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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
ABOARD THE SS NATCHEZ

THE DESTREHAN FERRY LANDING

1:54 P.M. CDT

Congressman Dave Treen, Congressman Henson Moore, Senator Strom Thurmond, Governor Jim Edwards of South Carolina, we have two of my Cabinet officers -- Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz and Secretary of the Treasury Bill Simon:

Let me say to all of you before I make any observations and comments I have two beautiful, wonderful ladies with me that I would like to introduce to you on this occasion.

First, my bride, Betty Ford. And now, the wife of your great Governor Edwin Edwards, Elaine Edwards. Elaine? And, of course, we have Dave Treen's wife, Dody.

When I made an acceptance speech in Kansas City a few weeks ago, I said that I would not concede a single State, I would not concede a single vote, that I would campaign from the snowy banks of Minnesota to the sandy soil of Georgia.

I have come to the State of Louisiana and we are going to Mississippi, Alabama and Florida. We are coming down here to prove that we want the South to be with us.

Betty and I thank all of you for coming out on a Saturday afternoon to give us a wonderful Louisiana welcome, and we are deeply grateful for your hospitality and the friendship and the warmth of your welcome.

But, let me talk for just a minute, if I might, about why you and myself and millions and millions and millions of other Americans should be together on November 2.

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In the first place, we believe that the Federal Government is spending much too much of your tax dollars that you have worked so hard to earn. As your President for the last two years, I have imposed restraints on the expenditures from the Federal budget. We cut 50 percent in the rate of growth of Federal spending and we would have done far better if we had had a cooperative Congress.

As many of you know, I vetoed 56 (58) spending bills by the Congress, 42 of them have been sustained by a combination of good Republicans and sound Democrats, and the net result is we have saved \$9 billion of your tax dollars that you worked so hard to earn.

Let me add just a footnote. We might have sustained another veto or two if we had gotten any cooperation from Senator Fritz Mondale, who wants to be Vice President. Let me tell you a secret. He has voted to override every veto that I have sent back to the Congress. Do you want him as your Vice President?

But, let's talk about taxes. A few months ago I sent to the Congress a proposal to cut your Federal income taxes by \$28 billion, which would mean, as an example, that when you file your income tax return next April, instead of having a personal exemption of \$750, under the President Ford proposal you would have had \$1,000 personal exemption. Isn't that what you want?

If you have a family of four, you could have an additional \$1,000 personal exemption. That is the kind of tax reform that this Administration is for and we are going to get it -- if we don't this year, we are going to get it next year.

I know of the great historical tradition of the people of Louisiana. You believe in a strong national defense. You believe that the United States must be number one in the Army, the Navy, the Air Force and Marines. Since I have been President, I have submitted to the Congress the two largest military budgets in the history of this country in either peacetime or war, and let me say as long as I am President this country is going to have a military capability second to none. We are going to be number one and stay here.

On the Fourth of July this country had a tremendous 200th birthday anniversary. From Alaska to Florida, from Maine to California, from Louisiana to Michigan, everybody felt good because in the last two years we have healed our divisiveness. We have all come together with a great hope, with a good vision about the future of America.

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That means a good job for everybody who wants to work. That means a home for every family that wants to work and save. That means the best medical care that we can give to our people. That means freedom on the streets from crime. That means an opportunity for all of us to enjoy the blessings of our national parks and recreation areas. But, it also means that we are at peace and the United States is strong enough to maintain the peace and we are diplomatically skillful enough to keep the peace.

This is the vision, this is what we want as all Americans in all 50 States, and we are going to get it under the Ford Administration.

Now Betty and I love being here in Destrehan, in St. Charles' Parish and in the great State of Louisiana. We look forward to coming down and shaking hands with as many of you as we possibly can, to look you in the eye and say hello and express our friendship for you.

Let me ask you, if I could, November 2 is a very critical date. It makes the difference whether America is going to keep moving. I want your vote on that day so America will keep moving and have a better America for all of us.

Thank you very much.

I want to not only thank all of you but to express our deepest appreciation for your friendship.

As I was walking up that hill and as I stand here now I can't help but notice that tremendous grain elevator. I know that farmers in the middle west have produced a great grain crop this year. I can tell you we are going to increase our exports. I can tell you that the part you play here in this area in our exports is very vital.

Let me say with all the production that we have, we are not going to have any grain embargoed, period. We are doing our best to fight the battle for a responsible grain inspection bill, and we will do the best we can to try and help those who have done a good job in the past.

Thank you very much.

END

(AT 2:37 P.M. CDT)