

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

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THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT  
AND THE FIRST LADY

THE BRIEFING ROOM

12:14 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: It is perfectly obvious that my voice isn't up to par, and I shouldn't be making very many comments, and I won't, but I did want Betty, Mike, Jack, Steve, Susan and Gayle to come down with me and listen while Betty read a statement that I have sent to Governor Carter. I guess Ron has told you that I called him.

But I do want to express on a personal basis my appreciation and that of my family for the friendship that all of us have had and, after Betty reads the statement that was sent to Governor Carter by me, I think all of us -- Betty, the children and myself -- would like to just come down and shake hands and express our appreciation personally.

Let me call on the real spokesman for the family, Betty.

MRS. FORD: The President asked me to tell you that he telephoned President-elect Carter a short time ago and congratulated him on his victory.

The President also wants to thank all those thousands of people who worked so hard on his behalf and the millions who supported him with their votes. It has been the greatest honor of my husband's life to have served his fellow Americans during two of the most difficult years in our history.

The President urges all Americans to join him in giving your united support to President-elect Carter as he prepares to assume his new responsibilities.

I would like to read you the telegram the President sent to President-elect Carter this morning:

"Dear Jimmy, it is apparent now that you have won our long and intense struggle for the Presidency. I congratulate you on your victory.

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"As one who has been honored to serve the people of this great land, both in Congress and as President, I believe that we must now put divisions of the campaign behind us and unite the country once again in the common pursuit of peace and prosperity.

"Although there will continue to be disagreements over the best means to use in pursuing our goals, I want to assure you that you have my complete and wholehearted support as you take the oath of office this January.

"I also pledge to you that I, and all members of my Administration, will do all that we can to assure that you begin your term as smoothly and as effectively as possible.

"May God bless you and your family as you undertake your new responsibilities.

Signed, "Jerry Ford."

Thank you very much.

END (AT 12:20 P.M. EST)