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THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

Few Congresses have been presented with such a clear challenge to deal forthrightly with the Nation's problems than the Congress that has just adjourned -- and few Congresses have fallen so short of meeting the challenge.

Over the past two years I have placed before the Congress a wide variety of programs addressed to the hopes and needs of the future. Rather than make the necessary hard decisions, this Congress has more often responded with weak compromises and evasions.

I asked Congress to cut the rate of growth in Federal spending by 28 billion dollars, and to give that 28 billion dollars back to the taxpayers in tax cuts.

The Congress refused to go beyond the temporary tax cuts that were made in 1975. Instead, they added 17 billion dollars to my recommendations for spending, and every one of those dollars came out of the American taxpayers' pocket.

If all of this Congressional spending had been for good purposes, we might take a more charitable view of Congress' performance. But that is not the case.

This Congress ignored major parts of my comprehensive energy policy.

They took no action on my proposals to reorganize and reform health, education, child nutrition and social services programs -- apparently preferring instead to continue the current jumble of programs that fail in too many cases to help those who need and deserve our help.

They took no action on my recommendation for catastrophic health insurance for older Americans, and took no action on my request for legislation that would bring new jobs to areas of chronic unemployment.

They were unwilling to follow my lead in restoring the financial integrity of the Social Security System. In the heat of an election year they preferred to quietly duck the entire issue, rather than do what we all know is right.

I hope the adjournment of this Congress marks the end of an era -- an era marked by a growing gap between Congress and the people. The people understand the need for change. But this Congress has persisted in the discredited ways of the past.

Last week Great Britain's Prime Minister Callaghan told his people, "Britain for too long has lived on borrowed time, borrowed money, and borrowed ideas. We will fail if we think we can buy our own way out of our present difficulties by printing confetti money and by paying ourselves more than we earn."

America does not have to repeat Britain's experience to learn from it. As long as I am President, I will use every Constitutional power at my command to avoid this situation in America.

I look forward to working next year with the 95th Congress. The Congress elected next month will, I am convinced, come to Washington prepared to carry out the will of the people.