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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE
LUTHER ELY SMITH MEMORIAL PARK

12:27 P.M. CDT

Thank you very, very much Jack Danforth. May I say at this point, nothing would make me happier than to have Jack Danforth as your next United States Senator. You need Jack Danforth, and I need him, so let's go work and make sure he is elected November 2.

It is great to be back in Missouri, to have the opportunity of being in a State so wonderfully handled by your fine, fine Governor, Kit Bond, and his very, very able Lieutenant Governor, Bill Phelps.

I am indebted, of course, to your good friend and mine, Gene McNary. Gene, thank you.

But there are two wonderful people here who have made extraordinary efforts. Peter Graves has been your master of ceremonies. Peter, thank you very, very much; and one of my all-time favorites, Al Hirt. Al, thank you.

A very dear friend of mine and a great person who was born and brought up right here in St. Louis has been traveling with me for the last ten days. Unfortunately, he had a prior commitment that prevented him from coming here to St. Louis. But, I have gotten to know I think one of the most fabulous people in this whole country. Do any of you remember the name of Joe Garagiola?

Joe has taken about ten days of his time and is out campaigning on behalf of Jerry Ford and Bob Dole. The other day we were flying from someplace to someplace, and Joe and I were sitting and I was listening to those wonderful stories that he tells about baseball. I was a rookie baseball player that never made it. Joe was telling of not only some baseball stories, and then we got to talking about St. Louis and he was telling how he was brought up here in a wonderful Italian neighborhood.

Today, Joe said, "I can't be with you, but will you say hello to Father Saul Paulevy for me," who did such a wonderful job in retaining the character and the integrity of that neighborhood where Joe was brought up. So, I say to you on behalf of Joe Garagiola: "Hi."

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But we have some awfully fine Congressional candidates here that I would like to recognize. We want Jack Danforth in the United States Senate, but we also -- and this is very important -- want Joe Badarocco in the House of Representatives. We sure would like Joe Frappier in the House of Representatives. Bob Witherspoon would be very helpful. Then I know you have a first-class candidate in Bob Steiner. Let's make sure that Missouri makes that kind of an affirmative contribution to a better Congress that will be sworn in on January 3.

Now, if I could take just a few minutes to express my deepest appreciation for this tremendous gathering here in front of the old court house, and to indicate to you that I have kept the pledge that I made when he left Kansas City, I said I would campaign every State, I would not concede a single vote, I would not concede a single State and the net result is we have campaigned the length and the breadth of this country. We were 33 points behind in August and right now we have the momentum and we are going to win on November 2.

Let me extend an invitation on behalf of Betty and myself to all of you -- all of you, even some of those good Carter people out there. (Laughter) I extend an invitation to every one of you to come to Washington on January 20 and see Jerry Ford and Bob Dole inaugurated President and Vice President.

Let me tell you why we are going to win. Take just a minute to refresh your memory back to August of 1974. We had a troubled country. America was in turmoil. People were mad and angry with one another. They had lost their faith in actually our Government. We were suffering inflation of over 12 percent. We were on the brink of the worst economic recession in 40 years. We were still involved in a tragic war in Vietnam.

I became President on August 9. It wasn't a happy day, but I had faith in the American people, I had faith in our form of Government, and I decided that we had to keep the ship of State on an even keel, that we had to set a steady and firm course. You know, because our people responded, all of you in St. Louis and Missouri, all over the country, you rejoined me in that faith, that trust, that confidence.

Today, I think the American people, whether they agree with me on every issue, believe that the man in the White House can be trusted, that confidence has been restored in the Oval Office.

But, we have also made great progress. Instead of inflation at 12 percent, the latest figures are 4.4 percent. That is headway. Yes, we had a recession. Unemployment was too high. Employment was dropping, but again, the American people recognized that quick fixes and phony programs are not the solution, are not the solution to make America healthy and prosperous, and because we moved steadily and progressively forward, today we have four million more people working than we had 18 months ago, and that is progress.

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We have 88 million people working in America, an all-time high. But, I make a pledge to you. I am not satisfied with the unemployment we still have, but I will promise you that President Jerry Ford will not be satisfied until every person who wants a job has a job, period.

But I am also very, very proud to say -- and look each and every one of you in the eye and say -- isn't this great that there is not a single young American fighting or dying on foreign soil today?

And we are at peace because America is number one militarily, and we are going to stay that way under President Ford. We are not going to cut and slash and gut the Defense Department. We want the Army, the Navy, the Air Force and Marines to have the kind of military hardware so that they can deter aggression, that they can protect our national security, that they can give to the President the kind of strength that makes it possible for him to negotiate from strength with our adversaries and to stand with our allies and put together this free world so it can stand against aggression and stand for freedom and liberty for all people throughout the world.

As I look around this great audience, there are some wonderful people here, and I suspect most of you fall in what is called the middle income class. You should be proud of that. We are proud that America has a middle income class, because they are the strength, the real life blood of American society.

But the middle income people in the last 10 years have been short-changed under Federal taxes. Last January, I made a proposal to the Congress that would have remedied that situation. I recommended that the Congress increase the personal exemption from \$750 to \$1,000. That is a one-third increase.

And I was out to a factory the other day talking to some people, and one of the men said, "Well, what would that do to me if Congress passed it?" I said, "How many kids do you have?" He said, "I have three." So, it turns out to be a family of five. I said, "If Congress had been smart enough they would have done what President Ford recommended, and then next April when you have to fill out your income tax return, you would have had \$1,250 more in personal exemption."

Well, the Congress was irresponsible, unresponsive, and they didn't do it. Next January, I am going to put that same proposal on their desk, and if they don't pass it, I will put it on their desk the next January, in 1978, and if they don't pass it then, will you help me beat them in the next election in 1978?

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The best tax reform that I know is tax reduction, and the kind of a tax reduction program I recommended is meaningful. It will help 50 percent of the American taxpayers when they need it. So, let's make sure that instead of the kind of talk that I hear from my opponent where one day he says he might give a tax reduction, the next day he says he isn't sure -- you can count on President Ford to be on your side to reduce taxes in 1977.

Let me conclude with this observation: This election in three days will determine the direction of this country, not only for the four years but for the next 100 years, which is our third century of American history.

Our forefathers, 200 years ago, drafted the most wonderful document for the governing of people in the history of mankind, and on July 4 of this year we celebrated our 200th birthday. You had celebrations the length and the breadth of America. I was privileged to go to Valley Forge and to see where the straggling army of George Washington fought that battle. I was privileged to be in Philadelphia where it all began. I was privileged to be in New York City to see those Tall Ships where countries from all over the world came to pay respect to the greatest country in the history of mankind.

Out of that wonderful birthday celebration, America had a rebirth of spirit, a restoration of confidence and a feeling that America was on the move. We can keep it on the move if you do your job on November 2, 1976.

I have been honored to be your President for the last two years through the tough, difficult times we have had. I have nothing but the highest aspirations for all of you who kept your cool and stayed with us during those tough times.

I would be honored to be your President in the next four years, and I would be so pleased, I would be so proud, if you would tell me, "Jerry, you have done a good job, keep right on doing it."

Thank you very much.

END (AT 12:45 P.M. CDT)