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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
TO THE
TEXAS REPUBLICAN PARTY DELEGATION

THE ROSE GARDEN

9:20 A.M. EST

Gee, it is nice to see my old friends, Bill McKenzie and all of you from Dallas County. I think it is very appropriate because it is very meaningful to me and I think to you.

The Texas Republican delegation is high on quality. We could stand a little more quantity (Laughter) but they certainly are the top people. John Tower is one of the outstanding members of the United States Senate. He is a very close and dear friend of mine and, as you all know, he does a superb job representing you as well as doing a fine job for the country.

But you also have three outstanding members of the House of Representatives in Jim Collins, Bill Archer and Alan Steelman. I just wish that they had a few more compatriots to help us up there in some of the legislative problems we have from time to time. They are all staunch, they are able, they have fine committee assignments and they are great team workers.

You might be interested, speaking of politics and the Convention, I am announcing at this time that John Tower, who I spoke of and spoke of very glowingly, is going to be the President Ford Floor Leader at the Convention in Kansas City. This is recognition of John's outstanding ability, not only in representing all of you, but as a friend of mine and a very ardent and devoted advocate of my own candidacy.

There have been some Wednesday mornings that have been happier recently than this one. We had five good ones and this one that did not turn out as well as we would have liked. We knew it would be a close race. We expected to win. We didn't, and I might say that in politics it is never good to come in second.

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What we intend to do in the months ahead, starting this morning, is first on to Wisconsin and we expect to make a big effort there. We know it will be close, but we expect to win and then, of course, that same day we have the New York primary where we are entered and our opponent is not. So the situation there looks very good.

In Pennsylvania, which is another large delegation, we are entered and there is no opposition so that looks good. But whether the results yesterday will have any impact or not, it is my judgment it will not in the final conclusion.

We expect to go to Kansas City and we expect to be nominated. But the important thing, I think, for all of us is that we have to make certain that the Republican Party and the philosophy that it represents prevails November 2nd.

The Republican Party, as we all know from surveys and polls, is a minority party. We are outnumbered by the independents. We are outnumbered by the Democrats, so the Republican candidates must find a way to get people certainly from the independent side and to also woo some of the Democrats who philosophically more nearly agree with us than they do with whoever the Democratic nominee might be.

So as we move down in trying to get the nomination, we have to be most careful that we don't alienate Republicans. We have to be certain and positive that in the process of the Presidential nomination we keep the party together and that personal ties must be secondary to the philosophy and to the cause for which we are all working so hard.

I was looking over a list this morning of people from Texas who are in the Administration. It is a very, very imposing list. Of course, you can start with Bill Clement, who is number two over at the Department of Defense, and we are all very, very pleased with Anne Armstrong, who is the first woman who has ever served our country as the Ambassador to the Court of St. James, and then we have got Jim Baker, who is number two over at the Department of Commerce. We have Jim Hargrove down in Australia. We have Al Fay. We have Bob Mosbacher who is doing a great job.

You probably heard from Bob over at the President Ford Committee, but he has done a superb job over there. We are delighted to have so many Texans. They do a good job and they significantly contribute to the success of the Administration.

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Speaking of that, as I take a look at the situation that has developed in the last 19 months -- just about the time that I took over this very, very great honor -- we have gone through some tough times. We have had a tough economic situation with inflation on the rampage, something like 12 to 14 percent. It is now down very significantly and the news we got last Friday showed the increase in the cost of living for the month of February was the lowest in four years. That is awfully good economic news.

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We are going to continue the pressure that has been exerted in this area because inflation hurts everybody. It hurts those who have a job. It hurts equally, if not more so, those who are unemployed, so if we can continue the progress we are making on inflation, it would be a very significant achievement.

At the same time we are finding that employment is going up. We have regained the two million jobs that were lost in the low point of the recession and all indicators are that employment is going to continue to go up and unemployment continue to go down.

Just as I said, I get no solace out of being number two in any election. I can assure you that the United States is going to be number one, as it is, in our national security. All of you in Texas represent that kind of strength that I think really prevails throughout the country.

We want the United States second to none in military capability so that we can deter aggression, so that we can keep the peace, so that we can protect our national security. Our Defense Department today -- the Army, the Navy, the Air Force and the Marines -- is the best trained. They are alert and ready. They have the finest equipment, and we are going to make certain that they continue to have all of what they need for the security and the defense of the United States.

I think it is vitally important to remember this one fact: Last year I submitted to the Congress at that time the highest peacetime military budget in the history of the United States. Tragically, the Congress cut \$7 billion out of that defense budget. The Congress was wrong.

But, it is also interesting to note that in the last five years on defense budgets, the Congress has cut about \$39 billion out of requests made by me and my predecessor. So, if there is a problem -- I don't think there is -- the blame rests on the Congress for its failure to adequately fund the Department of Defense.

Now let me add one other thing. In January of this year I submitted the largest peacetime military budget in the history of the United States, \$112.7 billion in what we call obligation authority, and \$100 million plus in expenditures.

We have made a massive effort in the last three months to convince the Congress that they cannot make reductions of the magnitude that they have previously reduced military budgets.

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I think we are making headway. But, I was very disturbed to read in the paper this morning that the Chairman of the House Budget Committee -- this is only the Chairman, but he is a influential individual -- is recommending, as I recall the figures, about a \$7 billion reduction in the \$112 billion obligation authority figure.

That is much too large a reduction, and he has called for a reduction of some \$1 or \$2 billion in expenditures. Again, that is a reduction that cannot be justified in the problems that we face around the world. We are number one. We are not second to anybody.

But, it is an obligation that all of us have, Democrat or Republican, to make certain that we continue this strength in the months and the years ahead. That is the way we can keep America safe. It is the way we can preserve the peace, and it is the way we can deter aggression.

I know all of you support that viewpoint, but it is a mission that I have and you have in a constructive way to make certain that this country has the strength, as I have indicated, for the purposes that are essential to our security for peace and the deterrence of aggression.

One final word. I have known from 13 Congressional campaigns that it is important that volunteers participate. No candidate can win on his own. You, in Texas, and you, particularly, in Dallas County, have been a tremendous help to Jim Collins and to Alan Steelman. I know that you will be equally significant in the months ahead in making certain that we get more Congressmen, that we keep those who are already there, and that we broaden our total Congressional effort so that we can have a Congress that will be easier to work with when we have a Republican President for the next four years.

Thank you very much.

END (AT 9:34 A.M. EST)