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MAY 7, 1976

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
UPON HIS SIGNING
OF THE REQUEST FOR FUNDING
FOR FACILITIES FOR THE 1980 OLYMPICS

THE ROSE GARDEN

11:40 P.M. EDT

First, I wish to extend my very warm welcome to all of you who are here today, the representatives of the Lake Placid Organizing Committee, Philip Krumm, President of the United States Olympic Commistee, Gerald Zornow, Chairman of the President's Commission on Olympic Sports and other Commissioners of that body, distinguished Congressmen are also here, Gene Cowan, ABC host, spectacular coverage of the Olympics who brought the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat right into the living room for myself and millions and millions of other Americans who were watching those spectacular Olympic games, and finally and most particularly, to the seven athletes who won medals on our behalf in the 1976 Winter Olympic games in Innsbruk:

Today we are here to pay tribute to your recent accomplishments and to consider the future of American amateur athletics in the Olympic efforts of this country. I doubt whether anybody here, except the athletes themselves, fully understands the tremendous sacrifices that you and your fellow teammates have made over the years and at Innsbruk in order to successfully compete in the Olympic games.

I would like to thank each and every one of them on behalf of all Americans for the honor which their achievements have brought to our country and for advancing the cause of international fellowship.

Obviously, it makes all of us extremely proud of what you have done. I believe that the time is right for greater understanding and support of amateur athletic competition in this country. For this reason, I appointed a Presidential Commission on Olympic Sports last year to examine the nature of American athletic competition. Their report, due later this year, will assess the organization and the financing of amateur sports in this country and how it affects American participation in international competition, such as the Olympic games.

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An important factor in the success of American Olympic teams is the availability of first class facilities for training as well as competition.

Many of the most thrilling events of the 1978 Olympics like the bobsled races and ski jumping events were held at facilities which required tremendous expenditures to construct. Europe, as we all know, has several speed skating rinks and a number of 90 meter ski jumps. The United States, I am sorry to say, has only one speed skating rink and no 90 meter ski jumps. As a result, American athletes in these events must spend long months abroad to prepare for competition or they must, on the other hand, limit their training.

America is very proud of her Olympic athletes and proud to have them take part in the great Olympic competition. I am proposing, therefore, legislation that will provide special financial assistance for the 1980 Winter Olympic games to be held at Lake Placid, New York. The funds will be used to build permanent sports facilities, including, among others, a speed skating rink, a 90 meter ski jump and a luge run. These facilities will not only be used for the 1980 Olympics, but will also be available for United States athletes to train on thereafter.

I know that many of the Senators and the Congressmen here today, like Bob McEwen of New York State, have worked hard to improve amateur athletics and to bring the 1980 winter games to the United States. Hopefully, the proposals that I am making and submitting to the Congress will permit the full realization of these goals.

Thank you very much.

END (AT 11:45 P.M. EDT)