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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT
BEACH PARK

6:05 P.M. CDT

Trent, Bill Colmer, Jack, Mr. Levy -- we have got a couple of good Alabamans here, Jack Edwards and Bear Bryant -- it is great to have them and we are going into Alabama very shortly.

Let me say to the people of Mississippi we started in Bay St. Louis, we went to Gulfport, we went to Biloxi, and we are now here in Pascagoula. It has been a wonderful day.

At the Convention in Kansas City I said that we would not concede a single State, we would not concede a single vote, and that we would campaign from the snowy banks of Minnesota to the sandy soil of Georgia, and we are here and we are here to win.

It has been a great experience coming along the coast to see all the wonderful recreation areas that you have where you can fish, where you can hunt, where you can really spend a wonderful time after you work and go to school.

But, speaking of hunting, I want to make one comment because I think it is vitally important for all of us who have a great dedication to the Constitution. No law-abiding citizen should be deprived of the right to have a gun in his possession under our Constitution.

Let me talk for just a minute, if I might, about where we have been and where we are going. Two years ago, when I became President, August 9, 1974, this country was in tough shape. I recall vividly, as I think you do, the American people -- for understandable reasons -- had lost faith and trust in the White House. The American people were faced with economic conditions which were very difficult. The cost of living was 12 percent or more. We were on the brink of a serious recession, and we were still involved in Vietnam.

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(OVER)

That was a tough time. But, something really wonderful happened in this country. We got together. We realized what a blessing we had in the kind of Government we have and instead of the division we had among our people, we began to heal and the net result is that two years later we have made an incredible come-back and we are going to do better and better.

But, let's talk about the future because that is what we really are all here about. I appreciate your coming. I am grateful for you to give me the opportunity to talk affirmatively.

What do we have in mind for the future? We want a better quality of life now that we have taken care of the immediate problems. What we want is a job for everybody who wants a job, for everybody who wants to work a meaningful job, and I won't be satisfied until we have a job for everybody who wants a job and who will look for a job.

I don't mean a dead-end job for the Government. I mean a job where you have got an opportunity for advancement, where you can make yourself a career.

We also want everybody who will work and save, to have a home in a decent neighborhood and under the next four years of this Administration that is what we will get.

We want to get rid of crime on our streets. We want to give people the kind of health care that they can afford. Nobody should have to go broke just to get well.

Now let me talk just a minute about the national security. This is my third visit to Pascagoula. I came down here in 1962 with my wife, Betty. She commissioned a new submarine over here in the Ingalls shipbuilding yard.

Let me talk about the Navy and what the Ingalls shipbuilding yard means to the kind of a Navy that we have to have. We are being challenged by the Soviet Union on the sea. We have had our Navy gradually go down in ship numbers, although we have done very well in tonnage. You have a big shipbuilding contract out here in Ingalls shipbuilding. I understand 27,000 people work here building those fine ships.

I compliment you, but let me say this: We need a first-class Air Force; we have got one. We need a suburb, first-class Army; we have one. We need an outstanding Marine Corps; we have got one. We have got a swell, first-class Navy, and you are a big part of it.

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I am very proud of the fact that I sent to the Congress in the last two years the two largest defense budgets in the history of the United States, and I will submit one next year that will be the third largest military budget in the history of the United States. I am not going to cut the defense budget just to appeal to some people. Anybody who says you can cut \$5 to \$7, or \$10, or \$15 billion out of the defense budget does not know what he is talking about.

The United States is number one, and under the Ford Administration we are going to keep it number one, period.

One final comment. I will bet all of you in Pascagoula had a tremendous Fourth of July celebration when we celebrated our nation's 200th birthday. Wasn't it a great day? Wasn't it wonderful?

Well, we are now in our third century, and we have got a new spirit. We are going on the offensive. That is what Bear knows how to do with those good ball teams he has.

But, let me say this: We are healed. We are going forward. We are on the upbeat. America is going someplace and it is all to the good. Let's work to build a better America in our third century.

Now let me ask one question -- one question. I have had a wonderful day in Mississippi. I am looking forward to going to Alabama. You people in Mississippi have such a strong patriotism. I love being down here. It has been a great day.

Let me ask one favor of you. Will you vote for Jerry Ford On November 2? All right, that is a compact. You vote for me -- I won't let you down.

Thank you very much.

END (AT 6:14 P.M. CDT)