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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
TO THE
16TH ANNUAL GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
LEADERSHIP SEMINAR OF THE JAYCEES

THE ROSE GARDEN

2:35 P.M. EDT

I am delighted to welcome all of you in this leadership seminar to the Rose Garden here at the White House. I hope and trust you have had a good experience with the various people in the Executive Branch of the Government. I am sure they have been helpful in laying out some of the programs and problems we face, but I would like to share some good news with you today.

The Department of Commerce just announced that for the month of August, we have had a very substantial increase in housing starts. It also indicates that there has been a very sharp rebound in multi-family starts, which is vitally important if we are going to get the housing and construction industries moving as they should.

Secondly, we are extremely encouraged by the continuous increase in new building permits which certainly foreshadows that we will have an even better housing market in the months ahead.

I think I can take some satisfaction from the fact that this good economic news comes from what we have done, and done successfully, is to continue to win the battle against inflation, and that, of course, means that interest rates are down, that money is available in the mortgage market.

It also reflects, I think, the fact that there is a growing optimism in America as far as a healthy economy is concerned. So, that kind of good news is nice to be able to announce to a group of leaders from all parts of the country -- individuals who have a great stake in the future of this country.

As it was indicated, I used to belong, a few years ago, to the Jaycees. I had some wonderful experiences and was fortunate enough to have received, back in 1949 -- a long time ago -- the honor that goes to ten young men in this country each and every year -- and I am proud of it.

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But let me speak, if I might, about leadership. When I was an active Jaycee in Grand Rapids, Michigan, we undertook a great many civic projects and community programs. That is a hallmark of the Jaycees throughout this country, has been, will continue to be, and the things that I learned in my three or four years as an active Jaycee, in leadership, gave me the competence and gave me the certainty and the assurance that I could handle some of those problems of leadership.

Now, I would like to talk about what we have tried to do in leadership down here at the White House. The background I got as a Jaycee has been extremely helpful and beneficial. Let me just tick off a few things that we have done that I think reflects sound leadership as the President of the United States.

First, we submitted to the Congress, in January of this year, the largest military budget in the history of the United States in order to maintain our national security. For the last ten years, under several Presidents, the Congress has traditionally slashed the defense budget by anywhere from \$3 billion to \$8 billion a year, and over a 10-year period, the accumulated total was \$50 billion.

I am glad to report to you, because we showed the kind of leadership that I think is needed and necessary, the Congress, this year, has made very minor reductions in the appropriations for the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps. The net result is we have achieved real success in getting the Congress to recognize that when a President submits a military budget, he means it and it is necessary and essential for the national security of this country. We can say with pride, "We did it."

If I might, I would like to add another thing. Fortunately, this country is at peace. We are not drafting any young men today to participate in the Army, Navy, Air Force or Marine Corps. We have an all-volunteer military force, and I am proud of it.

But with this kind of leadership in the military, and with, I think, our military strength overall and our diplomatic skill, we not only have the peace, but the capability to keep it.

Let me add one other comment, if I might. What is more moral in foreign policy than to have peace with freedom and security.

Finally, I have nothing but great memories of my experience as a Jaycee. I think this 16th seminar that you are having here is the kind of organizational programming that is essential for Jaycees throughout the country to see what our Government is doing, and why.

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Probably within a relatively few years, one of you, or maybe more than one of you, will have an opportunity to participate either in the Judicial Branch or the Legislative Branch or the Executive Branch. It is a great experience, a wonderful challenge, and I urge each and every one of you to participate in some way, in a meaningful way, in our Government at the Federal level.

One final comment. Rumor tells me that you had a poll among all of you. (Laughter) I just hope that the poll, I understand, which reflects your views, will be indicative of what will happen November 2nd.

Thank you very much.

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(AT 2:42 P.M. EDT)