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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
TO THE
REPUBLICAN NATIONAL ASSOCIATES

THE EAST ROOM

6:23 P.M. EDT

Mr. Vice President, Mary Louise Smith, Mike Carmichael, and all of you:

It is wonderful to welcome you into the East Room. As I look around the room, I see so many, many people that I have known over a good many years who have been consistent in the support for the Republican Party, candidates and the principles that our party stands for.

So, it is a great privilege and pleasure for me to welcome each and every one of you here on this occasion, which I know is another expression of your strong belief in what we all believe in and what we intend to try and do. I just thank you very, very much for being here.

I know that what you have done over the years has kept the party alive. It has permitted us to flex our muscles a little bit when we had some trials and tribulations. Let me add, you have kept the Republican Party from being an endangered species, (Laughter) and for that I thank you very much.

As I look over the past nine or ten months and see the difficulties that we have had, I think we can now say that the Republican Party has made one of the most amazing comebacks in the shortest possible time of any political party that I have seen or read about.

Let's review very quickly some of these difficulties.

About a year ago, we were, unfortunately, exposed to inflation of 10 or 12 percent on an annual basis. After some good, sound policies, constructive, firm, we are now down to inflation of about 6 percent.

We have cut it 50 percent. That is not satisfactory, but let me assure you, we are on the right path.

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About six months ago it was perfectly obvious that we were faced with a serious recession. Again, because of sound policy, firm hands and a dedication to doing what is right, all of the experts tell me that we are bottomed out and I can assure you, as I look at the statistics, we see a good many more bright clouds than dark ones, and we are going to continue and we are going to make it.

Now let me make another observation. After the last election, in November of 1974, we were faced with overwhelming odds in the House and in the Senate. The opposition party controlled the Congress by a better than two-thirds majority. In other words, they had two for every one of us, and a few plus, and there were many predictions of what their legislative course would be, and as I read their program I must say I was fearful and apprehensive and I should have been.

Except we have found that the Republicans in the Congress have unified in the House under John Rhodes and in the Senate under Senator Scott, and the net result has been that we have been able to stem the tide of unsound legislation.

I have had to undertake some hard decisions and veto a few bills that should not have become law, and the Republicans, with the help of a number of wise and discerning Democrats, have actually sustained those vetoes.

So, despite the odds that we faced following that election, we are able to keep a steady and firm hand on the legislative tiller and I believe that as we move ahead in the months before us the Congress will hopefully become more responsible.

And I can assure you that it has been a great privilege and pleasure for me to work with Senator Scott and the Republicans in the Senate, and with John Rhodes and the Republicans in the House. We are a good team and we are going to continue that way.

I have always felt that in the 13 elections that I participated in as a candidate that what was good for the country was the best politics, and that is true for Democrats as well as Republicans.

And it is my judgment, as I talk to people, as I read communications that come into the office, that our principles and our policies, those in which we believe, that for which we stand, that for which we work, is really what most Americans believe in.

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And so we are going to keep the course that we are on today, and that course involves the following: a total dedication to the free enterprise system; seeking to lift the heavy hand of Government from business so that the free enterprise system can work.

One of our national magazines, in the issue that came out this morning, has a wonderful story showing the excessive cost to our society because of unneeded, undesirable regulation by Government, and I have a meeting tomorrow morning with 20 Members of the House and Senate, Democrats and Republicans, trying to guide with them a way in which we can alleviate the heavy hand of Government regulation.

Secondly, we believe in fiscal responsibility, and I say this fully recognizing that the Federal fiscal affairs in this current fiscal year and next year are most difficult.

We have had a drop in revenue because of the recession; we have had extra expenditures because of the recession; we are the victims of some legislation that continue payments regardless of certain circumstances. And the consequence is that we have a substantial Federal deficit this year and next year, but the biggest danger is that the Congress will add to it in a significant way, and to live up to the principles of fiscal responsibility we are going to keep vetoing measures that will add to that deficit, and I think the Congress will sustain us in trying to keep the lid on these unwise and unnecessary expenditures.

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Secondly, we believe in a strong national defense posture. The record is abundantly clear that if you are strong militarily, that is the best way to keep the peace, and the best way to ensure that we can move ahead, working with our allies and working also with our adversaries.

So, this Administration will continue an adequate funding program for the Army, the Navy, the Marines, the Air Force, because that is the best insurance that I know for the maintenance of peace in the future.

Fourthly, we believe in local control at the State and at the local level. The people that you elect to your municipal offices, your county offices, your State offices--if you elect the right people--can do a better job.

As a result, we believe in what is called block grants to help strengthen local and State Government. You can keep a more watchful eye on people at home in your State Governments, and they, as a consequence, will do a better job.

Lastly, and just as important as any of the others, we believe in freedom for the individual. Freedom in what way? Freedom against an all-powerful Government, freedom against mass education where every individual is educated as a robot, freedom against an impersonal production line, freedom against all of the things that take away from you and me and our neighbors and our friends the opportunity to do something different, because you are different from everybody else.

This, in my judgment, ought to be one of the themes of our third century of America's freedom of the individual, and not to the extent that -- well, these are the principles that I think we ought to seek to achieve in the months and years ahead.

It is my judgment we have convinced a good many Members of the Congress that we mean business. We have convinced a good many of our allies that we are dedicated to the common purposes, and I think we have convinced some of our potential adversaries that we mean business.

So, the net result is the American people will support us. We must close ranks. We must work together. We must field good candidates, and one of the most encouraging things that I have seen is the tremendous effort of Mary Louise Smith, along with Dick Obenschain, to field good candidates, to recruit good candidates. If we do, I think we can do tremendously well in 1976.

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I am also very encouraged by the effort made by Senator Ted Stevens in the recruitment of Senatorial candidates and Congressman Guy VanderJagt in the recruitment of Congressional--or House--candidates, and Kit Bond, the fine Governor of the State of Missouri, also has the responsibility of recruiting gubernatorial candidates around the country.

So, if we get candidates, I think 1976 can be one of the best years of the Republican Party, and 1976 can be a new era for all of us Democrats, Republicans and Independents alike.

Thank you very, very much.

END (AT 6:36 P.M. EDT)