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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AND
QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION
TO THE OVERFLOW CROWD
AT THE JAYCEES' SPECIAL
HAPPY BIRTHDAY USA CELEBRATION

ABILENE CIVIC CENTER

6:34 P.M. CDT

THE PRESIDENT: It is really wonderful to be in Abilene, and I thank all of you, particularly for coming here and being so warm and responsive and hospitable.

It has been a great three days in Texas and to have it climax by this wonderful welcome here in Abilene, I can't thank you enough.

I don't know how many CBers there are here in the audience. Well, I was going to say First Mama gives you her very best (Laughter) and certainly wants to thank you.

Now, I would be glad to take some questions. Have we got a microphone that could be used? If not, if somebody will stand up and ask a few questions I will be delighted to try and respond, but you have to have a loud voice because I can't hear otherwise. (Laughter)

I understand there are some students here from Hardin-Simmons? You have got other fine educational institutions here. Anybody from McMurry? And, of course, Abilene Christian -- I know there must be some.

Now where is that first question? Over here?

QUESTION: What do you think of the basic difference between Governor Carter and yourself?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I know what my record is of 25-plus years in the Congress and 20 months in the Presidency. I must say from what I have read and what I have heard, and what I have heard other Democrats say, I am not sure that I know where he stands on most of the issues. (Laughter)

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So that being the case, I really can't compare my record or my views or what we have tried to do when on the major issues that affect this country, both domestically and internationally, the Governor has not yet spelled out what he would do or how he would handle the problems either at home or abroad.

Yes?

QUESTION: What is it like to be President of the United States?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, it is a great opportunity and a great challenge. It takes a lot of time but it is an opportunity for someone to dedicate his life, in effect, to do what he thinks is best for 215 million Americans at home and abroad, and that is what it is like.

It is not a 40-hour-a-week job, I can tell you that, but I love it and I want to have an opportunity to give this country leadership for the next four years.

QUESTION: Will we have selective service any more in the future?

THE PRESIDENT: I have recommended that we continue with the all-volunteer military force. During my Administration we have achieved the necessary manpower requirements of the Army, the Navy, the Air Force and Marines without utilization of selective service or the draft.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff have asked for a manpower of 2,100,000 and we have gotten every one of them by the all-volunteer military recruitment program.

Now, if I might, I would like to add a postscript to that. There are some who say that the Soviet Union has 4 million men under arms and that we have 2,100,000, the inference being that if we were doing the right thing we should go to 4 million men under arms. First, no responsible military officer in this country has recommended that we have 4 million men under arms.

But let me add this: If we were to go to 4 million men, as some people are advocating or inferring, we would have to go back to selective service and the draft. I don't think we want it because we are doing all we have to do with 2,100,000 men under arms at the present time.

QUESTION: Would you tell us about your veto record?

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THE PRESIDENT: For the last 20 months, I have vetoed 48 bills passed by the Congress. The Congress has sustained 39 of those vetoes and it has saved the taxpayers of this country \$13 billion, because I vetoed those bills and we got 39 of them sustained.

But let me add, as your good Senator knows, one in particular that I vetoed they knew they would sustain. They haven't brought it up to be sustained but I am darned glad I vetoed the common situs picketing bill, as well.

QUESTION: Mr. President, would you tell us about the mission of Dr. Kissinger in Africa at the present time?

THE PRESIDENT: I can very directly give you what that mission is seeking to do. It is seeking to reaffirm what we have had from the birth of this country, and we, as a country, believe in self-determination. That is how we got our freedom -- self-determination of the American people.

Number two, that mission is to make certain that we guarantee minority rights in the future in any country in Africa.

Number three, he is there to make certain that the Cubans and the Soviet Union don't move into any of those countries and dominate them. We believe Africa should solve African problems without the influence or the impact of the domination of any outside country, including Cuba and the Soviet Union.

QUESTION: In your next term for the next four years, would you recommend compulsory national health insurance for this country?

THE PRESIDENT: I have seen no program that I would recommend to the Congress for compulsory national health insurance.

Thank you all very, very much. It has been a great privilege and pleasure to be in Texas for 3-1/2 days and to climax it with this superb and wonderful, hospitable, warm welcome here in Abilene. I thank you.

May I express also--my wife, Betty, was in Texas four days last week, my son, Jack, was here twice in Texas, on two occasions-- the Ford family, Betty, Jack, Mike, Steve and Susan and myself thank you very, very much.

Senator Tower has just pointed out to me that all of these birthday cards here were made by the wonderful elementary school pupils in the Abilene school system. May I say to each and every one of them, and to the faculty, thank you very, very much for this thoughtfulness.

END (AT 6:45 P.M. CDT)