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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE GOP FUNDRAISING BREAKFAST
FOR SENATOR HENRY BELLMON

SKIRVIN PLAZA HOTEL

9:35 A.M. CDT

Thank you very, very much, Henry, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

It is a very great privilege and a very high honor for me to have the opportunity to join with you this morning for a cause that I think is of very great national significance.

It has been a good morning. I don't know what I have enjoyed more. I have seen so many good, loyal Sooners, on the one hand, who are sitting down to a breakfast I didn't have to make myself.

It is a particular pleasure, as I indicated at the outset, to participate in something that pays honor to Henry Bellmon. You know, Henry is known as a very tight-fisted Member of the Congress. He really looks after your tax dollars.

To be perfectly honest, however, I didn't know how tight-fisted Henry was until the waiter came up and gave me the check a few minutes ago. (Laughter)

But it is significant for me to come to the great State of Oklahoma and to see what has happened and transpired in the years that I have been in politics in Washington, to see the Republican party in this State grow from a political party that had literally no organization, very few winnable candidates, to a party that has an organization, that has won with good candidates. And the net result is that you have in the United States Senate, in Henry Bellmon and Dewey Parker, two of the very, very best Members of the Senate that I have been able to observe.

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And, of course, both Henry and Dewey served as superb Governors of your State and it is a pleasure and a privilege to me to meet Jim Inhofe and to see the quality of the candidate that you are offering to the citizens of Oklahoma in Jim, and I congratulate you.

If I might, I would like to say a word about the two-party system. In January of 1949 when I came to the United States Congress, there were a good many States in this Union that had no two-party system, and Oklahoma was one of them.

Because you developed people as fine, fine candidates, and because you have developed an organization, you have now made Oklahoma a two-party system -- a State that has a viable two-party contest and competition. As a consequence, you have put Oklahoma on the map as a State that offers the kind of competition in the political arena that is good, healthy and beneficial to your State.

I think most of you would agree that competition in business results in a better product and a better price as far as the consumer is concerned. I happen to think competition in professions -- the law and medicine -- competition in politics is likewise good and Oklahoma has been the beneficiary of people like Henry and Dewey and Happy Camp. These are the kind of candidates that, in my opinion, make Oklahoma better represented in the Congress of the United States.

Now, let me say just a word or two about the slate that I think you have presented to the State of Oklahoma in 1974. In the travels that I have made around the country, both as a Minority Leader, as Vice President and the last 2-1/2 months as President of the United States, I have an opportunity to see first-hand the candidates that the Republican Party submits to the voters in various States of the Union.

In the course of serving in the Congress for 25-plus years you see Members of Congress -- both in the Senate as well as in the House of Representatives. When I look at what Oklahoma has contributed in Henry and Dewey in the United States Senate, and Happy Camp in the House of Representatives, I think that every one of you could be very, very proud. They do a first-class job not only in what they do, but in how they perform in every way, and I hope and trust that you will return Henry to stand alongside with Dewey and that you will re-elect Happy and give him some help in the Oklahoma delegation.

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I have known Henry more particularly in the last several years because I presided over the United States Senate for about nine months, and sitting there looking, watching, observing, I came to the conclusion that Henry was a thoughtful, hard-working activist type who took the practical experience that he had learned in his long years as a citizen of Oklahoma and put those practical experiences, that exposure to the problem to be used in the legislative actions that he took.

Now, some point has been made, I am told, of how Henry has differed with White House views. The truth is, I respect Henry for his forthrightness, for his independence, for his willingness to put the cards on the table.

I was reading the paper last night -- one of the Oklahoma papers -- and I noticed a comment to the effect, by one of your fellow Oklahomans, that I was coming to Oklahoma for the purpose of pardoning Henry Bellmon. Let me tell you, I am here to praise him, not to pardon him.

You know, on the question of whether Henry and I agree on everything, the question as to whether Henry has agreed with the White House on every issue. Naturally, we try to go down the same path. Philosophically, our interests, our views are identical. Sometimes, we, of necessity, for one reason or another, have to differ -- not in the objective but in trying to come to the ultimate answer. There are honest differences as to the method by which you can achieve a certain aim, a certain objective.

Now, Henry and I share -- we have talked about it before, we talked about it last night -- we share in the desire to achieve quality education for every child in every State. That is our aim, that is our objective. Now, there may be some differences as to how that is achieved and accomplished, but let me say that in this very difficult area, I am impressed with Henry's recommendation that a commission be established for the purpose of trying to get some uniformity, some sensible answers out of the United States courts as far as quality education is concerned, and I commend you for that recommendation, Henry.

The Congress has been under some challenge and I think some of our institutions in Government have been challenged as to integrity, as to forthrightness. In Henry Bellmon, I know of no person in the United States Senate or in the Congress who is more forthright, who has more integrity.

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It is a quiet sort of deep-seated belief that you have to be honest, you have to have maximum candor. I respect you for that, Henry. We have had too little of that in recent years and frankly, that was one of the prime reasons that I thought it was vitally important last week for me to appear before a Congressional committee.

There have been some challenges to the wisdom or the method as to why I had taken the action I did concerning my predecessor. But it seems to me that in this day and age, when our system of Government is under such challenge from many, many sources, that the best way to lay aside, hopefully, once and for all any challenge as to why and under what circumstances I should, as the first President of the United States, appear voluntarily before a Congressional committee. They had their chance. I appeared and I hope and trust the answers satisfied this committee of the Congress.

What I am trying to say is that today, there is no higher ingredient essential to the future of this country than openness, candor -- and I say this in Oklahoma because I know from first-hand experience, in Henry you have a person whose life is an open book, whose attitude is one of candor, forthrightness and total integrity. I can't think of a higher ingredient essential in the election of 1974. Congratulations, Henry.

I can recall vividly the first time I met Happy Camp. Where was it, Happy, that I came -- Enid? Six years ago, I visited Enid, Oklahoma, and had an opportunity to see that great part of your superb State, and believe me, it was a great experience for two reasons: One, I met an outstanding candidate for the Congress of the United States who had experience in the State legislature and everything they told me about Happy at that time has come true -- that he was able, he was knowledgeable, he was experienced and he had that kind of strong, tough character that was needed.

Happy, I sure hope that you come back to continue your outstanding work.

I have had an opportunity to look over the slate that the Republican Party has presented. I only know the incumbents and I have had the privilege of meeting Jim, but if you want a two-party system to grow and thrive, I think you have to give maximum consideration to the rest of the candidates if we are to have this essential competition which is good for the voters, and I think good for the country.

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Let me make one or two observations concerning some substantive matters. When I became President on August 9th, that is about two and a half months ago, we were faced at that time with a very serious economic situation. We were faced with what is commonly called today double-digit inflation -- inflation of 10 percent per year, inflation that we were not accustomed to in this country.

At the same time, we were faced with, in some areas of our economy -- it is almost paradoxical -- some softness. There was concern in some areas that there was a loss of vigor in the economy and we had the alternative which was also very difficult, of increasing inflation.

Now, as a result of these almost paradoxical circumstances, we started what was called a summit meeting, a program of getting the views of people from all over the country, from all segments of our society with their specific recommendations as to what ought to be done.

We covered the country literally in, as I recall, about ten different mini-summits. We invited people to give their views, their recommendations, and we concluded it with a rather historic economic summit in Washington, D. C. After accumulating all of this evidence, all of these proposals, we sat down and filtered them out and came up with a 31 point program which is a program very, I think, wisely devised to meet the challenge of inflation on the one hand and the problems of a softening economy in some areas of America on the other.

I hope and trust that the Congress will respond. I trust that the American people will respond because it called upon them to volunteer to do certain things in the area of energy conservation, to do certain things in the area of wasting less and saving more.

So far, the response from the American people has been excellent. So far, the Congress has done a part-time job. I ask particularly for a proposal in the Congress to set a spending ceiling of \$300 billion which is about \$5 billion 400 million less than the budget that was submitted in January of this year. If we are to call upon the American people, whether it is individual or otherwise, to sacrifice, it seems to me that the Federal Government itself -- the White House, the Congress, the Executive Branch -- must do the same. We cannot expect people, 213 million Americans, to sacrifice as we get over this economic hump unless the Government does it.

So, the Congress, unfortunately, did not respond, but I can tell you that in Henry and in Dewey and in Happy Camp you have the kind of people that do respond to a requirement to hold down Federal spending and I compliment you for it.

Something that has, I think, attracted a great deal of attention that ought to be discussed, quite frankly, is the demand on the part of some of our opponents -- opponents, philosophically, who are saying this election on November 5, which is 15 days away--for what is commonly called a "veto-proof" Congress.

A veto-proof Congress, in my judgment, would have two serious end results. Number one, undoubtedly it would result in the election of candidates who would be bigger spenders, not bigger savers. So if we cannot hold down Federal spending with this Congress, I can assure you a veto-proof Congress will be a Congress that will spend more and more and more, and they will do it over Presidential veto.

So if you want a Congress that is fiscally responsible, I think you have to defeat what is broadly called a "veto-proof Congress." I think we ought to have an inflation-proof Congress, not a veto-proof Congress.

But there is a broader problem that I see if a veto-proof Congress is elected. And what would that mean in numbers? For example, to get a veto-proof Congress, they need on the other side of the aisles roughly 50 more Members, so they would have not what the margin is today -- roughly three-to-two -- but a margin that is far better than two-to-one. And in the United States Senate it would undoubtedly call for the defeat of Henry and Pete Dominick and some of the other stalwarts.

Now if a veto-proof Congress is elected, it will destroy, to a substantial degree, the necessary balance that we have in the Federal Government. Let's go back historically just a minute. Our forefathers put together probably the greatest document for the governing of people when they wrote the Constitution of the United States.

They didn't want an all-powerful President. They didn't want an all-powerful Congress. They didn't want a judicial system that would dominate all branches of the Government. They wanted a system of checks and balances. And the net result is we have had for almost 200 years this finely-tuned form of Government which is a system of checks and balances. And the consequence is we have ended up with more freedom, more opportunity, and more material blessings than any people in the history of the world.

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But if a veto-proof Congress is elected, that finely-tuned balance will not exist, because one branch of the Federal Government, one of the three, will totally dominate at least one of the others, and possibly the third. And that system of checks and balances will be gone. Much of the freedom, much of the opportunity, much of the material blessings that all of us and our predecessors have enjoyed, will be in jeopardy.

So in a broad, philosophical sense, as well as the fiscal aspect that I discussed, the challenge is in the next fifteen days for all of us to maximize our efforts.

Let me close with one comment, if I might. Some of those on the other side of the political aisles, some of the news media, have suggested that I, as President, ought to stay in Washington and worry about the polls and do nothing about the situation.

I respectfully disagree with those who make that recommendation. I happen to think by coming to Oklahoma City, by going to Cleveland on the way back to Washington tonight, and by other trips throughout our country, I am going to be the beneficiary of some valid recommendations, observations, and proposals.

It seems to me that it is wholesome and very healthy for a President to listen to people other than those you see on the banks of the Potomac.

And I am here in Oklahoma for that purpose. I am going to be in Cleveland tonight for that purpose, and I am going to be elsewhere between now and November 5.

I am the beneficiary of what I can learn in all 50 States, and I hope and trust, as I speak to people such as you here this morning, I can stimulate you individually and collectively, to broaden your effort, to influence your friends, to protect that very important ingredient in our Government -- checks and balances -- and also to the maximum degree, to do what you can to make sure we have an inflation-proof Congress, not a veto-proof Congress.

Thank you very much.

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(9:58 A.M. CDT)