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OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
TO THE
NATIONAL FEDERATION OF REPUBLICAN WOMEN

THE STATE DINING ROOM

4:03 P.M. EDT

Betty, Pat and all the members of the Federation:

We do welcome you to the White House and to the State Dining Room. We are delighted to have you here, and I, at the outset, would like to compliment Pat -- where did she go? (Laughter) Here she is.

She is not only a great President of your organization, but I am honored to have her on the Steering Committee of the President Ford Committee. Thank you, Pat, for taking on an extra burden and responsibility.

Her input to that organization will be very significant in how we lay out our campaign organization, our plans, our strategy. Thank you very, very much.

I was looking at the statistics that were given to me as to the size of this organization -- 238,000, as I recollect. Let's use a little mathematics here to show the impact of that organization.

Supposing each of you made it a personal mission to get 100 people educated, as Betty says, as she indicates. You get them to the polls. Isn't that a figure of 23 million plus? That is what we need as a starter on this campaign.

I think the figures show that the person who wins will get double that, but if this organization in every one of the 50 States gives us a base from which we can operate--say 25 million Republican votes--we are well on the road to victory.

I think this ought to be your goal, your aim, your objective and, therefore, as I talked to all of the leaders of the Federation in the 50 States, I hope you will go back to your respective home towns, your home State and make this the aim that you are shooting for on November 2.

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(OVER)

As I said before, and have repeated since, we are going to have a national campaign. I have had the privilege of meeting people from virtually every State. We are going to make a campaign in every State. That does not mean I am going to get to every State, but we will have either myself or Bob Dole or some outstanding advocates who will get to every State. It will be an indication that the Ford-Dole ticket wants the full support and victory in every State. I think it can be done.

One of the questions that often is asked is are we going to ignore the South. Absolutely not. As a matter of fact, it was announced yesterday that Betty and I are going down to Louisiana. We are going to have a whistle stop down the Mississippi River.

I think it is a unique campaign technique -- the NATCHEZ. We will end up in New Orleans, spend the night there and then drive the next day across the State of Mississippi, the Gulf, going on through Alabama, ending up in Florida that night and we will be in Florida on a week from Monday.

This is only an example of what we believe is the right way to convince the voters in this country that we care about every State and every voter in every State.

Now, the message I would like to give to you on this occasion is a very simple one. This country in the last two years has gone through a very traumatic experience. We had domestic troubles with the worst recession in 40 years. When I became President, we were still engaged in a war that we seemingly couldn't win or couldn't end. At the same time, we had a great loss of public support for Washington and the White House itself.

But, by doing the right thing, by giving leadership -- leadership in the domestic area, leadership in international policy -- we have turned this country around and we have laid the foundation in two short years for a great four years, the first four in our third century of American history.

I think that without any question, without any hesitation or qualification, we are going to win on November 2.

Right after the Democratic Convention the polls showed us almost two to one behind. That did not look very optimistic, but we had a great Convention. It was one of competition, but when we left that Convention hall in Kansas City, we ended up arm in arm for a cause and for a philosophy that all of us believe in.

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We have solidified our leadership. We have a good program. I think we appeal to the vast majority of Americans. In the next couple of weeks after our Convention the polls narrowed and we ended up about 15 points behind. But, some good news has been coming in from polls taken all over the country. We have narrowed that gap very significantly.

We have the momentum, as Betty said, and momentum is what counts. I would rather have the momentum going up than trying to be at the top and keep it from going down. I would much rather be a fast finisher than an early starter. (Laughter)

As we look at the six weeks ahead, they are going to come very, very fast. Betty and Mike and Jack and Steve and Susan and I, as a Ford family, will be out trying to be helpful, to tell the American people the length and breadth of this country that we have done a good job and that we want the opportunity to do an even better job in the next four years.

Thank you very much.

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(AT 4:11 P.M. EDT)