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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
TO THE
PRESIDENT FORD COMMITTEE VOLUNTEERS

ABILENE CIVIC CENTER

7:12 P.M. CDT

First, let me express my appreciation for Senator Tower's wonderful support. He has been with me in the three and a half days that I have been in Texas and no one could have been stauncher, more steadfast and more loyal and more effective, I might add, because so many people in Texas respect John Tower, and for good reason. Thank you very, very much, John.

I also want to thank each and every one of you who are working for the President Ford Committee. I know how much time it takes and how much effort it is, and I can't express deeply enough my gratitude and appreciation.

But, as Senator Tower said, if we win in Kansas City, I can be elected in November. I am the Republican candidate that can be elected and can carry through on the moderate conservative policies that we believe in, so that is why Texas is so important, that is why other States are so critical.

So, I thank you for the efforts in getting the nomination, which I think will be very influenced by the decision tomorrow. I want to represent the Republican Party and win for the Republican Party, and the philosophy that it stands for, and I can, and I believe no other Republican candidate can win.

Let me tell you very quickly why I think we can win on the basis of policy and programs. You know that we have taken this economy when it was in the depths about a year ago and we brought it up so that we are now on the road to a healthy, continuous era of prosperity. I know that the women here particularly are affected by the cost of living increase.

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Think back to August of 1974. The cost of living was escalating at that time at the rate of 12 percent or better and in the month of March, in the month of February and in the month of January this year, a three-month period, we have cut the rate of inflation to under 3 percent. That is a 75 percent decrease or reduction in the rate of inflation in this country.

I think that is a great achievement and we have done it because we have been strong in dealing with the Congress, vetoing 48 bills, getting 39 of them sustained and saving \$13 billion. That is the kind of strong, effective anti-inflationary program that we have undertaken and you could take a look at the number of jobs.

A year ago we were in the depths of a serious recession. In the meantime, in 12 months, because we had the right policies, we have added 2,600,000 more jobs in America. We are now up at the highest rate of people gainfully employed in this country, 86,700,000.

But, I am not satisfied because there are too many people unemployed. We are doing well, but I want a situation in this country where everybody who wants a job and will look for a job can have a job. That is the kind of economy we want in America today.

Now, let me make one comment that I think all of us who are dealing in the facts -- and particularly those of us who have to go out and meet the comments made by my challenger or you who meet the individuals who are supporting my challenger -- my challenger has raised the issue about whether or not our military capability was sufficient. He is alleging that we are number two.

First, that is totally inaccurate, but as to his credibility to make that charge, let me make this observation. On November 20 of last year, when he announced his candidacy in Washington, D.C., he was asked a question by one of the reporters at that press conference whether or not he could recommend a figure that would be adequate for our defense appropriations.

It just happens that that answer is a matter of record, and here is what my opponent said. "I didn't say what I wanted to spend. You have me in a position in which the answer is very difficult because I think only when you are in that position of command do you have access to all of the information that is necessary for making that decision. Obviously, I am not in that position and do not have that information at this moment."

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Then he went on following another question by a reporter and said, "One has only to face the fact that there are facts not known to you which cannot be known to you because of classification, and this always must be kept in mind as a reservation about any opinion that you might render."

What, in effect, he is saying is he didn't have enough information to make a judgment or to make a recommendation as to how much money we ought to have for the Army, the Navy, the Air Force or Marines, and now a few months later he is saying we are not spending enough money, that our program is inadequate.

I think this affects his credibility very seriously as to whether or not he can be an honest critic of the status of our defense program. So, I think we ought to say if you know what the facts are, you can be critical, and you can have a program, but he charges we are number two and admits himself he doesn't have enough information to make a valid accusation.

So, I say we are on the way because we have a good program, a program of strength for America, a program of success for our economy, and I believe as the momentum between now and 7:00 p.m. tomorrow night, we are going to surprise him, we are going to make this race one that we can win.

Thank you very, very much.

I thank all of you on behalf of Betty and Jack and Mike and Steve and Susan and myself for what you have done, and I am deeply grateful for the sacrifice and effort that each of you has made. We won't let you down. I will make sure of that.

Thank you very much.

END (AT 7:20 P.M. CDT)