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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE
GOVERNOR'S MANSION

5:38 P.M. EDT

Governor Jim Edwards, Senator Strom Thurmond,
Congressman Floyd Spence:

I can't express deeply enough my appreciation for the hospitality of Jim and Ann and this wonderful turnout here in this just gorgeous mansion and the grounds. I thank you all for your very warm and generous hospitality. It is great to be in South Carolina.

I enjoyed the second half of the football game. (Laughter) I can claim some credit. You scored more points than your opponents while I was there. (Laughter)

As I said in Kansas City, I am not going to concede a single State or a single vote. While I am here, let me extend to each and every one of you a special invitation to come to Washington next January when we have the inauguration of Jerry Ford and Bob Dole. Or, to put it another way, you all come, and we will have a great party. (Laughter)

I think all of you know where I stand -- for limited Government, for fiscal responsibility, for rising prosperity, for lower taxes, greater military strength, for peace in the world with freedom. Not a single young American today is fighting or dying on any foreign battlefield, and that is because America is strong.

After so many years, the last 10 years in which America's defensive needs have been shortchanged, I proposed the two largest defense budgets in the history of the United States, and this year with the help of Strom Thurmond, we were able to convince the Congress to give us virtually all that we asked for. And the net result is we can look forward to real progress in maintaining our strategic capability, our conventional capability. We have the will. And let me say, as long as I am President of the United States, we are going to stay number one.

After so many years of runaway growth in Federal spending, I submitted last January a budget which for the first time put a cap on the growth in Federal spending.

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I have held the line on Federal spending with 66 vetoes, which saved the hard-pressed taxpayer something like \$9 billion. I have not been afraid to say no to the excessive spending of a liberal Congress, and let me say we will keep the pressure on in the next Congress.

But, speaking of the Congress, you have here in this Congressional district one of the strongest, one of the best Members of the House of Representatives in Floyd Spence. You need him and I need him.

I think it goes without saying that you are proud of the wonderful job that Strom Thurmond does for you, and let me say without any hesitation or qualification, believe me, I know Strom Thurmond is up there fighting for a strong national defense, fighting for restraint on spending, fighting for your lowering of taxes. Strom, thank you from the bottom of my heart.

We have heard a great deal about tax reform. The best tax reform that I know is tax reduction. And the best tax reduction that I know is the kind of tax reduction that goes to the middle income taxpayer, who in the process of legislation in the last 10 or 15 years has been shortchanged. And, therefore, I think if we are going to get equity in our Federal tax laws, we have to increase the personal exemption from \$750 to \$1,000. That gives that great, vast, middle income taxpayer the kind of fairness, the kind of equity that he deserves.

Congress didn't pass what I recommended this year, but let me look them right in the eye. We are going to keep the pressure on them next year; if they don't pass it, the next year. We are going to get that kind of tax relief and the Congress is going to do it, because the American people know it is right.

I tried to mention in the debate last night the kind of progress that we have made in America since I have been President. And, believe me, that day of August 9, 1974, was not a very happy day. America was in trouble. We had inflation over 12 percent. We were on the brink of a serious recession. The American people had tragically lost faith and confidence in the White House, and we were still involved in Vietnam.

But with the strength of the American people and with the kind of Government that we have in this country, we were able to set the ship of State on an even keel and to set a steady course.

And we have gone through some tough times for the last 26 months, but the thing that gave Betty and me the kind of satisfaction, the kind of propping that we needed when times looked tough, was the faith that we had in 215 million Americans.

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And let me say, having gotten through the storm of those 26 months, I think with the progress we have made, with the foundation that we have laid, we can have the most glorious four years to begin the third century of American freedom and progress.

And so I come before you all here in this great State of South Carolina and ask for your help, ask for your assistance. I think we can carry South Carolina. It would be a great, great honor -- Jim, it would be a great honor to come back here to this mansion after November 2 some time and really relax and enjoy being with you and Ann and meeting all of these wonderful people from South Carolina.

But, as I close, let me reemphasize, we have a chance to go forward together, and I promise you once more, as I promised you before, to uphold the Constitution, to do what is right as God gives me the right, or to see the right and to do the very best that I can for America.

God helping me, I won't let you down.

Thank you very much.

END (AT 5:47 P.M. EDT)