The original documents are located in Box 34, “6/8/76 - Talking Points for Use During Greetings for the 1976 National Spelling Bee Finalists” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

Copyright Notice
The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Gerald Ford donated to the United States of America his copyrights in all of his unpublished writings in National Archives collections. Works prepared by U.S. Government employees as part of their official duties are in the public domain. The copyrights to materials written by other individuals or organizations are presumed to remain with them. If you think any of the information displayed in the PDF is subject to a valid copyright claim, please contact the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.
-- Let me welcome you, the 87 finalists in the 1976 National Spelling Bee, to the White House. I hope you have enjoyed your tour.

-- You should be proud of yourselves for being finalists in this competition, and so should your families and your teachers.

-- I understand that some 8 million children took part in the preliminary rounds of this contest. So you have come a long way.

-- You should also know that spelling bees are an American tradition going back to colonial days. Benjamin Franklin was an early advocate of public spelling contests.

-- Spelling bees were a form of popular education, a way to combine learning and fun. They were also a way of showing that in America, proper speech was accessible to everybody -- not just a few aristocrats.
On the American frontier, spelling was especially valued as a symbol of culture and education.

One of our great American writers about the West, Bret Harte, humorously described a frontier spelling bee where the miners decided there was only one way to resolve the spelling of a troublesome word -- with bowie knives!

I am sure your competition on Wednesday and Thursday will remain a friendly one, though.

I wish you all the best of luck. Whatever the outcome, I hope you enjoy your time here in the Nation's capital.

# # #