The original documents are located in Box 31, “5/8/76 - Remarks at the Dedication of the Harry S. Truman Statue, Independence, Missouri” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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Acknowledgements - Truman Statue Dedication

Thank you, Governor Bond

Mrs. Margaret Truman Daniel

Distinguished Members of Congress:

Senator Humphrey
Senator Symington
Senator Curtis
Senator Eagleton

Congressman Symington
Congressman Randall
Congressman Bolling

Mayor King

Dr. Jonas (Chairman, Truman Statue Committee)

Distinguished Guests

Friends and admirers of Harry Truman
I AM SUROUNDED AS I AM BY OLD FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS
OF PRESIDENT TRUMAN, IT WILL BE HARD AND PERHAPS FOOLHARDY
TO TRY TO ADD ANYTHING TO THE AFFECTIONATE TRIBUTES ALREADY
PAID HIM AS A PUBLIC SERVANT AND AS A MAN, BUT I HAVE A
FEW MEMORIES OF MY OWN, SO I WILL TRY.

MR. TRUMAN WAS A GREAT STUDENT OF HISTORY,
AND HE PARTICULARLY LIKED TO TALK ABOUT HIS PREDECESSORS AND THE
QUALITIES EACH OF THEM BROUGHT TO THE PRESIDENCY.
HE WAS REALLY EXPERT AT IT, ALLOWING FOR A LITTLE TILT
TOWARD JEFFERSON, JACKSON AND HIS DISTANT KINSMAN JOHN TYLER.
THE REASON I KNOW THIS GOES BACK TO MY VERY 
FIRST CLOSE-UP MEETING WITH HIM, IN FACT, MY VERY FIRST 
in 1949 
TO THE WHITE HOUSE. IN THE 81st CONGRESS, I WAS A VERY 
FRESHMAN MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, AND ON THE 
MINORITY SIDE—PRESIDENT TRUMAN HAD SEEN TO THAT, IN 1948.

I HAD BEEN ASSIGNED A PLACE AT THE VERY BOTTOM OF THE 
SENIORITY LADDER ON THE PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE AND ONE DAY 
THE PRESIDENT INVITED ALL OF US DOWN TO VISIT HIM.
He greeted us very warmly and asked if we'd like a personally guided tour through the house, and we got the full lecture, not just the public rooms but upstairs through the family living quarters.

President Truman explained all the portraits and pointed out all the changes made by first ladies all the way back to Abigail Adams. But the tour wasn't all ancient history.
The President also showed us the hole in the floor in Margaret's sitting room where her spinet piano attempted to obey the law of gravity. He stood us under the huge crystal chandelier that almost crashed down in the middle of an East Room reception.

He pointed to the swayback ceiling of the State Dining Room which he said was only held up by force of habit. We were all tremendously impressed, and we thanked President Truman and trooped back up to Capitol Hill and promptly voted him every penny of the 5,4 million dollars he wanted to completely renovate the White House.
SO I BROKE ALL THE ANTI-SPENDING PROMISES OF MY FIRST CAMPAIGN AND I WANT TO TESTIFY HERE TODAY THAT I'M GLAD AND GRATEFUL FOR PRESIDENT TRUMAN'S FORESIGHT AND CONCERN FOR FUTURE OCCUPANTS OF THAT BEAUTIFUL AND HISTORIC HOUSE - AND BETTY AND I ESPECIALLY ENJOY THE TRUMAN BALCONY.

THERE'S A SERIOUS SIDE TO THIS STORY OF PRESIDENT TRUMAN'S SKILL IN LOBBYING THE WHOLE PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE. HE WAS PROUD OF HIS POWERS OF PERSUASION, AND HE OFTEN SAID THE PRESIDENT IS THE ONLY PERSON IN WASHINGTON WHOSE JOB IS TO LOBBY ON BEHALF OF ALL THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.
AS A SENATOR FROM MISSOURI, HE HAD TO LOOK AFTER THE SPECIAL INTERESTS OF HIS STATE, BUT WHEN HE BECAME PRESIDENT, HE HAD TO THINK ABOUT THE INTERESTS OF THE WHOLE COUNTRY. THAT SOMETIMES GOT HIM INTO TROUBLE WITH CONGRESS, HE CONCEDED, AND WITH POLITICAL CRITICS NOT ONLY IN MY PARTY, BUT FROM BOTH THE LEFT AND RIGHT EXTREMES OF HIS OWN.

"WHEN A PRESIDENT DOESN'T HAVE A FIGHT OR TWO WITH CONGRESS," HE WROTE IN HIS MEMOIRS, "YOU KNOW THERE IS SOMETHING WRONG."
Although I was on the other side in many of these contests, I now know how President Truman felt.

I'm still trying but I have a long way to go to beat his postwar record of 250 vetoes.

Differ though we did on a lot of issues, I completely agree with Mr. Truman's stern concept of presidential duty.
"A PRESIDENT CANNOT ALWAYS BE POPULAR," he wrote after coming home to Independence.

"HE HAS TO BE ABLE TO SAY YES AND NO, AND MORE OFTEN NO, TO MOST OF THE PROPOSITIONS THAT ARE PUT UP TO HIM BY PARTISAN GROUPS AND SPECIAL INTERESTS WHO ARE ALWAYS PULLING AT THE WHITE HOUSE FOR ONE THING OR ANOTHER."

"I HAVE NEVER FELT THAT POPULARITY AND GLAMOUR ARE FUNDAMENTALS ON WHICH THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD OPERATE ... A MAN WHO IS INFLUENCED BY THE POLLS OR IS AFRAID TO MAKE DECISIONS WHICH MAY MAKE HIM UNPOPULAR IS NOT A MAN TO REPRESENT THE WELFARE OF THE COUNTRY."
"I have always believed that the vast majority of people want to do what is right and that if the president is right and can get through to the people he can always persuade them."

President Truman, like Abraham Lincoln, had a great faith in the ultimate good sense of the people. He liked them, he talked their language, and in 1948 they went to the polls and proved that his faith was fully justified.
I REMEMBER THAT CAMPAIGN VERY WELL, NOT BECAUSE GOVERNOR DEWEY WAS A NATIVE SON OF MICHIGAN, BUT BECAUSE IT WAS MY FIRST BID FOR ELECTIVE OFFICE.

I HAD A TOUGH PRIMARY FIGHT, AND PRESIDENT TRUMAN UNKNOWINGLY DID ME A FAVOR BY CALLING THE CONGRESS BACK IN MID-SUMMER FOR HIS FAMOUS "TURNIP DAY" SESSION.
THIS KEPT MY PRIMARY OPPONENT IN WASHINGTON

WHILE I WAS BUSY CAMPAIGNING AGAINST THE WHOLE

WASHINGTON ESTABLISHMENT WHICH HAS ALWAYS BEEN

A GOOD WAY TO GET THERE.

BUT THE REAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MY PRIMARY OPPONENT

AND ME WAS THAT HE WAS A SINCERE ISOLATIONIST AND A LEADING

OPPONENT OF THE MARSHALL PLAN AND PRESIDENT TRUMAN'S OTHER

EFFORTS TO REBUILD WARTORN EUROPE AND MAINTAIN THE

UNITED STATES' ROLE OF LEADERSHIP IN THE WORLD.
LIKE MOST OF US JUST HOME FROM WORLD WAR II,
I WENT ALONG WITH PRESIDENT TRUMAN AND THE UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM MY HOMETOWN OF GRAND RAPIDS,
ARTHUR VANDENBERG, IN SUPPORTING A STRONG BI-PARTISAN POSTURE IN DEFENSE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS. AND I WENT ON SUPPORTING PRESIDENT TRUMAN AS A MEMBER OF THE CONGRESS ON THE GREAT ISSUES AFFECTING PEACE AND NATIONAL SECURITY WHICH IN THE BEST TRADITIONS OF OUR HISTORY OUGHT NEVER TO BE EXPLOITED OR DISTORTED FOR PURELY PERSONAL OR PARTISAN POLITICAL ADVANTAGE.
President Truman noted in his memoirs that 1948 was the worst possible time for him to have to wage a political campaign, because he was trying to negotiate with the Russians and trying to get some kind of cease-fire in the Middle East.

There should be no break in the bi-partisan foreign policy of the United States at any time, he said, particularly during a national election.
"WE ARE DANGEROUSLY CLOSE TO FORGETTING TODAY," HE WROTE LATER, "THAT IT IS THE PRESIDENT'S DUTY TO LEAD THE NATION IN THE CONDUCT OF ITS FOREIGN AFFAIRS. THIS IS A RESPONSIBILITY THAT CANNOT BE DELEGATED AND MUST NOT BE AVOIDED."

MR. TRUMAN WAS MUCH TOO SEASONED A CAMPAIGNER AND MUCH TOO REALISTIC ABOUT THE TWO-PARTY SYSTEM TO SUPPOSE THAT FOREIGN AFFAIRS WOULD OR EVEN SHOULD BE A FORBIDDEN SUBJECT IN POLITICAL DEBATE. THAT IS NOT WHAT HE SAID.
WHAT HE SAID WAS THAT AMERICAN POLICY SHOULD NOT BE DEMOGOGUED, DAMAGED OR DERAILLED BECAUSE OF ELECTION YEAR CONSIDERATIONS. I AGREED THEN AND NOW I KNOW HOW RIGHT HE WAS AND I AM GOING TO FOLLOW HIS COUNSEL AND HIS EXAMPLE.

NOBODY EXPECTS CONSENSUS OR CONFORMITY IN A DEMOCRACY BUT IT IS NOT TOO MUCH TO EXPECT OF A MATURE 200-YEAR OLD NATION THAT ITS FREE POLITICAL DEBATES BE CONDUCTED RESPONSIBLY AND RATIONALLY IN THE SENSITIVE AREAS OF NATIONAL SECURITY AND OUR RELATIONS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES.
WE KNOW THAT BOTH FRIENDS AND FOES ARE WATCHING OUR ELECTION PROCESS CLOSELY AND LISTENING TO EVERY WORD. WE SAY THAT MIGHT AFFECT THEM IN THE FUTURE.

THROUGHOUT HIS EVENTFUL YEARS AS PRESIDENT, AND AFTER HE LEFT OFFICE, MR. TRUMAN REPEATEDLY SAID THAT THE PRIMARY GOAL OF ALL HIS EFFORTS WAS PEACE.
HE HAD LEARNED ABOUT WAR FIRST-HAND AS CAPTAIN OF BATTERY "D" IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR.

AS COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HE MADE SOME OF THE MOST DIFFICULT DECISIONS OF WORLD WAR II AND KOREA.

HE WAS ACUTELY AWARE THAT WORLD PEACE CAN ONLY BE SECURED THROUGH AMERICAN STRENGTH AND THE CLOSEST TIES WITH OUR ALLIES.
HE HAD NO ILLUSIONS ABOUT OUR ADVERSARIES
BUT BELIEVED, NEVERTHELESS, THAT "NO DOOR SHOULD BE CLOSED
EVEN TO THE REMOTEST CHANCE IN PURSUIT OF PEACE."

I WAS JUST BACK FROM CARRIER DUTY IN THE PACIFIC
ON APRIL 12, 1945, THE DAY VICE PRESIDENT TRUMAN WAS
SUDDENLY CALLED UPON TO ASSUME THE PRESIDENCY OF THE
UNITED STATES.
ON THE EVENING OF AUGUST 9, 1974, AFTER THE SAME
THING HAPPENED TO ME, I WAS WALKING THROUGH THE WEST WING
OF THE WHITE HOUSE, AND I REMEMBERED MY FIRST VISIT THERE
AND HOW EASILY PRESIDENT TRUMAN MADE A FRESHMAN CONGRESSMAN
FEEL AT HOME — AND GOT HIS 5.4 MILLION DOLLARS.

ONE OF MY LONGTIME ASSOCIATES REMINDED ME
THAT ONE OF THE FIRST THINGS A NEW PRESIDENT USUALLY DOES
IS CHOOSE WHICH THREE PORTRAITS OF PAST PRESIDENTS SHOULD
HANG IN THE CABINET ROOM.
"WE'LL LEAVE PRESIDENT EISENHOWER RIGHT WHERE HE IS,"
I SAID. AND OF COURSE I WANT TO HAVE ABRAHAM LINCOLN."
'TO BALANCE IT OFF," HE SUGGESTED, "HOW ABOUT
ANDY JACKSON?"

"NO. HARRY TRUMAN," I SAID. "ARE YOU ABSOLUTELY SURE?" HE ASKED.
'THAT'S MY DECISION," I SAID. "HE KNEW WHERE
THE BUCK STOPS AND HE WAS NEVER AFRAID OF THE HEAT IN THE
KITCHEN." END OF TEXT