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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
TO THE  
TEENAGE REPUBLICANS

THE ROSE GARDEN

4:26 P.M. EDT

Let me at the outset welcome all of you -- and I mean all of you -- to the White House this afternoon. I am always pleased and delighted to have the opportunity of meeting with the representatives of the Teenage Republicans. I have done it for a good many years, when I was a Congressman, when I was Minority Leader, when I was Vice President and since I have been President, and I compliment you here today and I compliment those in the past who have participated as teenagers and those who have grown and participated in later life as active Republican leaders and active Republican participants.

As I look at the some 250 of you here, as I understand, coming from some 8,000 chapters throughout the country, I can see that the future of the Republican Party is in good hands. It is the party of Lincoln, it is the party of Teddy Roosevelt, it is the party of Ike Eisenhower and, therefore, I am optimistic about the future of the Republican Party.

Your enthusiasm and your campaign experience will make our campaign in 1976 a lot easier for the candidates and for the party as a whole.

And this year you are going to play a very special role. Your hard work, your dedication may well make the difference in electing Republicans across the board, not just at the national level, but at the State level and at the local level.

I happen to believe this is a great year -- a year of great promise for the Republican Party. I have traveled around the country a good bit in the 22 months since I have been President but especially this year I find that there is a feeling among the American people that they want to return to some of the sound Republican values that we have been talking about, voting for and believing in for a good many years.

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I think this is very important and it is very encouraging as we enter our third century of American history. This wave of moderation, this wave of common sense could well lay a sound foundation for the third century -- a century that all of you will have an opportunity to participate in and to be a part of.

1976 is a vitally important election year. It is the year that we can ride a wave of great victory. Now it makes no sense for us to scramble down to the wire for the nomination and then have our party fall apart the next day. This has happened before -- it happened 12 years ago and I recall it vividly. That year we lost 39 Members of the House of Representatives, we lost two Members of the Senate, we lost some 600 State Legislators. We took a bad beating.

We have been struggling in the Congress to recoup from that disaster. We have built up in 1968. We made some progress over this span of time, but in 1974 we took another disastrous defeat.

So what we have to do, as I look at it, is to build for the future. Now we have had a spirited contest for the Presidential nomination, but all of us must work equally hard to prevent this 1976 Presidential contest in the Republican Party -- we must strive to prevent it from becoming a grudge battle. Following Kansas City, I want a united, I want an enthusiastic Republican Party. I want a kind of Republican program and a Republican unity that is essential if we are to be successful in November.

It is important not only for the party but for the country. It is important for the American people in November that they be given a clear choice for the future direction of our Nation. We can give them that choice if we are united as Republicans. I can say that is my intention and I feel sure that it is equally the intention of my Republican opponent.

We can't have this a grudge fight if we are to achieve the success that is so important not only for the party and the principles we believe in but for the country as a whole. We must all work together at every level -- at the local level, at the State level and at the Federal level.

You can participate at the grass roots level and your contribution is invaluable as we move from here to Kansas City to November when it is the final touchdown.

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We face a great challenge. We have a great opportunity and I am confident that the combined forces of all elements of the Republican Party, old and young, all within our Republican spectrum, can make a substantial contribution and I urge each and every one of you to carry that message back to your fellow Republicans, back to your neighbors, back to your friends. That is the point that we must emphasize in the weeks and months ahead.

And I am an optimist. I think the Republicans can learn. I think Republicans can move forward. Republicans can have a vision and they can be above personalities. They can be above some differences. It is our responsibility as Americans that is more important than any of the other things that sometimes seem to get the headlines.

Thank you very, very much.

END (AT 4:34 P.M. EDT)