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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
UPON SIGNING AN EXECUTIVE ORDER
ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL COMMISSION
ON THE OBSERVANCE OF
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR, 1975

THE CABINET ROOM

2:07 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. Vice President, members of the Cabinet, ladies and gentlemen:

Let me at the outset thank all of the distinguished guests for being here on this auspicious occasion today. Since most Executive Orders are handled in a rather routine way, it is sometimes easy to overlook their particular significance, but this one, as you can see, has a very special significance.

This order creates a National Commission to observe International Women's Year in 1975. The activities generated by this Commission will reinforce our continuing national commitment to women's rights.

This event officially marks another step in our Nation's efforts, and efforts around the world for that matter, to improve the educational, economic and social status of women.

The dramatic advances women have made in politics, sports, business, science and other areas of endeavor are finally receiving the attention that they deserve. The gains demonstrate very real progress, but headlines do not guarantee that all barriers are down.

The Equal Rights Amendment, which I wholeheartedly endorse, has not yet been ratified by the number of States necessary to make it a part of our Constitution.

Let 1975 International Women's Year be the year that ERA is ratified. In the meantime, we will continue to explore legal inequities between sexes that can be changed by legislation.

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(OVER)

The gains of the past, of course, must be consolidated, but we must also break new ground. Breaking such ground means more than headline news of the first woman to chair a national political party or the first woman airline pilot.

It means equal pay for equal work for the one woman of every three workers in the world labor market. It means educational and social opportunities for women of all nationalities. Equality for women is one objective of International Women's Year; another is integration of women into the social and economic development of all nations; and third, recognition of women's increasing contributions to world peace.

The relationship between the improved economic and educational status of women and the improvement of communities in which they live is very, very clear. Where women are held back, their families are held back.

The vast potential of women has only been partially explored. Opening up new doors to approximately half the world's population is vital to solving many of our international problems.

When we discuss women's problems, we are talking about people's problems. Women's liberation is truly the liberation of all people.

Robert Frost once described failure as nothing to look backward to with pride and nothing to look forward to with hope. Women who are pressing for their rightful place in society can do both -- look back in pride and forward in hope.

America's women are now in the front lines of our national effort to rekindle the spirit of all revolution, a spirit that just one year short of our 200th birthday as a Nation still says all people are created equal, a spirit concerned about the reality of those words.

International Women's Year is not just for women, it is for all people dedicated to seeing that the highest potential of each human being is fully achieved. I hope the Commission which I will name, together with leaders of the Congress, will infuse the Declaration of Independence with new meaning and promise for women here as well as around the world.

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Before I sign this, Betty, if you have any words of wisdom or encouragement, you are welcome to speak. (Laughter)

MRS. FORD: I just wanted to congratulate you, Mr. President. I am glad to see that you have come a long, long way. (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know how to take that. (Laughter)

May I simply add: the women here, along with countless thousands of others, have made this possible, and the efforts of these, as well as literally millions around the world, will make this a successful International Women's Year.

We on the other side of the spectrum, we men, applaud your efforts and we urge you to continue in this very important effort.

Thank you very much.

END (AT 2:14 P.M. EST)