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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE
ASHEVILLE MALL

3:18 P.M. EST

Governor Holshouser, Wayne and Orville, and all of you wonderful people from Buncombe County in the mountain area:

Gee, it is great to be here and thank you for coming out.

You know the Ford family isn't a stranger to North Carolina. Let me give you a quick recitation.

I went to law school at the University of North Carolina one summer, and for nine months I was with the Navy Pre-flight School down at Chapel Hill. Then my son, Mike, and his wonderful wife, Gail, graduated from Wake Forest.

But, in addition, during 27 years that I have been in public office in Washington, I visited time after time after time the great State of North Carolina, trying to help Republican Congressional candidates or Senatorial candidates or gubernatorial candidates, trying to help get good Government. And let me say one of the finest efforts that has ever been made -- and I can't take credit for it, but I am sure proud of him -- and that is Jim Holshouser, your great Governor.

Let me take just a minute and talk to you right from the shoulder, straight talk. This country needs some language that all of us can understand. What we need is somebody in public office who won't promise more than he can produce and produce everything that he promises.

Now, let me take a minute or two to review what we said we would do and what we have done. Let's take in the first instance the economy.

Nineteen months ago when I became your President, we were going through inflation at 12 to 14 percent per year. We were on the brink of the worst recession in the last 40 years in this country. We were about to see unemployment soar and employment drop off precipitously. But instead of panicking, all of the American people knew that the right thing to do was to have a firm, steady course.

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The American people didn't buy these quick fixes, these phony proposals that so many wanted to sell around the country, and the net result is that we are on our way in America to a new prosperity. Unemployment is going down, employment is going up, and the cost of living is getting under control.

Just yesterday we got some more good news out of the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The increase in the cost of living in February was one-tenth of one percent, the smallest increase in four years.

I can remember back in the spring when everybody was blaming me and the Administration because we were in a recession. Well, we knew we would come out of it because the American people had a lot of courage and wisdom and we knew we would come out of it because we had the right actions to take, and now that we are doing well and everything is improving, they don't want to give us any credit. But I think the voters will because they have more sense than some of those politicians who have been doing all of this talking.

But, you know, gee, last March and April when the clouds were covering the sky and there wasn't much sunshine, about every other day up on Capitol Hill we would hear of some quick fix formula. They wanted to solve our problems by adding to the Federal payroll not a few, but millions, and they wanted to spend money like it grew on trees.

Well, those aren't the right answers. I call them budget busters, and in the process of trying to send to us down at the Oval Office some of these wild spending programs, I vetoed 46 of them. The Congress sustained 39 and, because I vetoed them, because we had enough people in the Congress who were voting right, we saved the taxpayer \$13 billion, and that ain't hay.

But there are also some people in Washington, and I guess around the country, a few, who think that the way to do things better is to have the Federal bureaucracy grow and grow and grow; put more people on the Federal payroll to harass you on a day-by-day and a day-by-day basis.

I don't agree with that. I think that is the wrong solution, and there is a very serious danger involved in that and, listen, because it is a very fundamental point. These people who want a bigger and bigger Federal bureaucracy and more and more control in the hands of a few all-powerful people never tell you what the ultimate is, and here it is:

We should never forget that a Government big enough to give us everything we want is a Government big enough to take from us everything we have.

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Let me talk for just a minute about something that is very fundamental, I think, to all Americans and something that I understand has a great significance in this wonderful part of North Carolina.

There are some people in Washington, not myself, some of the so-called liberals, who want to make every person who is a lawful owner of a gun register the gun or register the gun owner. I am against it, period.

The way to handle that problem is to make sure that the penalty is strict and that the courts send the people who use a gun unlawfully in the commission of a crime goes to jail and stays there.

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Now let's talk for just a minute about a couple of things that the Federal Government has to do, must do.

Number one, we have some 32 or 33 million citizens in this great land who have reached the age of maturity. They are sometimes called senior citizens. They are wonderful, wonderful older people. Your mother and father, our parents, they brought us up. They have earned the right for an honest, good retirement.

Now, there are some people that want to destroy the Social Security system. I disagree. We want to make it stronger. We want to make certain, we want to make positive, that the Social Security trust fund is there for those who are on retirement and those who are about to retire. And this Administration is going to demand it.

Now, there is one other area of responsibility that the Federal Government has under the Constitution; that is, the national security, the defense of this great country.

Let me tell you -- and I say it very firmly and very strongly -- the United States of America today is second to none in military capability, and we are going to stay there.

Oh, I know there are some critics who charged otherwise, but I don't really have much faith in those who downgrade America. I think we ought to speak up for America.

Let me say that the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, the Marines are well-equipped, well-trained, alert. They are on the perimeter, and they are doing a great job for us. We should support them, and we do. They are strong enough to deter aggression, they are strong enough to maintain the peace, and they are strong enough to protect our national security. They are great, and we should give them 100 percent support, as we do.

Now, let me talk for a minute, if I might -- I understand there is a rodeo in town. Well, sometimes this job, you know, in the Oval Office reminds me a little bit of riding a bucking bronco. But let me tell you one thing. I am not going to get thrown. With your help and support, I will stay in the saddle for four more years.

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While I am there, I will be riding herd on that Congress to get them to do some things right for a change. But, then, let me take just a minute to talk about this great election that is coming up in the State of North Carolina on Tuesday.

Back around January everybody said Jerry Ford was through, he couldn't win the nomination, we were going to lose here, here and here. What happened? We came from behind in New Hampshire and we won. We won in Massachusetts overwhelmingly. We did very well in Vermont. We surprised them and beat them quite badly in Florida, and we walloped them in Illinois.

We have the momentum going, and we need your help on Tuesday to keep that momentum going, so we can go to Kansas City and get the nomination which will be the clincher for a victory on November 2.

Thank you very, very much.

END (AT 3:30 P.M. EST)