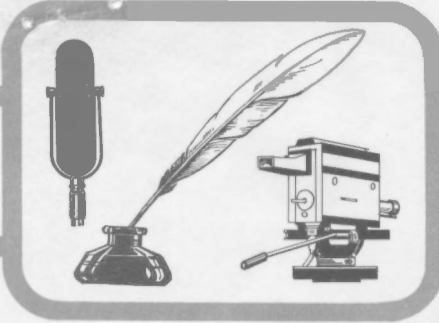


The original documents are located in Box D26, folder “Republican Governors Association, Lexington, KY, May 2, 1969” of the Ford Congressional Papers: Press Secretary and Speech File at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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CONGRESSMAN
GERALD R. FORD
HOUSE REPUBLICAN LEADER

**NEWS
RELEASE**

REMARKS OF REP. GERALD R. FORD (MICHIGAN)
REPUBLICAN LEADER OF THE U. S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TO THE REPUBLICAN GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION
LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY, MAY 2, 1969

FRIDAY P.M. RELEASE
MAY 2, 1969

I'm very grateful to have been invited to come to the native State of our first Republican President in this beautiful season of the year. I remember the story of young Abe Lincoln walking 12 miles just to borrow a book, and reading it by the flickering light of his log cabin fireplace.

It's so much easier nowadays for an ambitious young man to get an education. All he has to do is steal a rifle from the ROTC, seize the campus library and read by the light of burning draft cards.

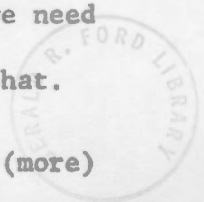
Seriously, I always enjoy these opportunities to meet with the Republican Governors on our common problems. And I expect to enjoy my first Kentucky Derby here in the Blue Grass Country. The reason Kentuckians call this grass blue, they tell me, is that everything green disappears on Saturday in Louisville.

I've picked my winner -- both of them -- but I'm not very expert on this subject. Like most of us in political life I'm basically a hunch player, so I suppose with my football background I'd have picked Forward Pass last year. Alas, I didn't.

Now if I were Senator Dirksen, I'd bet my bankroll on an entry with a name like Gallant Fox. And how could Hubert Humphrey miss if he had money on a horse called Bubbling Over? Or Barry Goldwater on Jet Pilot, or Gene McCarthy on Shut Out.

By my system I suppose the Teddy Kennedy crowd is going for Majestic Prince. There's hardly any money to be found for Texas Dancer. But I'll pass along one hot tip, straight from the White House: There's only one Top Knight in Washington these days, and he looks better every day.

You've heard a lot lately about 100 Days and how Congress hasn't done much and President Nixon is moving at too deliberate a speed, but in the context of the Derby everybody knows the fast starters don't always finish in the money. In legislation there is no special virtue either in speed or volume; we need only look back to the lopsided 89th Congress of 1965 and 66 to prove that.



(more)

I believe the Nixon Administration will be in a strong position in the stretch, where it matters, and right now it's hardly entered the first turn.

But if you want my judgment on the most significant domestic development of the first 100 days it happened last week in the House of Representatives. It was an emphatic 235 to 184 vote victory for the Nixon Administration on the extension of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, commonly known as the Federal school aid bill.

On this crucial showdown we were joined by 60 Democrats and won by a comfortable margin which almost reversed the numerical division of 244 to 190 in the current House.

Gone were all the old arguments about Federal intrusion and church-state schools. Even the amount of money was not at issue. Put in blunt political terms, the bill as reported by the House Education and Labor Committee would have extended the present program, virtually unchanged, for five years -- putting it well beyond the reach of President Nixon in his first term of office.

This bold ploy was engineered by a Kentucky Democrat, and I must say they don't play pantywaist politics down here. Maybe it is an exaggeration to say that if Mr. Perkins' gambit had succeeded, every other part of the Great Society program would have been put in deep freeze, ready to be revived and expanded in the hoped for Democratic Restoration of 1972. But we had a number of indications that such a strategy was developing in certain quarters, who would be most happy to strip President Nixon of all but his Constitutional functions in foreign and defense matters and stop cold the needed domestic reforms and new direction the new Administration is studying and shaping up.

So the lines were drawn. We Republicans stood almost solidly for a two year extension, enough to permit both the educators and the Administration to plan ahead, and also to take us to the point where the updated findings of the 1970 Census could be applied to future school aid formulas.

In addition, we joined with responsible Democrats who saw the flaws in the present system and proposed interim improvements such as eliminating local citizen's advisory committees (what can be more representative of local citizens than elected school boards?) and by consolidating four different Federal aid programs into a single block grant to the States. Such a substitute for the Perkins bill was offered by an Oregon Democrat, Mrs. Green, and prevailed by a bipartisan majority of 51 votes.

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Now some of our Washington critics see this as a revival of "the old Southern Coalition." I'd call it the continuation of the common sense coalition which has often written this country's laws. I predict it will continue to prevail over similar (though perhaps subtler) attempts to sabotage the Nixon program in this 91st Congress.

We have demonstrated convincingly in the House what can be accomplished when we are working for the good of the country, with strong leadership from the White House, against those who are still stubbornly working for the continuation of a political philosophy which the voters rejected in November, 1968.

President Nixon has now asked Congress for authority to go ahead with further consolidation of Federal programs by the reorganization plan method. This would permit the President to act unless Congress objects. I urge all Republican Governors, and indeed all 50 Governors, to press for prompt action, already long-overdue, to make sense out of hundreds of categorical aid programs.

It will lead to greater efficiency and flexibility in such areas as job training, housing, health, urban renewal and other programs ~~now being administered by your former members, Vice President Agnew, Secretary Romney and Secretary Volpe, and ~~by the former Lieutenant Governor of California, Secretary Finch.~~~~

Now for a brief look at the future. Next year will be a critical one for Republicans in the Congress and for the Nixon Administration. Only one other President has entered the White House faced with an opposition Congress, and that was long ago. Further, the form sheet shows that a President's party usually loses House seats in his first midterm election -- the only exception being FDR's gain in 1934.

Looking at what we call marginal Congressional districts, those won by 5% or less last time, analysis shows that since World War II the party in power at the White House has lost on the average slightly more than half its marginal seats at midterm, ranging from 72% lost by the Democrats in 1946 to only 12% lost by President Kennedy due to the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962.

By this gloomy reckoning, we could lose 14 of our marginal Republicans in 1970. To gain control of the House, we would need a net gain of 28. So it's an odds-on fight, but I'm still running for Speaker. And we do have some advantages this time around.

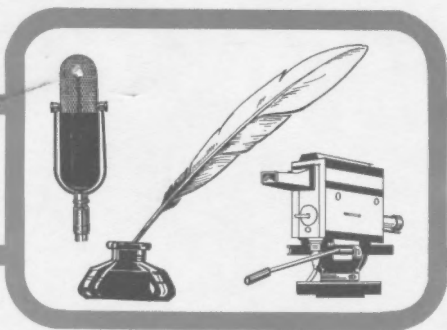
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But our greatest advantage, it seems to me, is that in this crisis of our national union there is a crying need for new leadership, leadership that is neither weary nor wedded to the disproven dogmas of yesterday, leadership that is firm and strong, calm and courageous. Such leadership wears no permanent party label. But I believe President Nixon in the White House, you gentlemen in your state capitals, and we in the Congress, have once again the golden opportunity given to Abraham Lincoln in another time of trouble, of demonstrating that ours is indeed the party of the people and the hope of the future.

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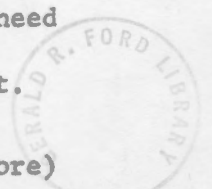
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