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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE
CENTENNIAL SAFE OPENING CEREMONY

STATUARY HALL
THE CAPITOL

12:13 P.M. EDT

Senator Mike Mansfield, Mr. Speaker, Senator Scott, Senator Brooke, Congresswoman Boggs, distinguished Members of the House and Senate, ladies and gentlemen:

Obviously, I am deeply honored to have the opportunity this afternoon to open this historic centennial safe. It contains many items of interest to us today as we celebrate the completion of our second century. But, it symbolizes much more than a valuable collection of mementoes -- it symbolizes something about the United States of America that is so mighty and so inspiring that it cannot be locked up in a safe. I mean the American spirit.

When this safe was sealed, Americans looked forward to the future, to this year of 1976. There was no doubt in their minds that a President of a free government would participate in a ceremony here in the United States Capitol Building.

Just as American men and women 200 years ago looked to the future, those who sealed this safe 100 years ago also looked to the future.

So it is today with Americans, but there is no safe big enough to contain the hopes, the energies, the abilities of our people. Our real national treasure does not have to be kept under lock and key in a safe or in a vault. America's wealth is not in material objects but in our great heritage, our freedom and our belief in ourselves.

A century ago, the population of the United States numbered over 40 million. Today, we have more than five times as many. But the growth of our population has not lessened our devotion to the principles that inspired Americans in 1776 or 1876.

In 1876, our immense wealth, both natural and inventive, commanded worldwide attention. We grew from coast to coast in greater industrial and agricultural development than humanity had ever known.

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In 1876, America was still emerging from a terrible fraternal war. A lesser people might have been unequal to the challenge, but 1976 finds the confidence of 1876 confirmed. Today, there is far greater equality of opportunity, liberty and justice for all of our citizens in every corner of America. There is rising prosperity for our Nation and peace and progress for our people.

We look back to the evening of July 4, 1776. It was then, after the adoption of the Declaration of Independence, that the Continental Congress resolved that Franklin, Adams and Jefferson begin work on a seal as a national symbol. We are all familiar with the front part of that great seal. But the reverse side, which also appears on every dollar bill, is especially instructive. It depicts a pyramid which is not completed and a single eye gazing out radiantly. The unfinished pyramid represents the work that remains for Americans to do. The Latin motto below is freely translated: "God has favored our undertaking."

Two hundred years later, we know God has. Though we may differ as Americans have throughout the past, we share a common purpose. It is the achievement of a future in keeping with our glorious past. The American Republic provides for continued growth through a convergence of views and interests, but that growth must be spiritual as well as material.

As we look inside this safe, let us look inside ourselves. Let us look into our hearts and into our hopes.

On Sunday, we start a new century, a century of the individual. We have given meaning to our life as a Nation. Let us now welcome a century in which we give new meaning to our lives as individuals. Let us look inside ourselves to unleash the God-given treasures stored within. And let us look outside ourselves to the needs of our families, our friends, our communities, our Nation and our moral and spiritual consciousness.

Thank you very much.

END (AT 12:20 P.M. EDT)