The original documents are located in Box 33, “5/23/76 - Remarks at Rossmore Leisure World Clubhouse II, Laguna Hills, CA” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN...

PRESIDENT'S REMARKS AT

LEISURE WORLD CLUBHOUSE II, LAGUNA HILLS,

CALIFORNIA, MAY 23, 1976

- THANK YOU, ERNIE BILLMAN
- CONGRESSMAN WIGLINS
- EVELLE YOUNGER
- LADIES AND GENTLEMEN
I spoke here at Leisure World four years ago, when I was still a Congressman. I was impressed in 1972, and I am impressed today, by the energy and vitality in your community. In fact, Leisure World must be the busiest place in Orange County.
YOU ARE PROVING THAT RETIREMENT NEED NOT BE A RETREAT FROM LIFE, BUT A FRESH OPPORTUNITY TO DO ALL OF THE THINGS YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO DO. IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU TAKING FULL ADVANTAGE OF THAT OPPORTUNITY.
MY MESSAGE TODAY CAN BE SUMMED UP IN JUST

A FEW WORDS:

AS MUCH AS I BELIEVE IN A STRONG AND PROSPEROUS AMERICAN AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY, I HAVE COME HERE TO SAY THAT THIS YEAR -- THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO REASON TO TRADE IN YOUR RELIABLE FORD FOR A FLASHIER MODEL.
LET ME TELL YOU WHY I AM ASKING YOU -- MY FELLOW AMERICANS FOR YOUR SUPPORT. BECAUSE I HAVE DONE A GOOD JOB UNDER TOUGH CIRCUMSTANCES. BECAUSE WE HAVE MAINTAINED THE PEACE -- MOVED AMERICA ON THE ROAD TO PROSPERITY -- AND RESTORED CONFIDENCE AND TRUST IN THE PRESIDENCY. I WANT A MANDATE FROM CALIFORNIA AND THE AMERICAN PEOPLE TO FINISH THAT JOB.
ONE OF THE TASKS I WANT TO CONTINUE IS THE ASSURANCE OF THE DIGNITY, THE SECURITY AND THE QUALITY OF LIFE EXPERIENCED BY OUR OLDER AMERICANS.
FOR MORE THAN FORTY YEARS, AMERICA HAS MADE A FIRM COMMITMENT OF SUPPORT FOR OLDER CITIZENS IN OUR SOCIETY -- NOT ONLY FOR THOSE WHO NEED HELP, BUT THOSE WHO HAVE EARNED A RETIREMENT INCOME DURING THEIR WORKING YEARS.
As you all know, there are problems facing our social security system. These problems have been building up for the last four years. Next year, unless my reforms are adopted, the social security trust fund will run a deficit of 3.5 billion dollars. The next year...
LET ME ASSURE YOU OF ONE THING VERY EMPHATICALLY:

MY ADMINISTRATION FULLY INTENDS TO PRESERVE THE INTEGRITY

AND THE SOLVENCY OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM FOR YOUR

BENEFIT AND THAT OF ALL WORKING AMERICANS NOW AS WELL

AS IN THE FUTURE.
To prevent a decline in the Social Security Trust Fund, which now pays out more in benefits than it receives in taxes, I have proposed a small payroll tax increase of three-tenths of one percent applying to both employees and employers. The largest increase would be less than one dollar a week.
THE PROPOSED TAX INCREASE WILL HELP TO STABILIZE

THE TRUST FUND SO THAT CURRENT AND FUTURE RECIPIENTS WILL BE

FULLY ASSURED OF THE BENEFITS THEY ARE ENTITLED TO.

AS PART OF MY PROGRAM, I AM RECOMMENDING IN

MY BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 1977 THAT THE FULL COST OF LIVING

INCREASE IN SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS BE PAID DURING THE

COMING YEAR.
AS LONG AS I AM PRESIDENT, WE ARE GOING TO KEEP SOCIAL SECURITY PROTECTION AND EVERY OTHER RETIREMENT PROGRAM STRONG, SOUND AND CERTAIN. YOU CAN COUNT ON THAT. UNDER A FORD ADMINISTRATION.
I have also proposed major improvements in the Medicare program to make it serve you better.

One of the most important improvements would provide for the payment of all but a very small fraction of the cost of catastrophic illness and extended care.
THERE IS NO REASON THAT OLDER AMERICANS SHOULD HAVE TO GO BROKE JUST TO GET WELL OR STAY WELL IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.
UNDER MY PROPOSAL, THE INDIVIDUAL'S CONTRIBUTION TO MEDICARE WOULD GO UP SLIGHTLY, BUT CONSIDER WHAT THE INCREASE WOULD PROVIDE: NOBODY ELIGIBLE FOR MEDICARE WOULD HAVE TO PAY MORE THAN 500 DOLLARS A YEAR FOR HOSPITAL OR NURSING HOME CARE -- OR MORE THAN 250 DOLLARS A YEAR FOR PHYSICIANS SERVICES. MEDICARE WOULD PAY THE REST OF THE BILL, WHETHER IT IS 1,000 DOLLARS, 10,000 DOLLARS OR 50,000 DOLLARS.
IT IS A GOOD PROGRAM, AND IF THE CONGRESS PASSES IT, THE RUINOUS ECONOMIC BURDEN OF CATASTROPHIC ILLNESS IS ONE THING YOU WILL NEVER HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT AGAIN.

I AM ASKING THE CONGRESS TO AUTHORIZE TWO OTHER PROGRAMS THAT WILL BE OF SPECIAL INTEREST TO OLDER AMERICANS.
ONE WILL EASE THE BURDEN OF ESTATE TAXES. WHILE THE VALUE OF THE DOLLAR HAS ERODED, OUR SYSTEM OF ESTATE TAX LAW HAS CHANGED VERY LITTLE SINCE THE 1930's. TO RESTORE FAIRNESS TO THE SYSTEM, I HAVE PROPOSED INCREASING THE PRESENT 60,000 DOLLAR ESTATE TAX EXEMPTION TO 150,000 DOLLARS.
A second proposal of mine is of great importance to married couples. At present, transfers of assets between husbands and wives are often subject to substantial taxation. I have proposed legislation which will make those transfers totally tax-free. This common-sense treatment of the assets of a husband and wife is long overdue.
IF I HAD TO SUM UP THE RECORD OF MY ADMINISTRATION

IN JUST A FEW WORDS, IT WOULD BE PEACE, PROSPERITY AND

TRUST.
TODAY AMERICA IS AT PEACE. THERE ARE NO AMERICAN BOYS FIGHTING ANYWHERE ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH -- AND I INTEND TO KEEP IT THAT WAY.
I will maintain the peace — secure that peace through strength and perseverance — and leave that legacy of peace for our children and their children.
I will continue my policies of cutting your taxes, expanding the private economy, reducing bureaucracy and useless regulation, and restraining spending.
MY POLICIES HAVE BROUGHT US FROM THE DEPTHS OF RECESSION TO A SUSTAINED RECOVERY, AND WILL ENSURE THAT RUNAWAY INFLATION NEVER AGAIN ROBS US OR OUR LOVED ONES OF THE REWARDS OF HONEST WORK AND LIFETIME SAVINGS.
FINALLY, I WANT TO FINISH MY MOST IMPORTANT JOB – RESTORATION OF TRUST IN THE PRESIDENCY ITSELF.

AS YOUR PRESIDENT, I WILL PROMISE NO MORE THAN I CAN DELIVER, AND I WILL DELIVER EVERYTHING THAT I PROMISE.
I NEED YOUR SUPPORT TO ENSURE PEACE, PROSPERITY, AND TRUST FOR THE FUTURE. THE FUTURE THAT WE OWE TO OUR CHILDREN.
AMERICANS HAVE ALWAYS WANTED LIFE TO BE BETTER FOR OUR CHILDREN THAT IT WAS FOR US BECAUSE LIFE FOR US HAS BEEN BETTER THAN IT WAS FOR OUR PARENTS.

WHAT DO I SEE AHEAD FOR THIS GREAT COUNTRY OF OURS?
I see a strong and confident America, secure

in a strength that cannot alone be counted in megatons

and rejoicing in riches that cannot be eroded by inflation

or taxation.
I see an America where life is valued for its quality as well as its comfort, where the individual is inviolate in his constitutional rights, where the government serves and the people rule.

Thank you very much.

End of text