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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT

THE PANTLIND HOTEL

8:20 P.M. EST

Would you please be very quiet for just a minute? I would hope that we might even hear a pin drop.

I don't think that I can adequately express in words tonight Betty's appreciation and mine for this tremendous welcome to the home that we love so much, Grand Rapids.

I have made a lot of speeches, and this is the hardest one to make because as I look out in this audience and as I saw so many people as we came down Monroe Avenue-- Democrats, Independents, Republicans--people that Betty and I lived with, that Betty and I love, that I tried to help over the years when I had the honor of representing this great Congressional district, I could tell you some stories about how the tough problems came to our office and we never asked the person who walked in that office whether he or she was a Democrat or a Republican. We said, what can we do to help you, and that is the way I want to be your President.

You know, those wonderful experiences over a period of time, of taking that trailer down through Ottawa County, Ionia County, Kent County, and sitting and listening to wonderful people who had a problem, who wanted to give me a little trouble, give me a hard time -- and they did -- but also we had a couple of friends that might come in and say nice things about us.

But, the wonderful experience of representing the Fifth Congressional District will be something that I will never forget, and I thank you for the opportunity.

You know, I had a speech I was going to make, but I threw it away. (Laughter)

But, I have a couple of friends that I would like to introduce to you and to suggest that you can help me if you help them.

First, I would like to recommend, because I know him, because I know the job he has done in Congress, I would like to recommend to you that you vote tomorrow for Marv Esch for the United States Senate.

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Then I would equally say it would be very helpful to me as your next President if you would send Al Sawyer to represent you here in the Fifth District.

As we came off the expressway, we went down College Avenue and Betty said, "I went to Fountain School." We went right by it. Then we went by Central High School, but then, you know, I said to her, "Well, South High, that was a great school, too." (Laughter)

But anyhow, Grand Rapids, Kent County, Ottawa County, Ionia, well, all of them -- western Michigan can make the difference and this is what I want you to know and what I think it is all about tomorrow.

You know, on August 9, 1974 I was sworn in as your President. You know better than anybody in this country I never sought the office, but circumstances put me in the position where I stood in the East Room of the White House. Betty held the Bible open; I put my hand on it. I took the oath of office at a tough time, when there had been a great loss of trust in the White House itself. We had high inflation. We were on the brink of a recession. We were still involved in Vietnam.

But, with some apprehension I walked over to the Oval Office. But, before doing so, I said to all Americans, not just to you from here, that you had not elected me by your ballots, but I prayed that you would confirm me with your prayers. And you did.

We went through troubled times for the last two years. But because you stood with me, because you prayed with me, because you believed in America, because you had strength and faith -- and 215 million other Americans, we have turned things around and we see brighter skies and we see greater opportunity.

We see, as we saw on July 4, when there was a great spirit that was expressed in America, our 200th birthday, all of a sudden Americans -- Democrats, Independents and Republicans -- came to the conclusion that we not only could read history -- and it was a great history -- but more importantly, together, regardless of our political persuasion, we could write history for the third century of America's great history, and we will.

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It is so nice to be back here where I see Bill Milliken, I see Bob Griffin, I see Bob VanderLaan, I see all the people that I grew up with, that Betty grew up with. You know, it is hard to express one's deep sentiments about a community and an area that has been so good to us.

So, as I conclude these totally prepared remarks (Laughter), tomorrow each and every one of you have a great decision to make. I suspect it might be the right one.

Let me conclude with just this final comment: Betty and I have been honored to represent this part of the country--but all America--in the White House during the last two years, and they have been troubled, and they have been tough. But we kept the ship of State on the right course and I tried to keep a firm, common sense hand at the tiller. And the net result is things have turned around. America has made incredible progress in the last two years. But we are just moving. We are going to get better. We are going to make America what our forefathers said it would be.

When I was sworn in, I asked for your prayers. I said you hadn't elected me. But tomorrow all of you in this great area of Western Michigan can really decide the election. You can decide the election in Michigan.

In Kansas City, I said I wouldn't concede a single vote, I wouldn't concede a single State, and I don't concede Michigan to the opposition. Western Michigan can turn the tide. Western Michigan can decide the fate of the next four years in this country. It will make the difference in Michigan. It will make the difference in the election.

So, I say to you calmly, from the depth of my appreciation: Tomorrow, yes, I want your prayers for confirmation, but tomorrow I ask that you confirm me with your votes, and I won't let you down. I promise that.

END (AT 8:34 P.M. EST)