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THE PRESIDENT HAS SAID . . .

TALKING POINTS FOR USE AT GREETING THE 1976 NATIONAL SPELLING BEE FINALISTS, TUESDAY, JUNE 8, 1976

-- 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.

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