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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT A RECEPTION
FOR MEMBERS OF THE
REPUBLICAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE

THE STATE FLOOR

6:59 P.M. EDT

Mary Louise, Ted Stevens, Bob Dole, Guy VanderJagt, members of the National Committee, ladies and gentlemen:

It is just nice for Betty and myself to have an opportunity of seeing you all and having you in the White House, and I hope and trust that in the months ahead, when you meet here, that we can do this often because this is a place where I think we can get better and better acquainted, even more so than when I travel or we travel to your respective States.

Let me say with great emphasis I believe that in the next election, 1976, it is vitally important that we have a strong National Republican committee and that we have equally strong State Committees in every single one of the 50 States.

I can assure you that in the months ahead, a major part of my effort in traveling will be to work with you in your respective States for the strengthening of the party. We must build from strength in each of the respective States. That includes not only the party organization, but it includes the financial aspects of the party in each of the States.

Mary Louise has been more than kind in pointing out that I have tried to go from one State to another -- been to quite a few. We were, a week ago, in Maine and Rhode Island, and last weekend in Seattle and in Oregon. We are going to go to a good many other States.

It is my strong belief that if we can help, or I can be helpful, in this regard, it is beneficial to the party in 1976.

I would hope that every Republican State organization could enter 1976 with a balanced budget and some money in the bank so we can go out and work together for the party and the principles for which we stand.

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Let's talk about some of the things that I believe are important, organizationally speaking.

I have looked at some statistics that indicate that although we have a relatively low registration, Republicans, vis-a-vis the opposition, there is a vast area of potential for the Republican Party. I am told that there are roughly 50 million unregistered voters in this country. I am told that there are some 25 million registered voters who apparently don't undertake the effort to actually vote.

I believe very strongly that that 75 million can be and should be what we, as Republicans, can appeal to. As I look at the issues that we face, the problems that we have both at home and abroad, the Republican principles today should appeal to this group of 50 million on the one hand and 25 million on the other.

What do we actually believe in? I have said it a few times in traveling in the States where I have been more recently, but I think it is good for us to reiterate it: We believe very strongly in Federal fiscal responsibility.

We have believed -- we do believe -- in a vigorous free enterprise system. It is our policy, our principle, that the way to make America better and better for more people is to embrace and work for the expansion of the free enterprise system.

Number three, we believe, as Republicans, that a strong national defense program is the best way to insure peace throughout the world. This Administration is going to propose and fight for in the Congress adequate funding for the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines so that they can be on the front line for peace to prevent war.

Fourthly, we, as Republicans, believe that local control over local problems is the best way to get good Government, and we are going to fight for more and more local control and less national domination by the Federal Government.

Lastly, and probably as important as any, we believe in the freedom of the individual. I have made a few speeches in the last month or two pointing out what our Bicentennial theme should be for the third century of America's history.

The first century was to establish a Government -- a Government that was strong and viable. The second century was to develop our country as an industrial country that was strong and capable of meeting the challenge from other industrial countries around the globe. But the third century, I believe, ought to be our dedication for freedom for the individual.

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We should get away from the concept that the individual should be mass educated, that he should be controlled by a big Government. The individual ought to have the right of expression on his own, and I can assure you that as far as this Administration is concerned, we are going to promote the right of the individual to be free from big Government, big education, big labor, big business and the like.

Now, 1976, with our principles and with the organizational effort that can be generated by a strong National Committee and strong State central committees, I think in 1976 can be and will be the year for the Republican Party and its candidates.

When I speak of candidates, I mean Republican candidates from the local to the State and the national level.

We have to find good candidates for local office, for State office and for national office, and the Congress particularly.

Let me assure you that in the months ahead I will help in any way I can to get good candidates locally or statewide or for the Congress, and once you have selected them in whatever way you do in your respective States, I will be proud to campaign with them.

This is the way we build a party, but more importantly it is the best way I know to spread a philosophy locally, statewide and nationally.

Now, as we enter the last 14 months before this campaign, which ends in November of 1976, I think it is important for us to welcome as many, many people -- Independents, particularly -- who want to join our party.

I think the door of the party should be wide open for those who want to join us and believe in our philosophy. I don't believe we should open that door just a crack for a limited few. We have to have a wide spectrum of people who are believers in our philosophy and who want to join us in literally a crusade, and let's work for a common victory at all levels of Government rather than working against one another for a sure and certain defeat.

We can win, I believe we will win, but if we join arms and work together, that is the best insurance I know for a happy day after Election Day 1976.

Thank you very, very much.

END (AT 7:11 P.M. EDT)