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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
UPON HIS ARRIVAL  
AT  
ELKINS HIGH SCHOOL

1:58 P.M. EDT

Thank you very much, Harley, Senator Randolph, Senator Byrd, Congressman Slack, Congressman Hechler, Mayor Herron, all of you wonderful people from the State of West Virginia. It is a great privilege and pleasure for me to be in Elkins and in Randolph County.

Let me say it was a special privilege to fly from Washington with your two able Senators and my very good friends, Jennings Randolph and Bob Byrd, and it was also delightful to have in the plane with me -- or in the helicopter -- my former colleagues in the House, John Slack and Ken Hechler.

Let me add, if I might, Harley Staggers, your Congressman, and I -- he and I came to the Congress together in January of 1949. We served together until a year or two ago, but our friendship has existed for a good many years and although we have had some differences -- and those are understandable -- our friendship has transcended any partisan differences we might have had.

If I might add just a note on that point, one of the great, great strengths of our political system is the fact that we can have differences, and as a former great Speaker of the House of Representatives once said, "We can disagree without being disagreeable." In America we can make our system better by competition in the political arena, as we make our system better by competition -- whether it is on an athletic field, whether it is in business, or in the professions, or in education.

Back in 1936, the late Franklin D. Roosevelt came to Elkins and at that time in his remarks he emphasized the need and necessity for conservation. In a State like West Virginia where you have roughly 75 percent of your State covered by beautiful forests, as we saw in the flight from Washington, conservation is an extremely important project and program that we must carry out.

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We are making substantial headway in the better utilization of our resources, the management of those resources which are so essential to a better America for the young people that I see here.

But as history moves along we run into other problems and, at the present time in the United States, we have a serious energy problem. But again, West Virginia can play and does play a tremendous role.

You have great coal resources here in West Virginia. You have natural gas. And as we move along to try and find the keys to preserve these beautiful forests and to properly utilize your coal and natural gas, we have to find the balance that will give to America the strength in the future that it had in the past.

It is my firm conviction and belief that in your State under Governor Arch Moore, that in your national capital under the Congress as well as the President, we can find that very important narrow line that permits us to save America's resources and at the same time to use them to keep our economy moving forward, that will keep us strong and invulnerable against any outside forces.

I am confident in the days ahead what we have seen in the past can be outdone, can be outshone; that we can keep America beautiful and strong at the same time.

When I first came to the Congress, back in 1949, Harley Staggers asked me to come up to a town in West Virginia. I was flattered he asked me to come and make a commencement address at a local high school. And, Harley, I look back at that experience in Berkeley Springs with great nostalgia. It gave me an opportunity for the first time to meet some of the people from West Virginia, to see first-hand on the ground these natural resources and the beauty of your great State.

A lot of history has passed since that June of 1949. We have had problems both at home and abroad. But the goodness of your people and the tremendous resources that you have are still the strengths of West Virginia. And I am told that you in West Virginia say that your great State is almost heaven. I think it is a very good description of your people and of your country.

Thank you very much.

END (AT 2:04 P.M. EDT)