a traditional edge in Democratic registrations — and throw out a tired, confused, blundering and hopelessly divided Administration that has lost the capacity to lead and to make the hard decisions which the safety and solvency of the body politic demands.

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Not only did Californians turn to new Republican leadership in the executive branch of your government in Sacramento, but you showed Republicans everywhere the importance of the so-called 11th Commandment — Thou Shalt Not Speak Ill of Any Other Republican — which I fervently hope can be the national watchword of our party as we build on the gains of 1966 and work towards a major victory in 1968.

I understand that this is not a partisan organization and that you support worthy Democrats as well as worthy Republicans. But I hope I may be permitted to speak in a partisan way about a situation which I believe transcends ordinary politics; which concerns the future of our children and perhaps the fate of our civilization; the crying need of our country for a New Direction and for forthright leadership which trusts the people instead of trying to outsmart them.

That the American people are uneasy about this was evidenced at the polls last November. They had no opportunity to change the nation's top leadership, but they served sharp notice that they did not like the way things were going. They sent us a net gain of 47 new Republicans in the House of Representatives in Washington — and I want to take this occasion to thank this organization for its vital contributions to the successful campaigns of three new California Republican Congressmen, Chuck Wiggins of El Monte, Jerry Pettis from San Bernardino County, and Bob Mathias from Visalia.

These three able, alert, vigorous young representatives of the people already have proved themselves valued additions to our reinforced minority ranks in the House — along with the rest of the splendid California Republican

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delegation which has also had your strong support. Each replaced a Democrat incumbent and thus helped to eliminate the lopsided legislative majority which the Great Society held in the last Congress.

In my own state of Michigan your counterpart organization under AMPAC, known as MD PAC, helped to replace five Great Society Democrats with Republican Congressmen. If I do nothing else, I would like to stir up a race between the doctors and their wives in California and Michigan to see which organization could bring in the most new Republican members for the next Congress in 1968. If this competition gets hot enough between the two States I might get elected Speaker of the House!

When I hear some of the plans that Dr. Malcolm Todd has for strengthening CALPAC, on top of what you have done already, I am not just voicing wishful hopes. The dedication and enthusiasm that brings this group of busy professional men and their ladies here on a Saturday is indeed encouraging, and I am happy to say I find the same spirit wherever I go around the country.

I think we can win the White House and the House of Representatives next year, and score substantial gains in the Senate, IF — and it's a big IF — we can maintain this momentum and honestly present to the American voter a clear choice between a resurgent and UNITED Republican party and the decadent and DIVIDED Democrats. As of today, this is the plain and the tragic fact.

Abraham Lincoln said "a house divided against itself cannot stand." I say today that a party divided against itself cannot lead. The Democratic party

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is hopelessly torn between its Johnson and Kennedy factions — not to mention the Hubert H. Humphrey fans who recently caucused in a Washington telephone booth. The air is rent with the shrill cries of Democratic Doves and Democratic Hawks, as well as the shrewdly hybrid Democratic Hoves and Dawks who are waiting to see which way the polls blow. One almost has to sympathize with President Johnson who recently complained to the Democratic National Committee, or what there is left of it, that "You can't have 25 Secretaries of State and a half-dozen Secretaries of Defense and all of them dreaming dreams."

Yes, one could sympathize with our President if only he could make up his mind, and if only his futile efforts to appease the appeasers in his own party were not so costly and dangerous. The most significant thing in the recently publicized exchange of letters between President Johnson and Ho Chi Minh was the North Vietnamese Communist leader's claim that "Our just cause enjoys strong sympathy and support from the peoples of the whole world, including broad sections of the American people."

Undoubtedly Ho believes that, and if I were in his place and reading the public speeches and statements of prominent Democratic leaders such as Sen. Kennedy, Sen. Fulbright, Sen. Morse and others — indeed if my intelligence had reported to me last month's "stop the bombing" resolution of the California Democratic Council in Fresno — I might believe it myself. So why come to the conference table? Hold out a few months longer, Ho Chi Minh probably figures, and the American peaceniks will take over the U. S. government and come to terms with us. At least, with the 1968 elections approaching, Ho expects to be in a stronger negotiating position.

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Thus, as the Republican Policy Committee of the House of Representatives warned over a year ago, "the deep division within the Democratic Party over American policy in Viet Nam is prolonging the war, undermining the morale of our fighting men and encouraging the Communist aggressor. In the interim, the shameful and shocking struggle for political power within the President's party has intensified with unprecedented bitterness and fury.

While American casualties have mounted and Viet Nam has become our third largest foreign war, the ambitions of one Democratic leader the fierce pride of another have well-nigh paralyzed our national leadership. I say this is too high a price to pay for political feuding. In our system, parties are instruments for the periodic and orderly change of governments, and the first duty of any government is to maintain national unity in the face of external enemies.

I submit that the party in power for the past six years has forfeited its claim to lead the nation in war or to lead it to peace. If this is not wholly President Johnson's fault, it is nevertheless his responsibility before the nation.

His was a momentous electoral landslide. He was acclaimed as the most experienced and clever political operator of the age. He was given better than two-thirds majorities in Congress to rubberstamp his every whim into expensive law of the land. But we are still in an agonizing land war half way around the world and hearing ominous warnings of economic trouble at home; we face higher prices, higher taxes and higher draft calls with no end clearly in sight and a substantial number of our citizens uncertain that our cause is just, and conquer we must.

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Speaking as a Republican, I am proud that my party has spurned politics-as-usual and has backed the Americans fighting in Viet Nam and their Commander-in-Chief in every way we could. With our increased strength in this 90th Congress, we are continuing to give this all-out and united support without which, I submit, Ho Chi Minh will never be persuaded to talk peace. It was not among Republicans that Ho's intelligence agents discerned "strong sympathy and support" in America. And President Johnson himself is well aware of this.

What this country needs most today is unity. The Democrats clearly cannot provide this essential unity. But the message I preach wherever and whenever I can is that Republicans can hope to elect a President and a majority in the House of Representatives in 1968 ONLY IF we go to the people as the party of UNITY, united among ourselves and for the good of all the nation.

Now this broad brush picture of united Republicans versus divided Democrats must be drawn in every State and Congressional District, in every precinct and every voting booth. We must not deceive ourselves that the favorable trend of 1966 will automatically continue because of the blunders — Texas-size though they are — of the Democrats in power in Washington. We are going to have to offer better leadership at every level of government if we are to deserve the prize. That is why we in the Minority Leadership of the Congress have concentrated so hard on constructive programs that enlist the energies and genius of State and local agencies and private American enterprise and the solution of unsolved national problems.

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In the State of the Union appraisal which Sen. Dirksen and I gave last January at the start of this session, I outlined a 39-point domestic program which we called Sensible Solutions for the Seventies as opposed to the Democrats' Tired Theories of the Thirties. Each of these 39 domestic proposals require legislative action by the Congress, and prior to this Easter recess Republican members had introduced all but a handful of them, which required careful study and preparation, as bills before the House. But, of course, all the scheduling of bills before committees and on the House floor is still completely in the power of the Democratic majority.

After this Easter recess, Congress will settle down to business and we will be able to get a better reading on the fate of our program at this session. Some of our proposals, such as restoration of the Investment Tax Credit and measures to improve law enforcement, have been kidnapped by the Johnson Administration and adopted as their own. Others, such as the essential elements of the Republican Clean Election and Campaign Reform bill sponsored by the respected chairman of the California Republican delegation, Glen Lipscomb, have been embraced by enough Democrats on the appropriate House committee to insure them of a chance of consideration.

We are going to press for consideration of all our forward-looking Republican measures, including a permanent committee on Standards and Conduct of House members and employees, which is long overdue but have become embarrassing to the foot-dragging Democratic leadership in the limelight of the Powell, Dodd and Bobby Baker cases. But we are still a minority and our

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opportunity for taking the initiative is severely limited. Nevertheless, the effort is eminently worth making because it will write a record of Republican objectives and Democratic obstructions upon which we and other candidates can effectively campaign in 1968. As Number 2, we have to try harder!

Now this is where informed, intelligent and action-minded organizations such as CALPAC come in. If the Democrats have defaulted in their national leadership, doubly dangerous in time of war, and if we are able as a responsible and unified minority in the Congress to give the country evidence of our capacity to govern in the interests of all the people, and if the Republicans can sustain the unity of purpose and principle and — yes — patriotism is not a bad word in my vocabulary — which the country so desperately demands, what else do we need to guarantee success?

We need good candidates, good organization, good financing and good campaigning all across the country. We learned in the last campaign what can be done with first-rate Republican candidates such as the three your Californians elected here in normally Democratic district — and many of the other new freshmen in the House. People are not so Partisan in most parts of the nation, certainly not here in California, that they will not vote for a clearly superior man or woman when they know what the choice is.

To put a candidate across he must first have what it takes; character, capability, courage, and a conscientious desire to serve his constituents. But with all these he must get through to the voters, so that they know him and identify

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themselves with him. It is important to pick good challengers in poorly represented districts; it is doubly important to keep good men in Congress once they have proven themselves. You are better judges of these matters than we are back in Washington — that, too, is one of our Republican principles.

I want to say again how much we in Washington thank you for the reinforcements you have sent us, how eagerly we look for more, and how honored I am to have been included in this important meeting. I have been greatly impressed by the work you are all doing, and by the fine leadership which Dr. Todd has given to CALPAC, and I wish for you — and for responsible government — every success for this year and in 1968.

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