The original documents are located in Box 23, “2/12/76 - Address Commemorating Lincoln's Birthday” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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MAY I EXPRESS MY THANKS TO ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE

PATRIOTIC ORGANIZATIONS REPRESENTED HERE FOR THE OPPORTUNITY

TO JOIN YOU IN THIS BICENTENNIAL TRIBUTE TO ABRAHAM LINCOLN

ON THE 167TH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS BIRTH.
IN TIME, LINCOLN WAS CLOSER TO THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION THAN WE ARE TO THE CIVIL WAR. HIS GRANDFATHER IN VIRGINIA HEARD THE GREAT NEWS FROM PHILADELPHIA IN 1776; ONLY FOUR SCORE AND SEVEN YEARS HAD PASSED WHEN PRESIDENT LINCOLN STOOD AMONG THE NEW GRAVES AT GETTYSBURG.

TO THE YOUNG LINCOLN GROWING TO MANHOOD IN KENTUCKY, INDIANA AND ILLINOIS, JEFFERSON'S RINGING TRUTHS IN THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE WERE EXCITING AND REAL -- THAT ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL --
THAT THEY ARE ENDOWED BY THEIR CREATOR WITH CERTAIN UNALIENABLE RIGHTS -- LIFE, LIBERTY AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPIES.

AMONG HIS MANY GIFTS OF GREATNESS, ABRAHAM LINCOLN HAD AN ALMOST MYSTIC ABILITY TO FIND DEEP MEANING IN THE TUMULTOUS EVENTS THAT SWIRLED ABOUT HIM.
HIS EXPRESSION OF THESE INSIGHTS IN WORDS THAT SOME CALLED DULL AND DISHWATERY WHEN THEY WERE SPOKEN, ARE INSCRIBED ON THESE WALLS AND IN THE HEARTS OF HIS COUNTRYMEN.

BUT IT IS LESS FOR THE POWER OF HIS WORDS THAT WE HONOR LINCOLN THAN FOR THE FORCE OF HIS FAITH IN AMERICA AND IN THE PEOPLE OF THIS GREAT REPUBLIC.
HE SAW THE POLITICAL SYSTEM CREATED BY THE CONSTITUTION AS A DEFINITIVE ANSWER TO THE ANCIENT DEBATE ABOUT THE ABILITY OF MAN TO GOVERN HIMSELF IN FREEDOM. THE WORTH AND THE WILL OF THE GOVERNMENT IN WASHINGTON WAS BEING QUESTIONED AND ASSAILED ALL AROUND HIM.

BUT EVEN AS AMERICANS STRUGGLED IN BLOODY BATTLE WITH OTHER AMERICANS OVER ISSUES THE FOUNDING FATHERS HAD FAILED TO RESOLVE, PRESIDENT LINCOLN WAS ABLE TO DECLARE:
"IT IS MY CONFIDENT HOPE AND BELIEF THAT THIS SYSTEM WILL BE FOUND, AFTER SUFFICIENT TRIALS, TO BE BETTER ADAPTED EVERYWHERE THAN ANY OTHER, TO THE GREAT INTEREST OF HUMAN SOCIETY -- NAMELY, THE PRESERVATION OF PEACE, ORDER AND NATIONAL PROSPERITY."

AND, AFTER MORE THAN SUFFICIENT TRIAL, THE UNION WAS SAVED AND THE REPUBLIC ENDURES.

IT IS TO ABRAHAM LINCOLN THAT WE OWE THE OPPORTUNITY TO OBSERVE OUR NATIONAL BICENTENNIAL IN PEACE AMONG OURSELVES AND WITH ALL NATIONS."
TODAY, WE REDEDICATE OURSELVES TO THE VALUES AND GOALS FOR WHICH ABRAHAM LINCOLN LIVED AND DIED --

"THAT THIS NATION, UNDER GOD, SHALL HAVE A NEW BIRTH OF FREEDOM -- AND THAT GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE, FOR THE PEOPLE, SHALL NOT PERISH FROM THE EARTH."

END OF TEXT