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Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

TEXT OF REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AT A RECEPTION FOR
NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF BUSINESSMEN
THE EAST ROOM

It is a pleasure and a privilege for me to welcome you to the White House. It is the least we in government can do to thank you for the outstanding work you are accomplishing for America.

Last summer, I spoke at your national conference here in Washington and predicted that you would not let the problems of inflation and economic downturn prevent you from meeting your objective of finding jobs for America's disadvantaged adults, Vietnam veterans, and needy youngsters.

Now, after the reports I have heard on the progress you have made during the first half of this fiscal year, I am convinced that my prediction last summer was one of the most accurate ones I could have made.

In spite of the present economic conditions, you are right on your target of providing jobs and training for some 485,000 adults this fiscal year. Last summer, you exceeded your goal of 200,000 summer jobs for needy youngsters by more than 25 percent.

I commend your efforts and salute your achievements. The key to the American success story, for nearly 200 years now, has been a single word--opportunity. Generation after generation, that opportunity has been expanded. It has been made available to more and more people with fewer and fewer barriers.

But some barriers still remain--barriers of poverty, ignorance, prejudice, to mention a few. These are big barriers--barriers that government cannot overcome alone. However, thanks to groups like yours, progress is being made.

The productivity partnership you have formed with American business, laobr and government has proven what can be done when all segments of our American system work together toward common objectives. Over the past seven years, you have developed the skill, the know-how and the commitment necessary to help those least likely to succeed under normal circumstances.

Your objective is a simple one--to place veterans, the handicapped and disadvantaged people in private sector jobs--jobs that will be their first step up the ladder to dignity and prosperity.

Specifically, you are taking the lead in finding jobs for veterans--more than 650,000 to date--and you also conduct an enormously successful summer jobs campaign for needy youngsters. I think these two alliance programs are vitally important. We cannot--and must not--forget the veterans of the Vietnam war nor can we ignore America's youngsters.

(MORE)

I understand that you achieved all this with only 35 professional staff members paid by Federal funds. All of the thousands of other people who have made this program work were on free loan from the private sector, which has made an invaluable contribution to the betterment of America.

I am particularly pleased to see your current slogan--"Help America Work." That is really the goal of our country and I deeply appreciate what each of you has contributed toward making that slogan a reality.

Today, you are faced with the reward that so often goes with a job well done: I ask you to do more.

As representatives of the American business system, our economy, our government and our people need your efforts more than ever before. Therefore, I urge you to join with me in renewing and reaffirming our commitment and dedication to the purposes of the National Alliance of Businessmen in order to truly help America work.

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