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NOVEMBER 28, 1975

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

TEXT OF REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO BE DELIVERED UPON HIS ARRIVAL AT
EIELSON AIR FORCE BASE

FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

On behalf of Betty and myself, let me thank you all for your very generous and enthusiastic greeting today. It is a moment we will long remember. I don't care what the temperature is outside--your welcome has brought us all the warmth we need!

And let me also thank the men and women of Eielson Air Force Base for their very gracious hospitality today. Frankly, we're all just a little in awe of the sheer size of this building. I always knew Alaska was big, but up till now I never realized how much of it was indoors!

But I've found that everything about Alaska is impressive. America will soon get a lot of its oil from Alaska's North Slope.

And as everyone in this audience already knows, when it comes to baseball--America gets a lot of its great players right here in Fairbanks--from the Alaska Gold Panners.

I visited Alaska a little over a year ago on a previous trip to the Pacific region. This obviously does not make me a "sourdough." But I am no newcomer to the knowledge that this "great land," a part of another great land, the United States of America, is an inspiring and shining northern star in our constellation of States.

This visit gives us all a great farewell boost on our way to the People's Republic of China, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

It was last November when Alaska gave us a grand send-off for a successful visit to Japan, the Republic of Korea, and the Soviet Union. That visit did much to advance the cause of peace. In the year that followed, we have come a long way as a Nation. The United States has moved forward to stabilize our domestic economy and our national self-confidence as well as our international relations.

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Your State, determined to help America become self-sufficient in energy, is in the forefront of our national revival. I commend Alaska for its determination to help achieve energy independence for the United States.

The hearty people of Alaska, and the alert Armed Forces stationed in this strategic area, are a source of reassurance to all Americans. Let me reassure you today that my Administration, while striving to preserve world peace, remains aware that the best insurance for peace is United States military power second to none.

There will be no slackening in my Administration of support for a first-rate Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. We are vitally interested in the defense of Alaska. Your defense is our defense. Worldwide diplomacy would not be credible without a credible military force, both in substance and perception. It is appropriate to stop here en route to China. Alaskans are devoted to peace. Just as Alaska adjoins Asia, America's interests are linked to Asia. You know and I know that we must keep the Pacific peaceful.

There are fundamental differences between the American and Chinese societies. We may not agree on some issues. But we have found an important area of common ground. Our mutual pledge to peace in Asia is basic. So is our pledge of noninterference in the internal affairs of others. I will seek to strengthen these understandings and to further advance a relationship based upon mutual respect and mutual accommodation.

Alaskans experienced foreign invasion in World War II. You know better than most Americans how critical a strong national defense is to American security. We will be resolute in the pursuit of peace--but we will never forget that freedom and independence come first.

Freedom and independence are precious to all Americans. But these words have a special meaning for Alaskans. Up here, you can vividly feel America's greatness--the sense of a fantastic potential not yet realized--a frontier you fought to protect. The pioneer spirit is today not only alive but growing in Alaska. The oil which will flow gives your State an entirely new dimension.

We have become unacceptably dependent on other nations for oil that is our economic lifeblood. Americans became painfully aware of our dependence on foreign oil when an embargo followed the 1973 war in the Middle East. Long lines at service stations and soaring utility bills brought home the personal hardships which oil dependence imposes. Even more chilling was the impact on our national economy: the loss of \$20 billion in the Gross National Product--unemployment for a half-million more Americans--and pressure toward a national recession.

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We are determined to liberate ourselves from this threat. In our vast Alaskan reserves, we have the means to help accomplish the goal of energy independence. We have the physical resources, the economic resources, the ingenuity and the national will.

All of our natural resources--oil and oil shale, natural gas, coal, uranium--and all of our technological capability must be fully utilized if we are to stop depending on unreliable foreign suppliers. The liquid gold which will flow from Alaska's North Slope to the rest of the country will have a tremendous impact on the Alaskan economy and that of our entire Nation. Alaskan oil is closer to making a significant contribution to our national energy supplies than any other single new energy source.

I was delighted when the pipeline portion of the project for tapping Alaska's oil reached its half-way mark late in October--ahead of schedule. I wish I could report that all aspects of the energy program were moving as quickly. But we are making progress.

Today, I will tour a section of the pipeline to get a first-hand look at your accomplishments. I look forward to seeing the largest privately-financed construction project in world history.

We expect oil to flow through the pipeline by the middle of 1977--about 19 months from now. By the end of 1977, the daily flow will reach 1.2 million barrels. This is more than one-eighth of all domestic crude oil production expected then.

By 1980, the Alaskan North Slope could deliver 2 million barrels of oil every day. That would be 20 percent of America's total national crude oil production. When your oil production reaches that level, America will save--at today's prices--at least \$25 million each day in payments for foreign oil. Alaskan oil will reduce the loss of dollars to foreign oil producers by nearly \$10 billion each year by 1980.

There will be a huge economic benefit for the entire United States--and, especially, for Alaska. Crude oil produced in Alaska last year was valued at nearly \$350 million. Last year's 70 million barrels of oil from Alaskan wells was only about one-tenth of the production expected from the North Slope in 1980. Imagine the revenue for Alaska when oil begins to flow through the pipeline!

The influx of workers to your State has been dramatic. Last September, the top labor force totaled more than 21,000. The payroll invigorated Alaska's economy.

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Obviously, there have been problems in absorbing so many newcomers. But you have done a splendid job. The benefits far outweigh the disadvantages. When the pipeline is completed, oil tax revenues will greatly benefit all the citizens of Alaska and stimulate your entire economy.

Your State is blessed with many priceless natural resources. Some feared that the pipeline would destroy the environment. I am very pleased that the pipeline has proven to be an outstanding example of how our ecology can be preserved while energy needs are met. We can--and we must--have both decent environment and decent energy. We will have both if we continue the balanced policies demonstrated in Alaska.

Alaska's energy wealth doesn't stop with oil. It is estimated that Alaska has almost 32 trillion cubic feet of recoverable natural gas--only slightly less than the reserve of the Gulf of Mexico. It is urgently needed in our other States.

Our drive for energy independence relies heavily upon Alaskan oil and gas resources. All Americans are proud that Alaska has contributed so much by accelerated construction of the oil pipeline. Your future contributions will be even greater. In addition to oil and gas, Alaska will help meet America's critical needs for other essential minerals.

We salute Alaska. I count on you.

The State of Alaska is separated geographically from our other States. It took us over seven hours to fly from Washington, D. C. Yet Alaska is very close to our hearts. I am mindful of the pride I felt when I voted in the Congress for Alaska Statehood. Today, I am proud to be in the State of Alaska.

You are America's last frontier. Your pioneer spirit is developing not only vital natural resources but vital human resources. All America benefits from your achievements.

I thank you.

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