

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NOVEMBER 1, 1974

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY
(Fresno, California)

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE
FRESNO AIR TERMINAL

12:10 P.M. PST

Thank you very, very much Mayor Wills. I am deeply, very deeply grateful for this fine plaque or picture that makes me an honorary citizen of the great City of Fresno, and the 300-plus thousand people who are here.

Thank you, if not in person, in spirit. Thank you very, very much.

12:14 P.M. PST

Thank you very, very much Bob Mathias, Congressman Chuck Wiggins, Carroll Harner, distinguished mayors, members of the State legislature, members of the Board of County Commissioners, the wonderful bands from -- I still get a great thrill out of hearing the National Anthem played, as I am sure Bob Mathias did, both at London and Helsinki when he won, representing all of us in the Decathlon. It is a great, great thrill.

It is nice to see all these wonderful young people and all of you from Fresno, Kings, and Tulare Counties. I thank you for a super enthusiastic, warm welcome. I am very, very, very grateful. Thank you very much.

I think you can tell from the reaction that it is a great experience for me to be in the central valley of California, and as I look around this big valley to fine people, I noticed that as I flew in this morning, it is a big valley, and the big crops that it produces, the big yields that come from the soil, and the labor, the big livestock, to serve its people in Congress it produces big men, mentally and otherwise, in Bob Mathias. And, frankly, that is why I am here.

It is really no secret -- I need Bob Mathias. I think you need Bob Mathias. I think the country needs Bob Mathias back in Washington representing these three great counties of Fresno, Kings, and Tulare. And I am counting on your doing it.

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(OVER)

I have been asked many times why I have traveled extensively in the last few weeks, candidly asking American voters to return men like Bob Mathias back to Congress. People have asked why, and let me give you the answer. It is very simple. I am here because the issues are far, far too important. It is far, far too vital for me to sit on the sideline.

I never have, and I don't intend to, when I feel strongly about people and about issues. The stakes are far too high to be a sideline sitter when we have got people like Bob Mathias out in the hustings.

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And there is another answer, too. I do it because the people of Fresno, the 340,000 or 350,000 people in this Seventeenth Congressional District, in my judgment, deserve to see their President and deserve to see a President who believes with conviction and dedication in the issues and in the solutions that I think can make America a bigger, better, stronger, finer country for all of us, particularly these fine young people down here in the front rows.

Public service, public responsibility are far too important for me to sit in that beautiful Oval Office in a mystic seance in Washington, D. C., when I can come out here to Fresno in the Seventeenth Congressional District and have an opportunity to see the wonderful faces, the enthusiasm.

I enjoy being on the banks of the Potomac, but I get a big thrill and a big shot in the arm, coming to Fresno on an occasion like this.

I am out here -- I am particularly here because there are some issues that, in my judgment, deserve to be talked about, to be discussed, so that the problems we have can be communicated to you with the solutions and the answers that we have.

We do have a serious problem of inflation. We have some other economic problems, but the answers can be gotten by all of you and by all of us in the Executive as well as in the Legislative Branch.

To solve those problems, I need people like Bob Mathias who, in my opinion, from his past record, can be extremely helpful. He is a big man, but he is a big man in action. He is not a big man of talk. He is a big man as a problem-solver and that is what you want in the Seventeenth District representing you.

And let me give you, if I can very seriously, an extremely practical reason why I think Bob ought to be sent back next Tuesday, for you, for me, for the country. I could not help but notice as we flew in and saw the beautiful fields and the people working in them -- Bob Mathias, when he is returned to Congress will be the second man on our side of the aisle on the great Committee on Agriculture and agriculture is important to all of you.

That is the committee that drafts the legislation. That is the committee that guides it through the House of Representatives. That is the committee that has a direct connection with the Department of Agriculture and with Bob Mathias in that high-ranking, number two position on the Committee on Agriculture, you will have a voice at the top, a voice of experience instead of a person at the bottom with a big voice but no communication.

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Let me tell you something else about Bob. When I was the Minority Leader in the House of Representatives, I had the opportunity of working intimately, very closely with Bob Mathias on a number of legislative matters. But what was important in that relationship to all of you was that when I wanted some straight answers, some sound suggestions about agriculture, one of the finest, most helpful voices, to me, was the observations, the recommendations, the advice from Bob Mathias.

He advised me then and he advises me on agriculture as the occupant of the White House, and I thank you, Bob, for your help then and your assistance now.

I have heard, Bob, about the hard campaign that you are running, working literally night and day, to communicate your positions, your achievements, to the 400,000-plus people that live in the Seventeenth Congressional District and I won't try to repeat all the things you can speak up about, what you have done, how you voted.

I do know -- and let me mention very quickly -- some areas that ought to be reemphasized. For example, you have introduced a number of important, very vital pieces of legislation that affect all the young people, as well as the old; legislation to protect our natural resources and our environment, preserving the beauty of our national parks -- and I saw some of them as I flew from the Los Angeles area here this morning.

I think it is vitally important for everybody, the young as well the others, to know that you have introduced and pushed legislation to provide new jobs for all of the people in the Central Valley.

I think people ought to know what you have done in the way of legislation to open the flow of energy resources to our people and if we are going to grow and prosper and to provide jobs and homes and opportunities for these young people particularly -- and I am looking right at them and talking to them directly -- we need energy. We need energy to make a better America.

And I know, Bob, of your personal interest in education. You are interested in health legislation so you have had not only great experience in the field of agriculture, but you have had an interest in environment, our ecology. You have had an interest in energy, you have had an interest in job and health and education. Yes, your experience in these areas has been invaluable to the people in this Congressional District.

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But let me mention one other area that I hope and trust does have an impact on all of you, and I speak now of the field of foreign policy. Bob Mathias has another great committee responsibility, as a Member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs. That is the committee that puts together that legislation that helped to achieve the peace. It is the committee that puts together the legislation that will maintain the peace. It is the committee that will build a better America here so we can have peace abroad.

But let me speak if I might about the subject that I consider public enemy number one, domestically: inflation. Inflation, according to all polls, is the matter of primary interest, the highest-ranking matter of concern to the American people, some 83 percent. There is one way that all of us, and particularly those in the Congress, can do something about it, and that is to cut, to slice the fat off the Federal budget.

This can help us curb rampant inflation. Bob Mathias has a reputation in the Congress for being an inflation-fighter. I understand that his opponent is pretty well beholden to the people that want a veto-proof Congress.

Well, a veto-proof Congress, in my judgment, will do more to increase inflation than anything I can imagine. What we want is not a veto-proof Congress, but we want an inflation-proof Congress, and Bob Mathias can give us that.

As I heard the Star Spangled Banner, or National Anthem, being played, I thought back in 1948 when I first ran for the Congress of the United States as an ex-athlete, and it goes back a long time. I was proud of the representation that Bob Mathias at the ripe old age of 17 was giving our country in the Olympics, a gold medal winner, both in London as well as Helsinki. And I was proud of him then, and I am very proud of him and the contributions that he has made to our country today.

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This kind of representation, as a young man and as a legislator, is good for our country.

I am informed that in this area, perhaps -- maybe around the Nation -- there is an apathy about this election. I hope and trust this is not true in Kings and Fresno and Tulare Counties. I hope it is not true in the great State of California. And I am going to do the maximum that I can to prevent it from being true in the rest of the country.

I don't believe people are discouraged, disillusioned, turned off. I don't believe we are going to have only 42 percent of the eligible voters in America participate in that great election in all 50 States next Tuesday.

Let me tell you why I think it would be tragic, why it would be catastrophic. If only 42 percent of the American people vote next Tuesday, it means that 21 percent of the eligible voters in America will make the decision for 100 percent.

Now we want not 21 percent of the people telling us how to run the Government. I think we want 100 percent of the people. And I say to all of you young people, those right in front of me, and those in the bands: I think you have a very special mission. You have more impact, you have more influence, you can do more to get your parents to go and cast that ballot than anybody else in the whole area of Fresno and the surrounding environs.

I hope you will make that a special mission, to grab Mom and Dad by the hand and ask them on Tuesday morning, "Are you going to vote?" You can, and you will.

And this is important for Democrats, Independents, and Republicans alike. If they do, I am confident that you will send people like Bob Mathias back to Congress. You will send people like Hugh Flournoy to the State House in Sacramento. I think you will send a good team to help Hugh Flournoy in your great State capital of Sacramento.

Now it is just as important to attack the problems in Sacramento as it is in Washington. We want a creative Congress. We want a forward-looking occupant of your State House, your State capital, in Sacramento. We want responsive, responsible government in all parts of our Government at the local, State and national level.

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I am told that Hugh Flournoy's opponent for the office of Governor in the State of California says, "Inflation is not the problem of California."

I respectfully disagree with that very limited observation. California is one-tenth of the American people. It is the biggest State. It has got the biggest vision. It is a rapidly growing State and I am amazed that a candidate for the Governorship of California would have such a limited perspective of the problem.

It seems to me that a prospective or a candidate for Governor of California ought to recognize that with a State as big, as wealthy, as powerful, can have an impact on inflation. One out of every ten people in the United States live in California, and what you do, and what your delegation does in the Congress of the United States, will have an impact.

I respectfully say that California must be involved, and for any candidate for Governor to say that it is not, is purely nonsense.

We cannot fight inflation without the help of California and a Governor like Hugh Flournoy will help us fight inflation. And with that kind of help, we can do something about it.

Let me just make this final observation. My message to you here today is a very simple one, and I hope you will pass it on to your friends between now and Tuesday. If the big spenders get control of Congress, if the big spenders control your State House and your State capital, we cannot, in all honesty, do much about inflation, because excessive spending at the State level or at the Federal level is a major cause, a principal reason for inflation.

And so I ask you very strongly, but very simply, to send the kind of people back to Washington who you can trust, who will watch your tax dollars. I urge you to send people to Sacramento who will do a first class job in watching the money that you send to your State capital.

Actually, the key to the battle against inflation is within our honest, personal reach. All you have to do on November 5 is to go into the sanctity of that voting booth and pull the right lever. Good leadership is the answer. I am trying to do it in the White House. Bob Mathias has sought to do it in the Congress of the United States. Hugh Flournoy will do it for you in the State capital.

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Leadership, whether it is in Washington or Sacramento, is vital, and what you do in the quiet, personal relationship that you have in that voting booth is of great importance -- yes, to you and to me, but more importantly to all of us.

And I urge you not for the sake of one political party, but for the sake of America. Be a leader next Tuesday; be a leader in making the right decision. Let your vote and your voice re-elect and elect the kinds of men and women to public office who will bring out the best in our great country.

I am confident that you will, and that is why I am here to see all of you.

Good luck, Bob. Good luck to all of you who support him.

12:39 P.M. PST

Let me express my very deep appreciation and gratitude. I am not going to get into a discussion whether your bands or your football team is the best, but let me say this: I like a mayor who thinks they have the best band and the best football team.

And may I add that I have got a 16-year-old son who is working as a ranch hand out in Lolo, Montana. He decided that he wanted to learn to be a rancher so he is out there, and I am going to see him tomorrow. And I am not going to tell him I have this great, great cowboy hat. I will tell him, maybe I cannot ride as well as he can, but I might look like a cowboy, if I cannot perform the function.

Thank you very, very much.

END

12:40 P.M. PST