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THE WHITE HOUSE

TEXT OF REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT  
TO BE DELIVERED TO THE  
JOINT SESSION OF THE KANSAS STATE LEGISLATURE  
STATE CAPITOL

I am proud to be here in the great State of Kansas where people seem to have a special regard not only for the rights of citizenship, but the responsibilities as well. I understand that 68 percent of the Kansas electorate went to the polls in November -- as against a national average of only 40 percent. And so, let me take this occasion to salute the concerned citizens of Kansas. It's a real pleasure to be in a State where voting isn't considered a spectator sport!

Ever since I was a youngster, I have had a special feeling for Kansas -- because Kansas is where Dorothy lived before she went to visit the wonderful land of Oz -- where all kinds of strange, whimsical and unexpected things happened. But I'm beginning to think that if strange, whimsical and unexpected things were what Dorothy was really interested in, she wouldn't have gone to Oz. She would have come to Washington.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to address this Joint Session of the Kansas State Legislature. I would also like to thank my good friend, Governor Bob Bennett, and my former colleagues in the Congress, Senators Jim Pearson and Bob Dole, for urging me to attend this event. Their advice has helped to open up a new phase of my effort to mobilize our country to meet the economic and energy challenges.

In less than an hour, I will be addressing a gathering of Midwestern Governors on these two subjects. Later this afternoon, I will meet with the press for a televised news conference. But this event, here in your beautiful and historic State Capitol Building, brings another vital factor into play. I refer, of course, to the Legislative Branch of State Governments.

There is no doubt about it. America faces grave challenges today. I have been very frank -- you might even say blunt -- in describing the seriousness of our economic situation to the people. I feel, as I am sure you do, that they deserve the truth. And, for far too long, they have been given sugar-coated reassurances while pressing problems went untended.

As many of you know, I have always believed in action rather than rhetoric. I have offered the Nation an action program to fight an inflationary recession, to tackle the energy crisis, to create jobs and to foster economic stability.

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I don't pretend that my plan is perfect. But it is a plan. And, so far, no one has come forth with a better idea. There have been critics. There have been questions. But no one has put forth a comprehensive, workable alternative.

So what I ask you, just as I have asked the Congress in Washington, is that we work together, in a positive way, to solve America's problems. I ask for your counsel, your suggestions and, ultimately, your support. And the sooner we act, the better it will be for Kansas and for the Nation. Consider, for example, the impact that further delay in the energy field will have on farmers here and in other agricultural states. Unless we start now to achieve energy independence, the American farmer will grow more and more dependent on the foreign oil cartel for the energy products he needs to sow and reap his crops. His costs, his profits and his productivity will all be at the mercy of foreign forces. The farmer would be trapped between growing pressures for lower food prices in the marketplace and higher costs from his energy suppliers. Any way you look at it, that is a no-win proposition for the American farmer. And that is one of the reasons why I am so adamant about our need to act now on the energy front. We cannot let things slide any further. We have waited too long already.

At the same time, though, I recognize that the farmer may well be concerned about the immediate impact my energy program will have. In the short term, our conservation taxes on foreign oil will raise his energy costs. I can understand this concern. And I am doing something about it.

In my State of the Union message, and in my television address to the Nation on the economy, I stressed that no industry or geographical area would be allowed to suffer a disproportionate burden of the energy program. This definitely applies to the American farmer.

I renew my pledge to you today. As long as I am President, the American farmer will receive the fuel he needs to do his job. I will not let American agriculture run out of gas.

As a tax relief, the result of increasing the investment tax credit from seven to twelve percent will be a savings of nearly a quarter of a billion dollars for America's farmers and ranchers. I have instructed the Federal Energy Administrator, Frank Zarb, to design for the agricultural community a rebate program to compensate the farmer for increased energy costs caused by our conservation program. We will be announcing the details of this program within the next few weeks. But I wanted you to know now that this problem is at the top of my list of concerns as well as yours.

Let me give you another clear case where energy action is needed that can materially benefit the people of Kansas. As you know, the demand for nitrogen fertilizer has begun to outpace its supply. The reason for this is simple. Under the current regulatory system, natural gas suppliers have no incentive to increase, or even maintain, adequate production and distribution. Thus far this year, natural gas curtailments have already resulted in the loss of about 140,000 tons of nitrogen fertilizer. Estimates for total loss during the year range from 200,000 tons to 400,000 tons.

To give you an idea of how important this is, a loss of 200,000 tons, if it were all concentrated in corn yield, would reduce the 1975 crop by about 160,000,000 bushels, or about 2 1/2 percent of the total corn crop.

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We should head this problem off before it gets out of control. And the way to do that is to deregulate the price on new natural gas. But to do this, I will need your support, the support of public opinion, and ultimately, the agreement of the Congress.

Solving our problems will not be easy. But I would remind you of something that a man from Abilene, Kansas, one of the greatest men that Kansas ever produced, once said: "Free men do not lose their patience, their courage, their faith because the obstacles are mountainous, the path uncharted. Given understanding, they invariably rise to the challenge."

Dwight Eisenhower knew this was true, and he proved it, as a gallant Commander during World War II and as President of the United States. And he had something else to say about American history and the American character that I believe bears repeating today, when we are hearing so much from the prophets of gloom and doom. "It has been the tough-minded optimists," Ike said, "whom history has proved right in America."

This was true in Ike's time, and it is true in ours as well.

I am a tough-minded optimist. I know you are, too. I believe in America and I believe in America's future. I am confident that you do, too, because we are optimists. And I know that, together, we can get the tough job done.

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