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STATEMENT BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON  
RULES AND ADMINISTRATION, THURSDAY,  
NOVEMBER 1, 1973.

THIS IS A NEW EXPERIENCE FOR ME.  
I REALIZE IT IS ALSO A NEW EXPERIENCE FOR  
YOU AND FOR THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. I FEEL  
THAT I AM AMONG FRIENDS. HOWEVER, I ASK YOU  
ONLY TO TREAT ME AS TRUE FRIENDS TREAT  
ONE ANOTHER -- WITH DIRECTNESS, WITH CANDOR,  
WITHOUT FAVOR AND WITHOUT GUILE, IN FULL  
AND MUTUAL AWARENESS OF THE SOLEMN OATH



WE HAVE ALL TAKEN TO THE CONSTITUTION AND  
OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PEOPLE OF THIS  
GREAT REPUBLIC.

BEFORE GOING FURTHER, I MUST ADD  
MY GRATITUDE TO THE TWO DISTINGUISHED  
SENATORS WHO ABLY REPRESENT MY HOME STATE  
IN THE UNITED STATES SENATE. PHIL HART AND  
BOB GRIFFIN AND I HAVE SPENT A COMBINED  
TOTAL OF 57 YEARS IN WASHINGTON TRYING TO  
OUTDO ONE ANOTHER IN DOING THINGS FOR  
MICHIGAN -- AND NONE OF US IS READY TO  
CONCEDE THAT CONTEST YET. BUT I WANT TO  
TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO ACKNOWLEDGE



PUBLICLY, BEFORE TRYING TO EXCHANGE A VOTE FOR A GAVEL, THAT MICHIGAN AND GRAND RAPIDS HAVE GIVEN ME FAR MORE THAN I COULD EVER GIVE THEM.

YET I AM DEEPLY CONSCIOUS THAT TODAY THE CONGRESS AND THE CITIZENS WE REPRESENT ARE EMBARKING UPON AN HISTORIC VOYAGE INTO UNCHARTED WATERS. I COME BEFORE YOU AS THE NOMINEE OF THE PRESIDENT TO FILL A VACANCY IN THE OFFICE OF VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF THE 25TH AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION, FOR WHICH 65 SENATORS AND



368 MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE VOTED IN 1965 AND WHICH THE LEGISLATURES OF 48 STATES SUBSEQUENTLY RATIFIED.

I MIGHT NOTE THAT THE STATE WHERE I WAS BORN, NEBRASKA, WAS THE FIRST TO RATIFY THE 25TH AMENDMENT.

AS YOU MIGHT GUESS, I HAVE RECENTLY REVIEWED THE DEBATE ON THE 25TH AMENDMENT AND THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT MOST OF OUR ATTENTION IN FRAMING IT WAS CENTERED ON THE QUESTION OF PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION, ON FILLING A VACANCY IN THE PRESIDENCY.



SECTION 2, WHICH DEALT WITH THE PROBLEM OF FILLING A VACANCY IN THE VICE PRESIDENCY, WAS A SUBSIDIARY ISSUE IN OUR MINDS, DESPITE THE FACT THAT ON 16 PREVIOUS OCCASIONS, FOR A TOTAL OF 27 YEARS IN OUR CONSTITUTIONAL HISTORY, THE NATION HAS BEEN WITHOUT A VICE PRESIDENT.

VICE PRESIDENTS HAVE DIED AND THEY HAVE RESIGNED. TODAY OUR CIRCUMSTANCES ARE UNPRECEDENTED. UNTIL NOW VICE PRESIDENTS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN ELECTED, AT FIRST SEPARATELY BUT MOST OF THE TIME TOGETHER WITH THE PRESIDENT, BY AN ELECTORAL COLLEGE CHOSEN FOR THAT PURPOSE BY



ALL THE PEOPLE. ONE VICE-PRESIDENT,  
RICHARD MENTOR JOHNSON, WAS ELECTED BY  
THE SENATE IN 1837 UNDER THE 12TH  
AMENDMENT WHEN THE ELECTORAL VOTE WAS TIED.

THIS IS THE FIRST TIME IN  
HISTORY THAT BOTH THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE  
OF REPRESENTATIVES HAVE BEEN REQUIRED TO  
ADVISE AND CONSENT TO THE PRESIDENT'S  
NOMINATION OF VICE PRESIDENT.

THESE ARE NOT ORDINARY TIMES NOR,  
I SUPPOSE, WILL THE TIMES EVER BE ORDINARY  
WHEN THE 25TH AMENDMENT MUST BE INVOKED.



*However*  
I WANT TO ASSURE YOU, THE MEMBERS OF THIS COMMITTEE AND ALL MY COLLEAGUES IN THE CONGRESS, THAT I FULLY APPRECIATE AND SHARE YOUR DETERMINATION TO CONSIDER WITH THE UTMOST DILIGENCE MY QUALIFICATIONS AND FITNESS FOR THE SECOND OFFICE OF THE REPUBLIC.

FOR THE SAKE OF THE COUNTRY WE ALL LOVE, FOR YOUR SALES AND CERTAINLY FOR MINE, I WOULD NOT WANT IT OTHERWISE.

I AM A MEMBER OF THIS CONGRESS.  
I HAVE A VOTE AND A RESPONSIBILITY UNDER





THE CONSTITUTION, THE SAME AS YOURS. UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, I WILL VOTE "PRESENT" WHEN MY NOMINATION IS BEFORE THE HOUSE. I AM USED TO THIS. CUSTOM HAS COMPELLED ME TO DO IT IN THE LAST 5 VOTES FOR SPEAKER, WHEN I LOST TO THE HONORABLE JOHN McCORMACK AND THE HONORABLE CARL ALBERT.

YOU KNOW, LIFE PLAYS SOME FUNNY TRICKS ON PEOPLE. HERE I HAVE BEEN TRYING WITH MIGHT AND MAIN FOR 25 YEARS TO BECOME SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE. SUDDENLY, I'M A CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE,



WHERE I COULD HARDLY EVER VOTE AND WHERE I'LL NEVER GET A CHANCE TO SPEAK.

WHEN I WAS ASKED BY THE PRESIDENT FOR MY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR VICE PRESIDENT, I REALLY DID SUGGEST HUGH SCOTT AND MEL LAIRD AND ONE OTHER WHOSE NAME I WON'T TELL -- BUT THE PRESIDENT DIDN'T PAY ANY ATTENTION TO MY ADVICE.

I KNOW YOU ARE GOING TO HAVE A LOT OF QUESTIONS FOR ME, BUT THERE ARE TWO BIG ONES PERHAPS I CAN ANSWER AT THE START.



FIRST, WHAT MAKES YOU, JERRY FORD, QUALIFIED TO BE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES? SECOND, WHAT KIND OF A VICE PRESIDENT WOULD YOU HOPE TO BE?

LET ME TAKE THE SECOND QUESTION FIRST. HOW DO I REGARD THE OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENCY -- IN THE CLIMATE AND CONTEXT OF RIGHT NOW, AND IN TERMS OF THE FUTURE? HISTORY ISN'T MUCH HELP HERE, EXCEPT RECENT HISTORY, THROUGH WHICH WE HAVE ALL LIVED.



THERE ARE ONLY THREE LIVING AMERICANS WHO HAVE HELD THIS HIGH OFFICE, AND THREE WEEKS AGO AT THE WHITE HOUSE ONE OF THEM TOLD ME HE WANTED ME TO TAKE THE JOB.

THE FIRST TWO TELEPHONE CALLS I GOT AFTER THAT ANNOUNCEMENT WERE FROM THE TWO OTHER FORMER VICE PRESIDENTS. AND FOR THEIR GENEROUS GOOD WISHES I WILL ALWAYS BE GRATEFUL.

EVENTS AT HOME AND ABROAD HAVE MOVED SO SWIFTLY SINCE THAT NIGHT THAT



I HAVE NOT HAD MUCH TIME FOR SCHOLARLY  
HOMEWORK ON THE DUTIES OF THE VICE  
PRESIDENCY, OR EVEN TO COLLECT MY OWN  
FEELINGS AT THE SUDDEN CHANGE IN MY OWN  
STYLE OF LIFE.

MY THOUGHTS HAVE BEEN MIXED *f*-  
PRIDE IN THE CONFIDENCE WHICH PRESIDENT  
NIXON HAS SHOWN FOR ME AND DEEP SATISFACTION  
THAT APPARENTLY IT IS SHARED BY ~~HUNDREDS~~ *many*  
~~OF OTHER~~ OLD FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES, IN  
THE CONGRESS, AND THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY.  
I HAVE FELT A TOUCH OF SADNESS AT THE



THOUGHT OF LEAVING THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, WHICH HAS BEEN MY HOME FOR NEARLY HALF MY LIFE.

I HAVE ALSO FELT SOMETHING LIKE AWE AND ASTONISHMENT AT THE MAGNITUDE OF THE NEW RESPONSIBILITIES I HAVE BEEN ASKED TO ASSUME. AT THE SAME TIME I HAVE A NEW AND INVIGORATING SENSE OF DETERMINATION AND PURPOSE TO DO MY BEST TO MEET THEM.

SINCE I FIRST RAN FOR CONGRESS IN 1948 -- THE SAME YEAR ONE OF THE GREATEST VICE PRESIDENTS EVER TO SUCCEED TO



THE PRESIDENCY WAS RENEWING HIS LEASE ON  
THE WHITE HOUSE [BY WHACKING THE REPUBLICAN  
80TH CONGRESS WITH HAMMER AND TONGS] -- I  
HAVE BELIEVED THAT PUBLIC OFFICE IS A  
PUBLIC TRUST. I BELIEVE THAT ANY MAN OR  
WOMAN WHO WINS THE VOTES OF A MAJORITY OF  
HIS FELLOW CITIZENS HAS A SOLEMN OBLIGATION  
TO SERVE THEM FAITHFULLY AND WELL, AND TO  
DO THEM AS MUCH HONOR AS THEY HAVE DONE  
HIM.

NOW I AM CONTEMPLATING THE FIRST  
PUBLIC OFFICE TO WHICH I WOULD NOT BE



ELECTED BY THE PEOPLE, BUT BY MY PEERS IN  
THE CONGRESS AS THE PEOPLE'S <sup>representatives</sup> AGENTS. AS  
THE FIRST CANDIDATE TO BE SO CHOSEN, I  
RECOGNIZE AND WELCOME THE FACT THAT THIS  
COMMITTEE, AS IT SHOULD, WILL INQUIRE FULLY  
INTO MY WORTHINESS TO HAVE THE TRUST OF  
THE NATION.

IN THIS CENTURY, 32 MEN HAVE BEEN  
CHOSEN BY THE TWO MAJOR PARTIES AS  
CANDIDATES FOR VICE PRESIDENT, AND 19 OF  
THEM HAVE SERVED IN THE HOUSE OR THE SENATE  
OR BOTH. OF THE 15 WHO WON <sup>election</sup>, 9 HAVE SERVED





IN THE CONGRESS AND I BELIEVE THERE IS NO BETTER TRAINING SCHOOL FOR THIS JOB THAN SERVICE IN THE CONGRESS. I AM PROUD TO BE A MEMBER OF CONGRESS, AND IF I WERE TO EXPRESS MY NEW AMBITION IN A NUTSHELL, THAT AMBITION ~~OF MINE~~ IS TO BECOME RESPECTED AS WELL BY ALL THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AS I HOPE I HAVE BEEN BY MY GOOD FRIENDS IN THE 5TH DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN.

LIKE THAT OF MOST MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVE IN CONGRESS, MY PUBLIC LIFE HAS BEEN AN OPEN BOOK -- CAREFULLY REREAD EVERY TWO YEARS BY MY CONSTITUENTS.



LIKEWISE, THE DOOR TO MY OFFICE IN WASHINGTON HAS BEEN OPEN, NOT ONLY TO MY CONSTITUENTS BUT TO ANY CITIZENS WHO HAVE WANTED TO DISCUSS WITH ME THEIR VIEWS AND THEIR PROBLEMS RELATING TO LEGISLATION AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT -- OR EVEN JUST TO SATISFY THEIR CURIOSITY AS TO WHAT A CONGRESSMAN LOOKS LIKE. THESE CONTACTS WITH PEOPLE HAVE REPRESENTED A LARGE PART OF MY JOB, AND SINCE 1965 WHEN I BECAME MINORITY LEADER OF THE HOUSE BY THE "LANDSLIDE MARGIN" OF 73 TO 67 SUCH CONTACTS HAVE BECOME MORE AND MORE NATIONAL IN CHARACTER. I NOT ONLY THINK AN OPEN DOOR



IS A DUTY, BUT I HAVE LEARNED A LOT FROM THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE PASSED THROUGH IT, BOTH FROM THOSE WHO AGREE WITH ME AND FROM THOSE WHO DON'T.

PERHAPS THE WORST MISGIVING<sup>s</sup> I HAVE ABOUT THE VICE PRESIDENCY ~~ARE~~ THAT SUCH CONTACTS WITH ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE WOULD BECOME MORE DIFFICULT -- AND THAT MY FRIENDS MIGHT STOP CALLING ME JERRY.

NOT ONLY HAS MY PUBLIC LIFE BEEN AN OPEN BOOK BUT IN THE LAST THREE WEEKS MY PRIVATE LIFE HAS BEEN OPENED AS WELL.



ONCE I TOLD THE PRESIDENT I'D ACCEPT -- I GUESS I TOLD HIM AS MUCH -- I MADE A FIRM DECISION. I DECIDED TO MAKE AVAILABLE TO THIS COMMITTEE AND TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY, WITHOUT RESERVATION EXCEPT RELIANCE ON THEIR GOOD JUDGMENT, EVERY RECORD RELATING TO MY PUBLIC SERVICE, / MY PERSONAL FINANCES, | MY HEALTH AND THE HEALTH OF MY WIFE AND CHILDREN, AND TO RESPOND AS FULLY AND ACCURATELY AS POSSIBLE TO EVERY REASONABLE INQUIRY.

I ASKED ALL PUBLIC OFFICIALS, FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL, AND ALL PERSONS



OR AGENCIES THAT HAVE CUSTODY OF NORMALLY PRIVATE RECORDS REGARDING ME TO MAKE THEM FULLY AND SPEEDILY AVAILABLE, INCLUDING ALL OF MY CAMPAIGN FINANCES, OFFICE AND PERSONAL BANK ACCOUNTS -- EVEN OUR CHILDREN'S SAVINGS ACCOUNTS -- MY INCOME TAX RECORDS AND CONFIDENTIAL FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE REPORTS REQUIRED BY HOUSE RULES, ALL CORRESPONDENCE OF MY CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE AND THE RECORDS OF MY CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANT IN GRAND RAPIDS, INCLUDING A STATEMENT OF MY NET WORTH. IT HAS BEEN A MONUMENTAL JOB, JUST LOCATING AND DIGGING OUT THE RECORDS I HAVE, ALL IN A VERY



SHORT TIME. I HAVE ANSWERED EVERY REQUEST UNRESERVEDLY, AND I WANT TO GIVE SUCH ANSWERS BECAUSE OF THE GREAT IMPORTANCE OF THE PRESENT INQUIRY.

I BELIEVE YOU AND THE CONGRESS AND THE AMERICAN PEOPLE MUST BECOME FULLY SATISFIED THAT I AM WORTHY OF YOUR TRUST AND THAT I AM FIT TO PERFORM THE DUTIES OF THE VICE PRESIDENCY.

I AM NOT A SAINT, AND I'M SURE I HAVE DONE THINGS I MIGHT HAVE DONE BETTER



OR DIFFERENTLY OR NOT AT ALL. I HAVE ALSO LEFT UNDONE THINGS THAT I SHOULD HAVE DONE. BUT I BELIEVE AND HOPE THAT I HAVE BEEN HONEST WITH MYSELF AND WITH OTHERS, THAT I HAVE BEEN FAITHFUL TO MY FRIENDS AND FAIR TO MY OPPONENTS, AND THAT I HAVE TRIED MY BEST TO MAKE THIS GREAT GOVERNMENT WORK FOR THE GOOD OF ALL AMERICANS.

PRESIDENT EISENHOWER HAD A VERY SIMPLE RULE -- I HAVE NEVER HEARD OF A BETTER ONE FOR PEOPLE IN PUBLIC OFFICE WHO HAVE TO MAKE DECISIONS. GET ALL THE FACTS AND ALL THE GOOD COUNSEL YOU CAN, AND THEN DO



WHAT'S BEST FOR AMERICA.

MY OLD LAW PROFESSOR AT YALE,  
EUGENE V. ROSTOW, WHO HAD A DISTINGUISHED  
TOUR OF DUTY AT THE STATE DEPARTMENT DURING  
THE JOHNSON ADMINISTRATION, TOOK THE TIME  
TO WRITE ME A WARM AND INSPIRING LETTER  
UPON MY NOMINATION. I WOULD LIKE TO SHARE  
SOME OF HIS WORDS WITH YOU, BECAUSE THE  
MASTER STILL SAYS THINGS MUCH BETTER THAN  
HIS PUPIL.





PROFESSOR ROSTOW'S LETTER READS

IN PART:

“CONSTITUTIONALLY AND POLITICALLY,  
THE FIRST AND MOST IMPORTANT REQUIREMENT  
FOR THE POST, I SHOULD SAY, IS THAT THE  
VICE-PRESIDENT BE CAPABLE OF DISCHARGING  
THE DUTIES OF THE PRESIDENCY, SHOULD FATE  
CALL HIM TO THAT OFFICE. I AM OPPOSED TO  
ANY OTHER CRITERION IN THE SELECTION OF  
VICE-PRESIDENTS, ABOVE ALL IN THESE  
TIMES OF DIFFICULTY AND DANGER AT HOME AND  
ABROAD. THE NATION HAS NEVER NEEDED STRONG



PRESIDENTS MORE URGENTLY, AS THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS OF THE LAST FEW MONTHS DEMONSTRATES. A CRITICAL FACTOR OF THAT MOST DANGEROUS CONFRONTATION WAS THE PRESIDENT'S RESOLUTE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE DIPLOMACY, NOTABLY HIS THREAT TO USE FORCE IF NEED BE. THE BASIC QUESTION TO ASK ABOUT A PROSPECTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT IS WHETHER HE HAS THE CHARACTER AND INSIGHT TO DO WHAT THEODORE ROOSEVELT AND HARRY TRUMAN DID WHEN THEY WERE CALLED TO THE PRESIDENCY.

“WHILE IN OFFICE, THE VICE-PRESIDENT SHOULD SERVE AS A VITAL PART OF THE PRESIDENT'S ADMINISTRATION. HE



SHOULD HAVE NO INDEPENDENT RESPONSIBILITY FOR POLICY, SAVE AS THE PRESIDENT'S ADVISER AND AGENT. THAT IS THE IDEA BEHIND THE TWELFTH AMENDMENT, IN MY OPINION. THE VICE PRESIDENT'S DUTIES AND FUNCTIONS AS THE PRESIDENT'S ROVING HALFBACK CANNOT AND NEED NOT BE DEFINED WITH PRECISION. THEY WILL DEPEND UPON CIRCUMSTANCE -- ON THE NATURE OF THE PRESSING BUSINESS BEFORE THE COUNTRY, AND ON THE TEMPERAMENTS AND SPECIAL TALENTS OF THE TWO MEN. SOME PRESIDENTS HAVE USED THEIR VICE-PRESIDENTS WISELY AND WELL; OTHERS, AS WE ALL KNOW, HAVE IGNORED THEM.



“IN YOUR CASE, IT IS APPARENT THAT PRESIDENT NIXON COULD WELL ENLIST YOUR EXPERIENCE, AND YOUR INFLUENCE IN CONGRESS, TO HELP REBUILD THE RELATIONSHIP OF CONFIDENCE AND COOPERATION BETWEEN PRESIDENT AND CONGRESS WHICH SHOULD CHARACTERIZE OUR CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AT ITS FINEST MOMENTS.”

THE CONSTITUTIONAL DUTIES OF A VICE PRESIDENT ARE FEW, AND HIS STATUTORY DUTIES WHILE NUMEROUS DO NOT REALLY DEFINE HIS ROLE. IT IS TRITE AND CYNICAL TO SUM IT ALL UP BY SAYING THE VICE PRESIDENT DOES WHATEVER THE PRESIDENT WANTS HIM TO,



AND NO MORE. I HAVE A DIFFERENT IDEA, I HOPE A BROADER ONE. IT IS BASED ON THE UNIQUENESS OF MY SITUATION AND, ABOVE ALL, ON THE GREATEST SINGLE NEED OF OUR COUNTRY TODAY.

I REALIZE, OF COURSE, THAT ALMOST EXACTLY A YEAR AGO PRESIDENT NIXON AND VICE PRESIDENT AGNEW WERE ELECTED BY [REDACTED] MAJORITIES OF THE PEOPLE IN 49 OF THE 50 STATES. NOT ONLY THAT, BUT THE PRESIDENT WAS RUNNING ON HIS RECORD OF FOUR YEARS. HE WAS RE-ELECTED BY A MASSIVE MAJORITY WHO APPROVED OF HIS PROGRAM AND



HIS POLICIES AS THEY HAD BEEN TRIED AND TESTED OVER THAT PERIOD. I FOUGHT HARD FOR THOSE PROGRAMS IN THE CONGRESS AS REPUBLICAN LEADER IN THE HOUSE. I DEFENDED THEM VIGOROUSLY ALL OVER THE COUNTRY AND ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL, AND FOR THAT I HAVE NO APOLOGIES. IF BEING FOR HIS PRESIDENT AND FOR HIS PARTY AND FOR ITS CANDIDATES DISQUALIFIED ANYONE FROM BECOMING VICE PRESIDENT, THEN WE'LL NEVER HAVE ANOTHER TRUMAN, NIXON, JOHNSON OR HUMPHREY.

BUT WHILE I FEEL A STRONG OBLIGATION TO RECOGNIZE THE PRESIDENTIAL



MANDATE OF 1972, I AM ALSO VERY MUCH MINDFUL OF THE CONGRESSIONAL MANDATE ON THE SAME ELECTION DAY. THE VERY SAME AMERICANS WHO GAVE THE REPUBLICAN PRESIDENT A MARGIN OF 17,838,725 VOTES ALSO GAVE THE SENATE A DEMOCRATIC MAJORITY OF 56 TO 42, WITH ONE INDEPENDENT AND ONE CONSERVATIVE, AND THE HOUSE A DEMOCRATIC MAJORITY OF 243 TO 192.

THE FOUNDING FATHERS IN 1787 NEVER INTENDED -- AND THE AMERICAN PEOPLE IN 1972 NEVER INTENDED -- TO PARALYZE AND CRIPPLE THE GOVERNMENT IN WASHINGTON.



BUT RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS AND LEADERS IN BOTH PARTIES ARE BEGINNING TO WORRY ABOUT OUR NATIONAL GOVERNMENT BECOMING SERIOUSLY WEAKENED BY PARTISAN DIVISION.

I HAVE SERVED IN ONE REPUBLICAN CONGRESS AND A DOZEN DEMOCRATIC CONGRESSES. I HAVE SERVED DURING THREE DEMOCRATIC AND TWO REPUBLICAN PRESIDENCIES. IN THE COURSE OF 25 YEARS I'VE STOOD WITH THE CONGRESS WHEN IT WAS RIGHT AND WITH THE PRESIDENT WHEN HE WAS RIGHT, IN MY JUDGMENT, REGARDLESS OF WHICH PARTY CONTROLLED THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH OR THE





LEGISLATIVE BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT.

I KNOW FROM FIRSTHAND EXPERIENCE THAT ALMOST WITHOUT EXCEPTION THE PEOPLE IN THEIR WISDOM SEND TO CONGRESS MEN AND WOMEN WHO ARE REASONABLE, WHO PREFER ACTION TO INACTION, WHO ARE CAPABLE OF COMPROMISE, WHO LOVE THEIR COUNTRY AND WHO ARE CONCERNED FOR THE FUTURE OF THE OLDEST REPRESENTATIVE REPUBLIC ON EARTH.

I KNOW THESE MEN AND WOMEN CAN WORK TOGETHER BECAUSE I HAVE WORKED TOGETHER WITH THEM THE BEST YEARS OF MY LIFE.



SO I COME BACK TO THE FIRST QUESTION. WHAT MAKES YOU, JERRY FORD, QUALIFIED TO BE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES?

MY ANSWER IS THAT I BELIEVE I CAN BE A READY CONCILIATOR AND CALM COMMUNICATOR BETWEEN THE WHITE HOUSE AND CAPITOL HILL, BETWEEN THE RE-ELECTION MANDATE OF THE REPUBLICAN PRESIDENT AND THE EQUALLY EMPHATIC MANDATE OF THE DEMOCRATIC 93RD CONGRESS. I BELIEVE I CAN DO THIS -- NOT BECAUSE I KNOW MUCH ABOUT THE VICE PRESIDENCY -- BUT BECAUSE I KNOW



BOTH THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES  
AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES AS  
WELL AND AS INTIMATELY AS ANYBODY WHO HAS  
KNOWN BOTH FOR A QUARTER CENTURY.

I COUNT ~~MOST OF~~ THE MEMBERS OF  
THE SENATE AND OF THE HOUSE AS MY FRIENDS.  
THEY HAVE BEEN WONDERFULLY KIND AND HELPFUL  
DURING THESE HECTIC DAYS IN VOLUNTEERING  
SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO ME. THE  
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES HAS BEEN MY  
FRIEND FROM THE TIME HE WAS A SECOND-TERMER  
FROM CALIFORNIA IN THE HOUSE AND TOOK TIME  
TO MAKE A FRESHMAN FROM MICHIGAN FEEL WELCOME.

WELCOME.



HE HAS ALWAYS BEEN TRUTHFUL TO ME, AS HAVE MY GOOD FRIENDS IN THE CONGRESS. I HAVE NEVER MISLED THEM EVEN WHEN THEY MIGHT HAVE WANTED TO HEAR SOMETHING ~~GENTLER~~ <sup>more gentle</sup> THAN THE TRUTH. AND IF I CHANGE JOBS THAT IS THE WAY I INTEND TO CONTINUE.

TRUTH IS THE GLUE, <sup>on the bond</sup> THAT HOLDS GOVERNMENT TOGETHER, AND NOT ONLY GOVERNMENT, BUT CIVILIZATION ITSELF.

SO GENTLEMEN, I READILY PROMISE TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS TRUTHFULLY.



I KNOW YOU WILL NOT PULL ANY PUNCHES -- THE AMERICAN PEOPLE WILL NEVER FORGIVE ANY OF US IF YOU DO. THROUGH MY TESTIMONY IT IS MY INTENTION TO REPLACE MISUNDERSTANDING WITH UNDERSTANDING AND TO SUBSTITUTE TRUTH FOR UNTRUTHS.

WE HAVE ALL TAKEN THE SAME OATH BEFORE GOD AND UNDER THE CONSTITUTION, AND WE ARE TODAY CHARGED WITH THE DUTY OF TRYING AND TESTING A NEW AMENDMENT TO THAT CONSTITUTION FOR THE FIRST TIME. MANY OF US HAD A VOICE AND A VOTE IN BRINGING ABOUT THE 25TH AMENDMENT. FROM THAT



DEBATE I WOULD LIKE TO QUOTE TWO DISTINGUISHED SENATORS -- ANONYMOUSLY, SINCE I HOPE YOU WILL NOT THROW TOO MANY OF MY OWN WORDS FROM THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD BACK AT ME.

ONE, A REPUBLICAN, NOTED THAT "THE SECURITY OF OUR NATION DEMANDS THAT THE OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT SHOULD NEVER BE LEFT VACANT FOR LONG." ANOTHER, A DEMOCRAT, OBSERVED THAT "AT A TIME OF NATIONAL CRISIS, THE PUBLIC WOULD NOT TOLERATE THE PLAYING OF POLITICS IN THE CHOICE OF A VICE PRESIDENT."



I AGREE WITH BOTH THESE DISTINGUISHED SENATORS, AND I ALSO AGREE WITH THE ONLY AMERICAN WHO HAS EVER SERVED CONSECUTIVELY AS SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE AND AS PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE, JOHN NANCE GARNER.

“MEN WHO HAVE KNOWN HOW TO COMPROMISE INTELLIGENTLY HAVE RENDERED GREAT SERVICE TO THEIR COUNTRY,” SAID “CACTUS JACK”, PROBABLY SITTING RIGHT IN THE CAPITOL OFFICE WHICH I NOW OCCUPY AS MINORITY LEADER. “THE MOST CONSTRUCTIVE LAWS ON OUR STATUTE BOOKS HAVE BEEN PUT



M OFFICE COPY

STATEMENT BY THE HONORABLE GERALD R. FORD  
MINORITY LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON RULES AND ADMINISTRATION  
THURSDAY, NOV. 1, 1973



ADVANCE FOR RELEASE AT 10:00 A.M. E.S.T.

This is a new experience for me, I realize it is also a new experience for you, and for the American people. I feel that I am among friends however I ask you only to treat me as true friends treat one another, with directness, with candor, without favor and without guile, in full and mutual awareness of the solemn oath we have all taken to the Constitution and our responsibility to the people of this great Republic.

Before going further, I must add my gratitude to the two distinguished Senators who ably represent my home State in the United States Senate. Together, Phil Hart, Bob Griffin and I have spent a combined total of 57 years in Washington trying to outdo one another in doing things for Michigan -- and none of us is ready to concede that contest yet. But I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge publicly, before trying to exchange a vote for a gavel, that Michigan and Grand Rapids have given me far more than I could ever give them.

Yet I am deeply conscious that today the Congress and the citizens we represent are embarking upon an historic voyage into uncharted waters. I come before you as the nominee of the President to fill a vacancy in the office of Vice President of the United States under the provisions of the 25th Amendment to the Constitution, for which 65 Senators and 368 Members of the House voted in 1965 and which the Legislatures of 48 States subsequently ratified.

I might note that the State where I was born, Nebraska, was the first to ratify the 25th Amendment.

As you might guess, I have recently reviewed the debate on the 25th Amendment and there is little doubt that most of our attention in framing it was centered on the question of Presidential succession, on filling a vacancy in the Presidency.

Section 2, which dealt with the problem of filling a vacancy in the Vice Presidency, was a subsidiary issue in our minds, despite the fact that on 16 previous occasions, for a total of 37 years in our Constitutional history, the nation has been without a Vice President.

Vice Presidents have died and they have resigned, but our circumstances today are unprecedented. Until now they have always been elected, at first separately but





most of the time together with the President, by an Electoral College chosen for that purpose by all the people. One Vice President, Richard Mentor Johnson, was elected by the Senate in 1837 under the 12th Amendment when the electoral vote was tied.

This is the first time in history that both the Senate and the House of Representatives have been required to advise and consent to the President's nomination of a Vice President.

These are not ordinary times nor, I suppose, will the times ever be ordinary when the 25th Amendment must be invoked. I want to assure you, the members of this committee and all my colleagues in the Congress, that I fully appreciate and share your determination to consider with the utmost diligence qualifications and fitness for the second office of the Republic. For the sake of the country we all love, for your sakes and certainly for mine, I would not want it otherwise.

I am a member of this Congress. I have a vote and a responsibility under the Constitution the same as yours. Under the circumstances, I <sup>will</sup> vote "Present" when my nomination is before the House. I am used to this. Custom has compelled me to do it in the last 5 votes for Speaker, when I lost to the Honorable John McCormack and the Honorable Carl Albert.

You know, life plays some funny tricks on people. Here I have been trying with might and main for 25 years to become Speaker of the House. Suddenly, I'm a candidate for President of the Senate, where I could hardly ever vote and where I'll never get a chance to speak.

When I was asked by the President for my recommendations for Vice President I really did suggest Hugh Scott and Mel Laird and one other whose name I won't tell -- but the President didn't pay any attention to my advice.

I know you are going to have a lot of questions for me, but there are two big ones perhaps I can answer at the start.

First, what makes you, Jerry Ford, qualified to be Vice President of the United States? Second, what kind of a Vice President would you hope to be?

Let me take the second question first. How do I regard the office of the Vice Presidency -- in the climate and context of right now, and in terms of the future. History isn't much help here, except recent history, through which we have all lived.

There are only three living Americans who have held this high office, and three weeks ago at the White House one of them told me he wanted me to take the job.



The first two telephone calls I got after that announcement were from the two other former Vice Presidents. And for their generous good wishes I will always be grateful.

Events at home and abroad have moved so swiftly since that night that I have not had much time for scholarly homework on the duties of the Vice Presidency, or even to collect my own feelings at the sudden change in my own style of life.

My thoughts have been mixed -- pride in the confidence which President Nixon has shown for me and deep satisfaction that apparently it is shared by hundreds of other old friends and colleagues, in the Congress, and throughout the country. I have felt a touch of sadness at the thought of leaving the House of Representatives which has been my home for nearly half my life.

I have also felt something like awe and astonishment at the magnitude of the new responsibilities I have been asked to assume. At the same time I have a new and invigorating sense of determination and purpose to do my best to meet them.

Since I first ran for Congress in 1948 -- the same year one of the greatest Vice Presidents ever to succeed to the Presidency was renewing his lease on the White House by whacking the Republican 80th Congress with hammer and tongs -- I have believed that public office is a public trust. I believe that any man or woman who wins the votes of a majority of his fellow citizens has a solemn obligation to serve them faithfully and well, and to do them as much honor as they have done him.

Now I'm contemplating the first public office to which I would not be elected by the people, but by my peers in the Congress as the people's agents. As the first candidate to be so chosen, I recognize and welcome the fact that this committee, as it should, will inquire fully into my worthiness to have the trust of the Nation.

In this century, 32 men have been chosen by the two major parties as candidates for Vice President, and 19 of them have served in the House or the Senate or both. Of the 15 who won, 9 have served in the Congress and I believe there is no better training school for this job than service in the Congress. I am proud to be a Member of Congress, and if I were to express my new ambition in a nutshell, that ambition of mine is to earn the respect as well by all the American people as I hope I have with my good friends in the 5th District of Michigan.

Like that of most men and women who serve in Congress, my public life has been an open book -- carefully reread every two years by my constituents. Likewise, the door to my office in Washington has been open, not only to my constituents but to any



citizens who have wanted to discuss with me their views and their problems relating to legislation and the Federal government -- or even just to satisfy their curiosity as to what a Congressman looks like. These contacts with people have represented a large part of my job, and since 1965 when I became Minority Leader of the House by the "landslide margin" of 73 to 67 such contacts have become more and more national in character. I not only think an open door is a duty, but I have learned a lot from the people who have passed through it, both from those who agree with me and from those who don't.

Perhaps the worst misgivings I have about the Vice Presidency are that such contacts with all kinds of people would be more difficult -- and that my friends might stop calling me Jerry.

Not only has my public life been an open book but in the last three weeks my private life has been opened as well. Once I told the President I'd accept -- I guess I told him as much -- I made a firm decision, I decided to make available to this Committee and to the House Committee on the Judiciary, without reservation except reliance on their good judgment, every record relating to my public service, my personal finances, my health and the health of my wife and children, and to respond as fully and accurately as possible to every reasonable inquiry.

I asked all public officials, Federal, State and local, and all persons or agencies that have custody of normally private records regarding me to make them fully and speedily available, including all of my campaign finances, office and personal bank accounts -- even our children's savings accounts -- my income tax records and confidential financial disclosure reports required by House rules, all correspondence of my Congressional Office and the records of my certified public accountant in Grand Rapids, including a statement of my Net Worth. It has been a monumental job, just locating and digging out the records I have, all in a very short time. I have answered every request unreservedly, and I want to give such answers because of the great importance of the present inquiry.

I believe you and the Congress and the American people must become fully satisfied that I am worthy of your trust and that I am fit to perform the duties of the Vice Presidency.

I am not a saint, and I'm sure I have done things I might have done better or differently or not at all. I have also left undone things that I should have done.



But I believe and hope that I have been honest with myself and with others, that I have been faithful to my friends and fair to my opponents, and that I have tried my best to make this great government work for the good of all Americans.

President Eisenhower had a very simple rule -- I have never heard of a better one for people in public office who have to make decisions: get all the facts and all the good counsel you can, and then do what's best for America.

My old law professor at Yale, Eugene V. Rostow, who had a distinguished tour of duty at the State Department during the Johnson Administration, took the time to write me a warm and inspiring letter upon my nomination. I would like to share some of his words with you, because the master still says things much better than his pupil:

"Constitutionally and politically, the first and most important requirement for the post, I should say, is that the Vice-President be capable of discharging the duties of the Presidency, should fate call him to that office. I am opposed to any other criterion in the selection of Vice-Presidents, above all in these times of difficulty and danger at home and abroad. The nation has never needed strong Presidents more urgently, as the Middle East crisis of the last few months demonstrates. A critical factor of that most dangerous confrontation was the President's resolute public and private diplomacy, notably his threat to use force if need be. The basic question to ask about a prospective Vice-President is whether he has the character and insight to do what Theodore Roosevelt and Harry Truman did when they were called to the Presidency.

"While in office, the Vice-President should serve as a vital part of the President's administration. He should have no independent responsibility for policy, save as the President's adviser and agent. That is the idea behind the Twelfth Amendment, in my opinion. The Vice-President's duties and functions as the President's roving halfback cannot and need not be defined with precision. They will depend upon circumstance -- on the nature of the pressing business before the country, and on the temperaments and special talents of the two men. Some Presidents have used their Vice-Presidents wisely and well; others, as we all know, have ignored them.

"In your case, it is apparent that President Nixon could well enlist your experience, and your influence in Congress, to help rebuild the relationship of confidence and cooperation between President and Congress which should characterize our constitutional order at its finest moments."

The Constitutional duties of a Vice President are few, and his statutory duties while numerous do not really define his role. It is trite and cynical to sum it all up by saying the Vice President does whatever the President wants him to, and no more. I have a different idea, I hope a broader one. It is based on the uniqueness of my situation and, above all, on the greatest single need of our country today.

I realize, of course, that almost exactly a year ago President Nixon and Vice President Agnew were elected by majorities of the people in 49 of the 50 States. Not



only that, but the President was running on his record of four years. He was re-elected by a massive majority who approved of his program and his policies as they had been tried and tested over that period. I fought hard for those programs in the Congress as Republican Leader in the House. I defended them vigorously all over the country and on the campaign trail, and for that I have no apologies. If being for his President and for his party and for its candidates disqualified anyone from becoming Vice President, then we'll never have another Truman, Nixon, Johnson or Humphrey.

But while I feel a strong obligation to recognize the Presidential mandate of 1972, I am also very much mindful of the Congressional mandate on the same election day. The very same Americans who gave the Republican President a margin of 17,838,725 votes also gave the Senate a Democratic majority of 56 to 42, with one Independent and one Conservative, and the House a Democratic majority of 243 to 192.

The Founding Fathers in 1787 never intended -- and the American people in 1972 never intended -- to paralyze and cripple the government in Washington. But responsible citizens and leaders in both parties are beginning to worry about our national government becoming seriously weakened by partisan division.

I have served in one Republican Congress and a dozen Democratic Congresses. I have served during three Democratic and two Republican Presidencies. In the course of 25 years I've stood with the Congress when it was right and with the President when he was right, in my judgment, regardless of which party controlled the executive branch or the legislative branch of government.

I know from firsthand experience that almost without exception the people in their wisdom send to Congress men and women who are reasonable, who prefer action to inaction, who are capable of compromise, who love their country and who are concerned for the future of the oldest representative republic on earth.

I know these men and women can work together because I have worked together with them the best years of my life.

So I come back to the first question: What makes you, Jerry Ford, qualified to be Vice President of the United States?

My answer is that I believe I can be a ready conciliator and calm communicator between the White House and Capitol Hill, between the re-election mandate of the Republican President and the equally emphatic mandate of the Democratic 93rd Congress. I believe I can do this -- not because I know much about the Vice Presidency -- but



because I know both the Congress of the United States and the President of the United States as well and as intimately as anybody who has known both for a quarter century.

I count most of the members of the Senate and of the House as my friends. They have been wonderfully kind and helpful during these hectic days in volunteering support and encouragement to me. The President of the United States has been my friend from the time he was a second-termer from California in the House and took time to make a freshman from Michigan feel welcome. He has always been truthful to me, as have my good friends in the Congress. I have never misled them even when they might have wanted to hear something gentler than the truth. And if I change jobs that is the way I intend to continue.

Truth is the glue that holds government together, and not only government, but civilization itself.

So gentlemen, I readily promise to answer your questions truthfully. I know you will not pull any punches -- the American people will never forgive any of us if you do. Through my testimony it is my intention to replace misunderstanding with understanding and to substitute truth for untruths.

We have all taken the same oath before God and under the Constitution, and we are today charged with the duty of trying and testing a new Amendment to that Constitution for the first time. Many of us had a voice and a vote in bringing about the 25th Amendment. From that debate I would like to quote two distinguished Senators -- anonymously, since I hope you will not throw too many of my own words from the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD back at me.

One, a Republican, noted that "The security of our nation demands that the office of the Vice President should never be left vacant for long." Another, a Democrat, observed that "At a time of national crisis, the public would not tolerate the playing of politics in the choice of a Vice President."

I agree with both these distinguished Senators, and I also agree with the only American who has ever served consecutively as Speaker of the House and as President of the Senate, John Nance Garner.

"Men who have known how to compromise intelligently have rendered great service to their country," said "Cactus Jack", probably sitting right in the Capitol Office which I now occupy as Minority Leader. "The most constructive laws on our statute books have been put there by intelligent compromise -- that does not mean that men



have to abandon fundamentals or basic principles."

So my platform, gentlemen, is always to support truth and intelligent compromise. And I pledge to you and to the American people that if confirmed, then, as President Eisenhower did, I will do what I believe is best for America. I will do it as President Lincoln did, "with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right."

Thank you for your courteous attention.

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