

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

TEXT OF REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO BE DELIVERED TO THE
YOUNG REPUBLICAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

I want to add my personal welcome to those of Betty and Susan and to congratulate you for participating in this important Young Republican Leadership Conference.

Today I congratulate you on this year's theme -- "Back to Basics".

One of the big lessons of the 1974 elections was the need for all of us -- particularly the Republican Party -- to return to the basics. We must rebuild. We must restore confidence. We must learn from our losses and move forward -- locally, statewide and nationwide. And that means mastering the nuts-and-bolts details.

America's young voters present a challenge to the Y-R's. In the 1974 elections less than thirty-seven percent of potential voters aged eighteen to twenty were even registered. Even fewer -- under twenty-one percent -- actually voted. The figure was almost as bad for citizens in the twenty-one to twenty-four age bracket, less than twenty-seven percent voting.

In fact, the only group of Americans to get out a majority were those of us over forty-five. One of the biggest contributions you can make is to sell young Americans on Republicanism. Get them to the polls on time.

As I look around this room I see that we have at least one great asset. You have the idealism and the appetite for learning and hard work that our party needs to ensure its future.

In many ways, your generation can play the most active, positive role in public affairs since the first generation of young American patriots in 1776.

We sometimes tend to think of the founding fathers as a group of elderly gentlemen in powdered wigs. That is not the way it was. In 1776, Thomas Jefferson was only thirty-three; James Madison was twenty-five; Alexander Hamilton was twenty-one and James Monroe was only eighteen. Even George Washington, who has come down to us as the ultimate father figure, was only forty-three when he assumed command of the Continental Army.

The challenges that the young generation faced two hundred years ago may have been more glamorous and dramatic. But they were no more real or urgent than the ones you face today.

I know you are going to meet the challenge of today -- and that the spirit of 1976 will equal the spirit of 1776. It is going to take the same idealism -- the same spark of patriotism and sense of purpose -- that motivated the founders.

Young Republicans have these qualities -- I can sense them here in this room today.

A good prescription for America today is the development of new energy sources -- including Young Republican energy. There is obviously no energy shortage among the Y-R's.

Welcome to the White House. Let's work together to strengthen and expand our Republican Party and build a better America.