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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE
OREGON GOP RECEPTION

BENSON HOTEL

8:02 P.M. PST

Thank you very much, Vic, Tom. It is just wonderful to be here in a gathering of this magnitude and friendliness. Every time I come to Oregon, I seem to find more friendly people, more diversification in all the things you do.

Last year, I think 48 hours after I was nominated as Vice President, I came out for a long-standing speaking commitment that I made. And your great Governor, Tom McCall, met me and was so hospitable and helpful. I come back today and I have been busy thus far with some wonderful crowds on the street, a warm welcome. (Laughter)

There are a couple of dissident voices. I have had those chants before, and I don't think they influence many people. But anyhow, it is -- I went over to the meeting at the coliseum this afternoon -- a great crowd of wonderful people. I am here right now and have been to a reception before and I am going to the Coliseum a little later. And because the day was not long enough, I thought I might sneak out and see the last quarter of the Trail Blazers and the Braves. And then Vernon Jordan of the Urban League sent me a telegram and said there was some fundraiser for the Urban League going on. And I thought, gee, we might as well go there after -- because I believe that Vernon Jordan and the Urban League does a first class job--I am sure here as well as elsewhere.

All I am saying is, you have lots of activity in Oregon, and I enjoy everything I have been invited to and participated in, and particularly for the fine, fine turnout here on this occasion.

Tom McCall--I have observed and I have watched him for eight years -- has done a superb job. You are lucky. He is a top quality Governor, and you, I am sure, know better than I, that the State of Oregon is infinitely better off because of his stewardship.

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(OVER)

Tom, you have done a great job.

And in the process of traveling around and meeting many people in high office in various States, you develop a knack of picking out those that really have quality, of those that are coming up, who have achieved something in the process of public service and experience and courage and wisdom, And you say, "There is somebody that really will do a job."

And so I speak on this occasion on behalf of your candidate for Governor, Vic Atiyeh. He was in Washington a couple of weeks ago -- I have forgotten what group because I meet with a good many, as you might suspect -- but I do remember him.

He handed me something, and he said, "I am a man with a plan," and that is kind of good advice. That is the way I would like a Governor to operate before he gets in office and after he is in office.

So, Vic, good luck to you.

If I might now, I would like to say a word or two about some people that I know very intimately, that I have known through my contacts both in the Congress and as Vice President, and now as President. And I say this, not because of what somebody wrote for me, but because I know, know from working in the relationship between a House leader and a Senator or a House leader, and the people with whom he works on a day-to-day basis.

I presided over the United States Senate roughly six, seven months, and I used to sit there and watch the 100 Members of the Senate -- and there are some fine, outstanding Members. In Mark Hatfield you have a fine Senator.

But let me just say now that in Bob Packwood you have in your junior Senator the kind of a person that I admire and respect, the type of an individual who seems to pick the right issues, the right side of issues. He works at the job, he is highly respected on this side or that side of the aisle. So I am delighted to be here in Oregon to urge you to maximize your effort on behalf of Bob Packwood.

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And I served 25-plus years in the House of Representatives and I was told the first year that I was sworn in -- I sat down next to an old-timer, and he said, "Jerry, do you know the definition of a Member of the House?"

And I said, "No." I was 35 and this man was 70. I looked at him with awe. He had been there 30 years, and I had just been sworn in.

He said, "Jerry, do you know the definition of a Congressman?"

I said, "No, I don't, Earl."

He said, "It is the shortest distance between two years."

I survived that, but you have sent, in my lifetime, some great Members of the House. One is living -- a dear friend of mine -- Wendell Wyatt. We will miss him.

But in Diarmuid O'Scanlain you have a person who is starting out at a young age who can build a great career and ably represent the First Congressional District in the State of Oregon. I hope you work to make sure that he is down there to do the job for you.

You have an incumbent that many of you know is extremely able, just a tremendous campaigner. His name has been mentioned here. He also is a very close and very dear friend of mine -- John Dellenback. You need him back there representing Oregon.

And then, of course, you have got a vacancy here, a vacancy that ought to be filled by the kind of a person that John Piacentini is. John, we sure hope you will make it. Good luck. We will see you down there January 3.

Now let me take just a minute to make two very simple points. I know it is crowded, it is hot -- or at least I am hot up here -- and the night is young, and we have to, you know, get organized here.

I looked at some figures the other day of some of these experts, and they say there is great public apathy. There is a great lack of public interest in voting on November 5.

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And the pollsters say that there will be the lowest percentage participation in this Congressional election on a national basis in the history of the United States. That is unbelievable.

With the problems we have, both at home and abroad, it is hard to comprehend that people won't go to the polls to exercise their sacred privilege of voting yes or no or for or against somebody. They say that approximately 42 percent of the eligible voters in America will make the effort sometime between 7:00 in the morning and 8:00 at night, to just say yes or no or I am for or I am against.

Gee, that is hard to believe. And you know what that means, if that happens or transpires? Supposing 42 percent vote out of all of the people that are eligible to pull that lever. It means that a little more than 21 percent of the American people will decide your fate for Governor, for Senator, for Members of the House, for Members of your State legislature or local office.

That means a little more than 21 percent of the American people will decide what will be done locally, statewide and nationally.

That is a real small minority deciding what is right or wrong. I just cannot believe the American people will tolerate that.

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I don't know how many are here, about 300, 500, but you can multiply your activity and influence by getting many, many, many people all over this great State of Oregon to go to the polls so that your State will not be one that lets 21.1 percent of the people decide your fate for the next two years, whether it is taxes or spending, this legislation or that legislation.

You know, an awful lot of our fellow citizens over the years, almost 200 years, have given a great deal to keep that right to vote. Some of them made the maximum sacrifice and for us now to abuse it or to leave it unused is beyond my comprehension.

Now, I know, because you are here, you are going to vote. You are going to get a lot of people to vote, but the message I want to go out here in this State and elsewhere is that we all have to vote and then we can say the public made a decision, right or wrong.

Let me talk about two of my favorite subjects. I think they are crucial. Public enemy number one in this country is inflation. About a month ago, I submitted to the Congress and to the American people a well balanced, finely-tuned program. I concede it is controversial, but at least I bit the bullet.

Oh, I know some people have said to me that it was kind of "marshmallow." Some of the opposition made that allegation. Then, I listened to what they submitted and I said, "Boy, that is a lemon, not a marshmallow."

All I am trying to say is it was a plan aimed at tightening the screws on inflation on the one hand, and recognizing that we have some soft spots in our economy on the other.

We made some recommendations that will help the housing industry and I asked the Congress to do something and they did it, and Jim Lynn has already initiated the action that I recommended following enactment by the Congress.

It is not enough, but I think it is a start and if we do the other things the housing industry will again have a great upsurge. So, instead of 1.2 million housing units per year, it will go up to what it ought to be, of 2.2 million housing units per year and then the people out in the industries here in Oregon will be producing for housing for people that need it.

You will have the kinds of burgeoning, booming economy that we want in this State as well as in others. But at the same time, we are tightening the screws on those areas where inflation is serious and we are going to win it.

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We want strong, stalwart people in Congress who will bite the bullet and not fade away when they ought to be strong, when they ought to be facing up to the issues and not play politics with something that is involved in the national security.

Speaking of national security, let me just make one observation. I get twice-a-day messages from Henry Kissinger. He just spent about four days in Moscow and he spent a couple of days in India. He spent a couple of days in Pakistan. I got messages from him today in Afghanistan -- and he is going two or three or four places after that. But here is a man who is carrying the torch of peace for America. Here is a man that worked night and day to achieve a peace and who is laying the groundwork for a broadening of that peace, whether it is in the Middle East, whether it is in the case of Cyprus or Greece, or whether it is in the case of Western Europe or whether it is in Latin America, Africa or Southeast Asia.

Here is a man that is on our side, leading the way with a torch of peace, and what we need in the Congress is Members of the Congress who will back up that kind of leadership; people who won't play politics with national security; who won't play politics with what is good in the furtherance of peace throughout the world.

Now, I am sure that the people here who are seeking office, or seeking re-election, are the kinds that won't play politics with peace, who will give to a President the kind of flexibility he needs to negotiate with the Russians or to broaden our relationships with China or strengthen our allies in Europe or negotiate between Israel and Arab nations on a fair and equitable basis in the Middle East, or to bring together our two allies, Greece and Turkey.

These are the kinds of people we want in the Congress, who will trust the President as a Republican Congress did in 1947 and 1948 when they trusted a Democratic President to give us the leadership to build NATO, to strengthen Western Europe. And it has been the bulwark of strength as we meet the challenges, or have met them, for the last 25 years.

I am confident that the kinds of Members of the House and Senate that you will send to Washington next Tuesday will win the battle against inflation, stabilize and build up our economy and lead the charge for the extension of peace throughout the world. And in the process, you are going to give us a Governor in the great State of Oregon to follow on the pattern, the practices, the leadership of Tom McCall. I cannot imagine a better man than Vic Atiyeh.

Thank you very much.

END

(AT 8:22 P.M. PST)