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OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
TO THE
FORMER MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

THE EAST ROOM

5:09 P.M. EDT

Thank you very, very much.

I think you all realize that it is a great privilege and pleasure for me to get together on this fifth annual alumni gathering of the Former Members of Congress.

I do hope that you have all had an enjoyable two days, and I hope that this final event will be an appropriate ending to this period of time that you have gotten together.

I can't help but say that this is one organization whose members have really made it. (Laughter)

Most of you can sleep late each morning, get up when you feel like it, listen to the birds sing, linger over your coffee, spend two hours reading the newspaper, but that isn't the best part. The best part is when you can look up from that newspaper, turn to your wife and complain about the mess they are making in Washington. (Laughter)

I think most of you know the only political ambition I had for the 25 years that I served in the House was to be Speaker of the House. Well, I never made it. But during those 25 very rich and very fulfilling years, I did have the opportunity and the good fortune to make many close, warm friendships -- friendships with some of the finest people that I think this country has ever produced, and I am glad to see so many of you here on this occasion.

There was something that meant a great deal to me in the House of Representatives the time I served in the Congress, and that was the very special relationship that Members of Congress had with one another, and that warmth and that friendship transcended the aisle.

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I know it was true in the House, and I had a limited opportunity to observe it in the Senate, and it was my judgment the same feeling prevailed there.

The annual gathering of the Former Members of Congress gives all of us an opportunity to renew those fellowships, those friendships, and to find out what each other has been doing and to talk about what we can do in the future.

It is my judgment that all of you are an invaluable national resource. You represent tremendous years and expertise in Government.

All of you have a great acquaintanceship with public issues and you obviously have an ability to articulate and advocate a point of view, and these characteristics, it seems to me, ought to be utilized in the months ahead.

I, for one, welcome your advice and welcome your counsel -- and I might add a postscript: I have sure been getting it. (Laughter)

But nevertheless, I am delighted and pleased to see you all, and I hope and trust that these hours left in your two-day gathering will be the most pleasant and the most enjoyable.

I now would like to ask all of you to join with me and go into the State Dining Room and have some refreshments.

Thank you very, very much.

END (AT 5:14 P.M. EDT)