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(Biloxi, Mississippi)

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT

AT

MAVAR'S CANNERY PIER

4:25 P.M. CDT

Trent, Congressman Thad Cochran, Mayor O'Keefe, my very, very good friend, your former Governor and my colleague in the House of Representatives, John Bell Williams, distinguished guests:

It is wonderful to be here in Biloxi. I thank you very, very much.

I love seafood. I just came from a wonderful seafood lunch, and despite what some people say, nobody works harder than shrimp pickers. (Laughter)

When I was in Kansas City and making an acceptance speech, I made a commitment. I will not concede a single State. I will not concede a single vote. We are going to have a national campaign and we are delighted to be down here in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida. We want your help and we are going to win.

I made another commitment. We were going to campaign from the snowy banks of Minnesota to the sandy plains of Georgia, and we are just started because we want every one of the States in the South to be a part of the Ford victory, and Mississippi can be number one. We want it that way.

As we drove across the great State of Mississippi this morning from New Orleans I could not help but see some of the greatest recreation areas that you have all along the coast -- fishing, hunting. Gosh, I think we ought to make it very clear right now. All right-believing people who are law-abiding ought to have the traditional right under the Constitution to retain firearms for their own national protection, period.

I don't think you should have to go down and register your gun or your firearm if you want to go hunting, and you won't under a Ford Administration.

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(OVER)

Let's talk about some of the things that we want done in the future, but let's take a quick look, if we could, at just what has happened in the last two years.

In August two years ago I became President in a very tough time in this country. People had lost trust in the White House itself. We were having inflation of over 12 percent. We were on the brink of the worst economic recession in the last 40 years. We were still involved in Vietnam. They were troubled times. People were distrustful of one another and we were divided as a people.

But, in the last two years we have calmed the waters, we have healed the differences between our people and we have made tremendous strides in turning our economy around. Oh, you can't turn a switch and solve all the problems, but instead of over 12 percent inflation, it is under 6 percent. We have added four million jobs in the last 17 months. We are making all kinds of progress to get this economy healthy again.

Of course, we are no longer in Vietnam and we have peace and we have the military capability to keep it. But let me talk for just a minute about the military. I am mighty proud of the people out at Keesler Air Force Base. You are a very vital part of this great national defense team that we have. I believe that the United States in the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, the Marine Corps, we are unsurpassed and under a Ford Administration we are going to stay number one.

In the last two years that I sent budgets to the Congress I have submitted the two largest military budgets in dollars in the history of this country. Let me be very frank with you. Nobody can honestly cut the defense budget \$5 to \$7 billion, as my opponent does, and keep America number one. You must do it the way I want it.

But let's talk about some of the things that we want for the young people, the old people, and all of us. We have to think of the quality of life now that we have gotten our economy turned around and we are out of Vietnam and trust has been restored in the White House. We want everybody to have a job that wants a job -- a meaningful job, not a dead-end job under some of these subsidized programs. We want the economy of this country to give the people of this country a job where they can have an opportunity for advancement, to better themselves and have some security. We want the American people, those who will work and save, to have a decent home in a decent neighborhood. We want the crime problem solved and we are making headway in that regard.

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We want the best health care for our people so they can afford what is available. There is no reason why anybody in this country should go broke just to get well.

As I look at the next four years and see what you have got in Mississippi, what they have done in 49 other States, what 215 million Americans can do working together, I am a tremendous optimist. On the Fourth of July of this year we celebrated our 200th birthday. It was a great occasion and the net result is there is a new spirit in America--a spirit of togetherness, a spirit of enthusiasm.

We have the most wonderful opportunity in the next four years to lay the foundation for a great third century. We will do it working together, and I want the opportunity to be your President during that period of time.

Can I ask you one question? I want, of course, you to re-elect Trent Lott and Thad Cochran. You should do it for yourselves, but also for your country.

But, let me ask you one other question. Jerry Ford wants your vote. Can I get it down here in Biloxi?

Thank you very much. It is great to be here. We have had a wonderful day. I thank you from the bottom of my heart. Good luck and God bless you.

END (AT 4:33 P.M. CDT)