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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

February 3, 1989

Remarks at a White House Luncheon for Business Leaders

The President. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very, very much for being with us today. Before I make some remarks, I just want to introduce you to some of the people with whom I'm working here in the White House, with whom a lot of you will be interacting one way or another.

I know you know our Secretary of Labor over here, Liddy Dole. Roger Porter is going to be doing a lot in our domestic policy. Over at this table is Bonnie Newman, who has got a major management responsibility in the White House. And Andy Card is the Deputy to the Chief of Staff. And Boyden Gray many of you have worked with in regulatory relief. He's the General Counsel to the President and is heading a lot of the issues as it relates to ethics. Steve Studdert over here and Dave Demarest are in our outreach and our communications end of things. General Scowcroft most of you know -- I don't want to date him, but most of you know him from previous incarnations -- [laughter] -- is the national security adviser. Richard Breeden over here worked very closely with me in the past on regulatory matters. He's now wrestling with the savings and loan problem. So, if he looks discomforted, why, it wasn't the food. [Laughter] Gregg Petersmeyer at this table, here from Colorado, back in the White House after quite a few years' absence. But he is handling this concept of voluntarism, national service. I can't see over here who we -- oh, Marlin Fitzwater is our Press Secretary, and with him, Joe Hagin, fresh from Ohio, who is handling the scheduling. Michael Boskin is head of our Council of Economic Advisers. And Bobbie Kilberg, sitting over here, is part of our major outreach to the different communities. And Jim Cicconi is the Staff Secretary that keeps everything moving inside the White House. And of course, on my left here is John Sununu, our Chief of Staff. And if I missed somebody, it's the glare. [Laughter] It's not that I don't know the names of the people with whom I work. [Laughter]

But listen, I wanted to thank you all for being here. It's great to see so many old friends. Having made my living in the hydrocarbon business -- that's a polite name for what's left of the oil business -- [laughter] -- I do have some appreciation of what some of you all face in business.

And today we're in the midst of a long peacetime economic recovery. Productivity is up. Real family income is up. A higher percentage -- you know this litany -- percentage of the work force at work than any time in history and a lot of job

creation, better than Europe and Japan. So, I am very proud of what the business sector has accomplished. And we are the most prosperous and most generous and most productive Nation. But I would say that we've still got a long, long way to go, and we've got some big problems out there. But if we need a reminder of who we are, you can look around this room and see the creativity of business and see how you have added tremendously to the GNP of our country.

Lately we've been talking a lot publicly -- the last couple of weeks -- about ethics. And I need your help in establishing and then achieving the highest possible standards and then performance in the field of ethics. It isn't just government. I think we need to set the best possible example in corporate America, in the workplace itself, and then certainly in government service. We've got to do better in terms of eliminating conflicts of interest for those who serve. And we need to assemble a government that the people can be proud of: a government, to a large extent, already comprised, I'd say, of honorable men and women who share conviction that a public office is, indeed, a public trust.

So, my emphasis on ethical public service is not some fad or passing fancy. It's something that I would like to see our administration institutionalize as best we can. Having said that, I am concerned about the excesses. And I'm talking to some right here in this room. I don't think we ever want to make it so it's impossible for men and women who have accomplished something to come and serve because of perception -- it might throw a conflict of interest out there. And so, as we try to achieve our standards now and as we try to codify these standards, I hope we can do it without discouraging men and women from coming to Washington to serve.

Last week, I appointed a bipartisan commission headed by former Judge and now our Ambassador Malcolm Wilkey. Cochairman of that is Griffin Bell, who is favorably known to everybody in this room, a former great Attorney General of this country -- to develop ethics reform proposals that are going to address all the branches of the Federal Government. And again, we welcome from the business community the advice and counsel on this effort.

Some of you have sent Boyden Gray, my General Counsel, your own codes of ethics and worked with him in this regard, and that's been very helpful to us. It's because some businesses are way out front on setting standards that I think will have good relevance for the Federal Government. We have to simultaneously assure that our public servants have the highest possible ethical standards at the same time we ensure that we don't create this bureaucratic quagmire that keep honorable men and women from serving. And this one, as I just mentioned, is not easy. It is a delicate balance.

The American people know that we're facing some very tough choices in the weeks and months ahead. I still feel that they want us to hold the line on taxes and that they want us to keep this economic engine going. They realize that that's mainly a function of the private sector. But we in government have a responsibility to see that we don't enact things that

inadvertently slow down the economic engine of this country. I've got to have as a prime goal seeing the creation of more jobs, more growth. And so, next week we're going to have to come forward with some tough decisions when I send a budget message up there to the Congress a week from yesterday.

We want to keep this deficit heading downward. And I've heard from a lot of you here the importance of having what we send up there credible so that world markets will understand that this is for real. And if the world markets understand that it's for real -- it doesn't have to happen overnight -- then I think we're going to see a very salutary effect on interest rates. So, we want to keep the deficit heading downward. And I'm pledged, obviously, to that goal.

There's another thing about the people of this country. Americans have long been committed to helping people at home and abroad in achieving literacy, housing, and safety -- a commitment that stems from our innate sense of fairplay as a people, innate sense of justice, if you will. So, there's more than altruism involved. And when I talk about a kinder and gentler nation, I realize that you cannot legislate kindness. The President can't sign an Executive order and decree that we have a gentle nation.

But the Presidency does provide an incomparable opportunity to set a tone, to lead a movement. And so, I wanted to ask all of you to do that which so many of you are already doing: Involve yourselves in this vast cooperative movement, unparalleled in magnitude, certainly unparalleled in its nobility of purpose. And I'm talking about the concept of voluntarism, the concept of national service. It's going to be a movement whose leadership extends from the South Lawn of the White House to the grassroots of America, but really, it's the other way around because it's the communities and it's neighbors that really have the line action on this concept -- a movement that respects the dignity of the individual and that is steeped in the values that have made this country great for more than 200 years. And it is this spirit that DeTocqueville found when he looked at this country of neighbor helping neighbor that has made us decent and generous, more so, I'd say, than any other country. And if we can revitalize the embers of that spirit, we will be this kinder and gentler place to live.

And that's where many of you, as I say, have already starred. As I look around this room -- and I'm not going to start singling out the examples that are represented here of your commitment to literacy or fighting drugs or whatever it is -- and you can do it far better, far more effectively than the Federal Government in Washington, DC. The essence of our government, of course, a democracy of and for and by the people.

To be successful, our movement on national service has got to be exactly the same thing. And the challenges are great. Government, as I say, cannot do everything, certainly can't do it alone without the will of the people. It really can't do anything.

But we've opened here now an Office of National Service.

Gregg Petersmeyer, under the Chief of Staff, has the lead on that. It will be in the White House. It will help lead the community and national service programs. We will not only build on what was known as the private sector initiatives, which President Reagan began and which many of you in this room were actively involved in, but actively I'll be seeking your leadership and involvement on specific initiatives; one, the Yes to America Foundation, Youth Entering Service, which I talked about last fall and which I'm determined to implement this winter.

I don't want the Federal Government getting in the way, incidentally, of the tens of thousands of volunteer programs that work effectively. I simply want to encourage more voluntarism.

You know, each of us is shaped in life by little events or things that he or she encountered. And I remember 8 years ago -- or maybe 10 now, campaigning in John Sununu's State, and being told of the Meals on Wheels program in Salem, New Hampshire -- that the volunteer aspect of that program had been eroded out by Federal legislation and that the regulations were drawn in such a way that the neighbors that had been helping older neighbors no longer were free to participate and volunteer. So, I certainly think we have to avoid that kind of crowding out on the part of the regulators, on the part of my administration, or on the part of the United States Congress.

During the past several months, you've heard me speak of a thousand points of light. That's given the cartoonists a wide array of new material -- [laughter] -- the best one being a thousand pints of light keg -- [laughter]. But other people are beginning to understand what I perhaps very inarticulately talked about. I've been using that phrase as shorthand for the fact that we're a nation of communities, thousands of business and professional and religious and ethnic communities and in this diversity is our key to success, it's our strength.

The community, next to the family, is the most important unit of our nation. And I've got to remember that as we kind of come up with urban policies -- or Liddy and I work together on child care, or whatever else it is -- a community has got to be more than just the bricks or mortar. Our community, our town, our neighborhood: It's where we live, where we work, where the kids play, and it's where we invite friends over. And so, we've got to keep these communities strong by whatever kinds of policies we spell out in our administration.

I'm committed to dramatically increasing, and a lot of this is simply exhortation, community participation in order to pragmatically address the difficult problems that are challenging our country. We need to build this community spirit in every community, large and small. And we need to tap America for its very best in terms of dedication and the leadership.

You all have been more active than most, I know, in community service and so I again want to say thank you. You have my heartfelt respect. We need your work. We need your experience. And to those of you who are still looking for ways to help, I just would urge you to come on in, the water's fine. We

need you to help us face this challenge. It's not just your money, individually and corporate, it's time and, again, it's exhortation on the part of the leaders of the business community. So, I would welcome your help on all of that.

Let me just end by a quick update. I know it's of interest to people here, the visit yesterday with the Japanese Prime Minister went well. He was -- Takeshita was -- Prime Minister Takeshita was our first official formal foreign visitor to come here to this country. And during our discussions yesterday we simply reaffirmed our responsibilities in the cause of world peace. We also reviewed the progress that our nations have achieved in bringing the economies into better balance and in further opening our markets to each other's goods and services. We, in this country, carry a disproportionate responsibility for the defense requirements of free countries. Japan, given its economic standing today, is willing to accept much more in the way of responsibility for helping in the whole development aid side of things. So, we had a good chance to discuss that. We did not go into every trade problem that faces our country. Both of us are realistic men, the Japanese Prime Minister and me, and we realize we're going to have some confrontation at times or certainly some differences of opinion. But I'm going to do my level best, working with our good new trade team, to be sure that we are treated fairly, that we have access, that we are not operating under standards that favor one side to the detriment of the other.

But the visit went well, and I think Prime Minister Takeshita wants very much to have that cooperative relationship. And we don't want to take these things for granted. It's not the reason I'm going to Japan for the funeral -- to pay my respects on behalf of the American people to the Emperor -- but it has something to do with it -- that's broader. I think we have -- I should be doing that -- looking to the present and to the future. But I just wanted to assure you that the visit yesterday had gone reasonably well.

In the meantime, we still are under study in terms of our relationship with the Soviets. I know everyone here is very much interested in that relationship. I am confident that General Secretary Gorbachev knows that our review is not a foot-dragging operation. I don't want to miss an opportunity, but I don't want to do something that's imprudent either. And so, with our Secretary of State, ably backed up and assisted by my National Security Adviser, we are undertaking a policy review with the Soviet Union. There will be no great shocks. There will be no turning our back on the potential for progress. But there will be taking the proper amount of time so that when we do go forward, whether it's on conventional arms control, or strategic arms, or whatever else it is -- the economic front, regional problems, human rights -- we're going to be marching together in this administration. And the Soviets, I think, now understand that there's no foot-dragging. But I wanted you to know that I understand the importance of this relationship and that I am determined to see us move forward. I want to see us get out in front if we possibly can, but I don't think that we have to be just restless because General Secretary Gorbachev made a very interesting set of proposals at the United Nations a few months -- now a month or so ago. So, we're going to look at the whole

array of these issues. In the meantime, we're taking a look at the hemisphere.

Some of you have read about trying to work with the Congress. I'm very serious about it, and the product of the Congress in some ways -- I realize that maybe we can wait until February 9th, which is only 6 days away, before we go after each other on things. But we're realists, and we know there is going to be differences on what I send up. But I think most people that understand the Congress certainly would give them credit, and I do, for a willingness at this juncture to talk. We had a very interesting, and I'd say productive, meeting with the leaders of key committees -- Ways and Means and Finance and Banking and Banking -- and then the leaders today and this question of facing this savings and loan problem. And they're not going to agree with everything I propose next week, but we've had a chance to consult and to listen to them, and I'm determined to try that, carry that forward. And I think it will be good for domestic policy, and I'm absolutely convinced that it is vital for foreign policy because we've been sending confusing signals around the world of two major branches of government that can't ever quite get together on something important.

I'm not naive. I know we're going to have differences, but I just wanted you to know I think that approach is certainly worth a try. And so, that's about where we stand.

I'm delighted you all are here. Again, I ask for your help, and lest you be unpersuaded by what I've said, I would now like to be one who has been -- invite one to come in here who has been dubbed by no less an authority than Time Magazine as the Silver Fox because -- [laughter] -- she's worked for so many of you in education that I want her to come in and say thank you if she's here.

Barbara, enter. I've got all your education crowd around.

Mrs. Bush. Thank you.

The President. I've been making a pitch for voluntarism.

Mrs. Bush. I heard you.

The President. And they're going to do it.

Mrs. Bush. I heard you. I heard him. I heard what he said. And what I really came in to say was use me. I'm willing to come. If you'll do what he asks, I'll come and help in any way I can -- literacy, the homeless -- anything. You call, and I'll come.

Thank you very much.

After Kennedy was gone, Republican senators fumed over the improvidence of it all. Why were these young people not providing for their futures? What were they thinking of, to go forth without insurance?

Funds for the Peace Corps were cut in the Nixon years. Nixon detested its domestic counterpart, Vista, and shredded its budget. Conservatives steamed at the idea of teaching ghetto inhabitants about their rights.

Bush's program must not be called that, according to the director of the Office of National Service, C. Gregg Petersmeyer. "To see it as a program is not to see it at all. This is a movement. The government is just a catalyst. The fuel is individual initiative."

Petersmeyer, 40, has known Bush for 20 years. They first met when Petersmeyer, as a new Harvard graduate, worked in the Nixon White House. When he was studying at Oxford, he spent a month in China with Bush, and he was his state chairman in Colorado. Petersmeyer says the approach is Bush's own.

"He's a man of personal relationships. He lives by them. The people out there having trouble, have a hunger for relationships, not for programs."

Not a program

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

May 13, 1989

Remarks at the Mississippi State University
Commencement Ceremony in Starkville, Mississippi

Congratulations to you. Thank you all very much. President Zacharias and members of the board of trustees, members of the distinguished faculty, administrators, friends, soon to be graduates, I can't tell you how much I appreciate that warm Bulldog welcome. Before I get too far into these remarks, I don't believe I've ever heard a more beautiful or remarkable rendition of the "Star Spangled Banner." Richard Gaddis -- just wonderful. And thank you all for the warmth of this welcome here today. And I am very honored and privileged to address your commencement.

I was at Alcorn State, another part of this great State, earlier on. And I told them that I was reminded of my own graduation, because I could see on the faces of some of these kids the apprehension about the President coming here and how long they might have to endure the message. And I was reminded of a graduation at Yale, and the speaker got up and went on and on. He finally -- at the beginning he said, "Yale -- Y is for youth." He talked about that for 20 minutes. "A is for altruism" -- 18. "L is for loyalty" -- 32 minutes. "E is for excellence." Finished his speech -- there was only one person left, head down in prayer. And the speaker said, "Were you praying for those values?" He said, "No, sir, I was giving thanks that I didn't go to Mississippi State University." [Laughter]

I want to say what a great honor it is to see a long-time family friend, one of the great patriots of this or any other era, the Honorable John Stennis, who resides right here on this campus. Judge Stennis, Senator Stennis, call him what you will. He doesn't merely hail from Mississippi: He is Mississippi. And his service to the United States of America will not be forgotten. Now, I wondered whether we could ever fill those big shoes. But I say this not as a partisan but as an observer of some time, as President Zacharias said, of the public scene. And you have two great United States Senators in Thad Cochran and in Trent Lott, and I'm proud to be with them here today. And I salute the two Members of Congress that are with us today. One of them, Congressman Montgomery, and I were elected to Congress on the same day. I'm delighted he's here. His great-grandfather, Colonel W.B. Montgomery, was instrumental in rebuilding Mississippi after the war, and he played a major role in founding this university. And so, this afternoon I want to recognize those pioneering efforts and to salute my dear friend, the

colonel's great-grandson, your own Congressman, Sonny Montgomery. He always kids me that I win only when I'm wearing my Mississippi State shorts. I brought them along today with a plea: Can't we do better than this? [Laughter] Twenty years. If you don't do better than that by me, you're going to get this. [Laughter]

[At this point, the President held up an old, worn pair of Mississippi State exercise shorts and indicated that if they were not replaced by something better that he would wear shorts from the University of Mississippi, the rival school.]

You know, I come from a State where we like to sing "The Eyes of Texas Are Upon You." Well, today, my friends, the eyes of America are upon Starkville, Mississippi. For we meet, to begin with, at a special school, special because for 109 years MSU has made education a lasting legacy and opportunity its bequest. We gather, also, in a very special State, special for its people. You realize that who we are matters more than what we have. And you value home and family and tradition and service to country.

I thought of that today as Air Force One brought me to Mississippi, and of how, for me, this afternoon also marks another journey, back to some of my own pivotal years, the years I spent as an undergraduate. It was 41 years ago next month that I, too, received my degree, 1948. In 1948 there were only 172,000 television sets owned in the entire United States of America. Milton Berle was "Mr. Television," taking pies in the face. Harry Truman was Mr. President, giving 'em hell. And in many ways, it was a different America: less congestion, less pollution, less high tech. Pac Man was a camper, not a video game. [Laughter] And we had problems, sure: at home, gas shortages and housing problems and veterans adjusting to domestic life after World War II. Abroad, the Cold War had turned frigid. The Communist bloc was solidifying. China and the Middle East were rent asunder by war. And in a Europe torn by conflicting ideologies, the Soviets were blockading West Berlin. And yet, with the end of World War II, America was unified as few could have imagined. I'm sure many of you have seen that famous Life magazine photo that captured the spirit of those times: the sailor in Times Square embracing a woman in the mass exultation of V - J Day, a victory for freedom that came after so much sacrifice. Like the woman swept off her feet, the spirit of rejoicing, and more importantly the limitless possibilities of America, swept us all. And I, too, felt that sense of idealism and opportunity and headed on out with Barbara -- headed out to Texas to make the most of the American Dream.

But today I look back upon those times, and I am struck by the wonder of how much this country has achieved. What newly married vet in his early twenties could have envisioned just how wide the golden door of opportunity would swing in four short decades? And I ask myself, what made this achievement possible? What caused America's technological and scientific advance, a prosperity and power unprecedented in world history? One thing, I believe, is what Mississippi's own William Faulkner called "the old verities and truths of the heart." My friends, it is these verities that in 1948 allowed us to meet our problems together. We took pride in our identity as a nation and solace in

our faith in God. And above all, we believed in the simple, the basic truths like kindness and civility, self-sacrifice and courage, compassion and concern for others, timeless values which span the generations, values which show that America is great because America is good.

An old saying notes how ``the world has turned over many times.'' It has since I graduated. The postwar period has given way to a new world, a world still perilous, but alive with prospects for peace and with the certainty of change. Yesterday at Texas A&M in Bryan, Texas, I talked of that change, of a new policy that moves beyond containment of the Soviet Union. And the new policy seeks to bring the Soviet Union into the family of nations, a policy, if you will, of reintegration. And as the Soviet Union moves toward greater openness and democratization, and as they meet the challenge of responsible international behavior, we will match their steps with steps of our own. And if we succeed, the future of every graduate today is going to be safer. The world we know will be more free. We can dedicate ourselves then to helping others even more.

Yet there are some things that haven't changed since 1948. Our values haven't. We see these values everywhere: a church-based child-care center, choir practice, or the PTA. And they uplift American society, for they reflect the tenets of ``Do Unto Others,'' tenets I respect and which I will try hard to serve as President of the United States. And they are the values of America's good, quiet, decent people, Americans who know that we are not the sum of our possessions but of how we conduct ourselves. And these people form the heart of our society. And they enrich its central unit: the family. Here these values play a special role, for they teach that life is not a celebration of self and our fate is not divisible.

As I mentioned to the graduating class at Alcorn, I will do nothing as President, nothing at all, to weaken our society by weakening the fundamental role of family in our society. Instead, I will do all I can to emphasize its importance and to reinforce its role. I've been very lucky -- a wonderful wife and five great kids. They're through college. And I remember receiving letters from them, and there would always be that ``P.S.'' at the bottom, those three little words, ``Please Send Money,'' that special bond between parents at home and kids away at school. I expect these parents have never, ever received a letter like that.

Five kids and 11 lively grandkids -- and by themselves, they could field the Bulldogs' entire pitching staff. And I understand you people with the earphones staying plugged in to the baseball game. [Laughter] If I were sitting up there, I'd be doing exactly the same thing. [Laughter] Never say that Mississippians do not have their priorities sorted out right. [Laughter]

But like all kids, ours provide a Rubik Cube of questions. And like most families, they supply that love and allegiance which make us more fulfilled. And, believe me, sometimes we need that loyalty. I'm reminded of the alumnus who sent his coach a telegram before the big game. It read: ``Remember, coach, we're all behind you -- win or tie.'' [Laughter]

The individual is important, but the family unit can be our secret weapon and our shield. And as President, I want to strengthen it. To help the family, we must keep America prosperous, strong, and free. We must stop the scourge of drug abuse, and we will. We must build an educational system which invests in our children. And for those who, for whatever reason -- sickness, poverty, the death of a loved one -- feel alone and isolated, let us become their family, not in a legal sense but in a human sense: helping, supporting, caring for our neighbor.

Today millions of Americans are doing just that: giving of themselves and helping others. And we term their work voluntarism, or community service. For they show how the definition of a successful life must include serving others.

The French writer Jean Cocteau was once asked what he would take if his house were on fire and he could remove only one thing. "I would take the fire," he replied. [Laughter] He liked what worked. Well, so do I. Community service works because it's real, not abstract. It makes achievements feasible. Compassion helps one child escape heroin addiction. Generosity allows another to eat a decent meal. And through faith in God, still another overcomes the curse of bigotry and hatred.

And that's why I have created the Office of National Service, which will enlist new volunteers to help meet unmet social needs. Project Victory, or Mission Impossible? Look to the heroes of today for an answer -- look to David Pettry, an MSU agronomist who has traveled around the world to nurture soil management; or Steve Cooper, who works in Starkville's Help Find the Children campaign; or Donnie Prisock -- Dr. Donnie -- a quadriplegic who earned his Ph.D. and who counsels handicapped students right here at this school. Heroes? Every one. For they know that the private sector -- and individuals -- have the resources and the responsibility to confront issues like hunger and health care, drug abuse and teen pregnancy. A famous adage says that "Luck is the residue of design." Well, America's luck can be the residue of voluntarism's design.

My friends, you've worked hard and studied and struggled for 4 years, and now you've endured the hardest part: listening to the commencement address. [Laughter] And I haven't even begun. Let's see, Y - M - I - S. [Laughter]

But let me leave you with the thought that Mississippi has given America some indelible leaders: in politics, John Stennis; in publishing, Eugene Butler; in entertainment, country's Jerry Clower. And always, you've treasured Faulkner's "verities and truths of the heart." Community service -- national service -- reflects those verities: "love and honor and pride and compassion and sacrifice," values which can ennoble the family and American society at large. So, let Faulkner's "verities of the heart" be our values, not merely for this generation but for future generations. And inspired by America's good, quiet, decent people, let us help enrich America so that America can continue to enrich the world.

Good luck to each one of you. My heart-felt congratulations. May your future be worthy of your dreams. And may you always

say, as I do now, God bless the United States of America. Thank
you for inviting me. Thanks a lot.

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

April 12, 1989

Remarks at the Annual Congressional Fire
Services Institute Dinner

The President. Members of the fire service community and ladies and gentlemen and friends, what a wonderful evening this is. Let me say, it's a great privilege to be, as Yogi Berra might say, in such extinguished company -- [laughter] -- all fired up. [Laughter] I want to thank you, though, for that warmth of your reception here and for your kindness. And let me just first congratulate some who are responsible for this first, massively successful event. I'm referring, of course, to the International Associations of Fire Chiefs and Fire Fighters, the International Society of Fire Service Instructors, the National Fire Protection Association, the National Volunteer Fire Council, and the Volunteer Firemen's Insurance Services. And I want to also salute the individual representatives of the fire service community and then the members of the Congressional Fire Service Caucus, now the third-largest, I believe, technically. But if I know Congressman Curt Weldon, you're going to be number one. Let me salute the members of Congress that are gathered here, and particularly singling out not only the firefighter's best friend, Congressman Curt Weldon -- he talked about a sleeping giant awakened; you try sleeping -- [laughter] -- with Curt Weldon on your case, giving you a hot foot -- but Congressman Doug Walgren here and Sherry Boehlert on this side here at the head table. I single them out for their special leadership and interest in the affairs that bind us all together tonight here.

And finally, I want to say that you've chosen a wonderful time of year to hold this first annual Congressional Fire Services Institute dinner. After all, just think of it. Spring is in the air. Washington is alive with visitors. Baseball's Orioles are still in the pennant race -- something we couldn't have said last year at this time -- [laughter] -- the season's a week old. [Laughter] Our dog has had her puppies. [Laughter] And my wife got a nice clean bill of health today out of Walter Reed Hospital.

So, we meet together in a special week, for this is Volunteer Week, a time which celebrates the selfless character of the American people. And looking toward tonight, I was struck by the fact that 85 percent of our nation's fire protection is indeed supplied by volunteers. And it occurred to me that both you and your paid colleagues -- professionals -- for both give time and of yourselves, provide the definition of a successful life. For any definition of a successful life, it seems to me, must include serving others. A successful life means that we're partners, not islands unto ourselves, the sum not of our possessions but of how we treat our neighbors. For more than 200 years, firefighters have been this nation's neighbor in word and deed, the backbone of

America. And you've met local emergencies through volunteer and paid fire and emergency service networks. And today, you meet them still -- three million members strong.

And you know, being here tonight reminds me of a story that I heard which happened back in Prohibition days. It seems that 25 of Boston's top bootleggers were rounded up in a surprise raid. And as they were being arraigned, the judge asked the usual question about occupation. And the first 24 men were engaged in the same profession: Each claimed to be a firefighter. Well, naturally, the judge asked the last prisoner, "And what are you?" And "Your Honor," he replied, "I'm a bootlegger." And surprised, the judge laughed and asked, "Well, how's business?" The guy said, "Well, it'd be a hell of a lot better if there weren't so many firefighters around." [Laughter]

What I'm getting at -- even back in Prohibition, your numbers turned the tide. [Laughter] And so, they can today, and must, too, in the future. We've come a long way since Benjamin Franklin founded one of the first volunteer fire companies in 1736. And now, let's go forward and help achieve your goal: a better, more secure, more firesafe America.

Let me just share a few thoughts with you, and then you can get on with the dinner. First, this administration believes the fire service network deserves a Federal Government which understands and values its place in the American community. Almost every municipality has some sort of emergency fire organization. At the 4th of July celebration or Memorial Day parade, the fire service is there. At senior citizens centers and service clubs, the fire service is there. And when fire raged at Yellowstone, the fire service was there. And so, too, when you become the first responder not only to fire but to accidents and floods and cave-ins and collapsed buildings, you deserve the Government's respect. And in my administration, you have it.

Second, this administration believes that you deserve the Government's support. Fifteen years ago, the National Fire Prevention and Control Administration was created to ensure that your concerns would be heard by every level of government. I intend for those concerns to be heard. And tonight, I commend the U.S. Fire Administration for pursuing with vigor its rightful role as the fire services Federal advocate and for providing a national clearinghouse to deal with these fire service issues. We want the National Fire Academy to retain its prominence as a national training center. And like the previous administration, we want the original intent of the Federal Fire Act of 1974 to be maintained.

You know, every profession -- you know this and I know it -- every profession has its ups and downs. And perhaps former hockey coach Harry Neale put it best: "Last season we couldn't win at home, and we were losing on the road." He said, "My failure as a coach was that I couldn't think of anyplace else to play." [Laughter]

Well, the difference is that few professions display that special brand of skill and heroism that is found in the fire service. I'm thinking, for example, of how last May, Richard Shiah, an off-duty battalion chief, arrived at the scene of a

burning pickup truck that was overturned in a ditch. And with no protective clothing on, risked his life -- suffered second-degree burns on his face and wrists, to save a father and two sons. Chief Shiah shows, like every firefighter, that heroism American-style is not going out of style, and tonight let us pledge that it never will. And to achieve that goal, let us act specifically to help the fire services in protecting our citizens from loss of life and property.

Each year, more than 6,000 lives are lost in fires, and over \$10 billion lost in property damage. And to combat such tragedy, we must foster greater public awareness of fire problems by supporting the Federal fire safety program. But we must also act when tragedy does occur. And toward that end, last year, as part of the Omnibus Drug Act of 1988, we raised the death benefit for fallen firefighters from \$50,000 to \$100,000.

We've done much, but we must do more. And as we do, we'll show how voluntarism can join hands with government to renew the promise of America. And that's why I have opened at the White House the Office of National Service. This office is leading my administration's community and national service efforts. And yesterday, I saluted the 18 recipients of the 1989 President's Volunteer Action Awards. And soon, I will announce our administration's Y-E-S, or YES Program, Youth Entering Service. And this program will encourage all young Americans to get involved in community service, to reignite the concept of one young person helping another.

And I have said I like what works. Well, voluntarism works. In a recent Gallup Poll, nearly 50 percent of the population was involved in community service. And today millions of people are lending a hand, tending a wound, helping the less fortunate, in a homeless shelter, in an inner-city school, or in our fire and emergency services.

And some of you may know, Teddy Roosevelt is among my favorite Presidents. Let me relate what his dad said to him on the eve of his 16th birthday: "All that gives me most pleasure in the retrospect is connected with others. We are not placed here to live exclusively for ourselves." And my friends, you, as well as anyone, embody those words. By saving lives, you have defined a successful life. And for that, I thank you. And yet I challenge you, too. And so, let us build on our beginnings. Let us continue to strive for a firesafe America. And as we do, all Americans will say, as I do tonight: The horizons of America have no limit. The best for America still does lie ahead.

Thank you for this evening. Thank you for inviting me. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America. Thank you all very much.

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

February 17, 1989

Remarks to Students of Washington University
in St. Louis, Missouri

Thank you, Chancellor Danforth; Chairman Liberman; our distinguished Governor, John Ashcroft; and Senator Bond; Congressman Buechner here; and to your student body president, Cynthia Homan; and other student leaders that have given me this warm reception. I really am pleased to be here, and I've looked forward to sharing this occasion with you.

Mark Twain once wrote: "In Boston, they ask, How much does he know? In Philadelphia, Who were his parents? In New York, How much is he worth?" [Laughter] But Mark Twain was a Missourian. He would agree with me that you couldn't put a price tag on this morning. Believe me, I'm delighted to be here, back in St. Louis and back at this university of excellence; the home of the State of Missouri; the home of ragtime and aerospace, agriculture; the State whose native sons include Omar Bradley and Harry Truman and that master linguist, Yogi Berra -- [laughter] -- the State -- oh, I love to quote Yogi. Do you remember when he said: "Let's pair 'em off in three's"? -- [laughter] -- and nevertheless, this State whose citizens embody the best of America and know that the heart of America is good, working, serving others, hoping and dreaming.

For 136 years your excellent university has played a part in that effort. Your community has built a pioneering effort in science and math. Your teaching, research, and soaring admission applications tell a story summed up best by two words: academic excellence. But there's another side of it, another side of the story that Washington University has to tell, a story from which all America can learn. It's a story about investing in America's future, how as students and faculty, administrators and alumni, you have shown that service and voluntarism can enrich education and enrich America. You work with the Special Olympics. Sunday's Special Olympics is but one chapter in that wonderful story. And around the Nation, other chapters are being written every day. And we're writing another chapter -- trying to -- in Washington, by opening in the White House the Office of National Service, which will lead my administration's community and national service programs. And our goal is simple: more Americans helping others by effectively serving their communities and the Nation. And these symbols, these signs around this room, I think, sum up what I talk about when I talk about a thousand points of light: It is neighbor helping neighbor. It is kid helping kid. It is friends holding out their hand to other friends.

From now on, in America any definition of a successful life must include serving others -- in a child care center, the corporate boardroom, in the Rotary or Little League or a tutoring program or a church or a synagogue. Our new initiative will reflect that spirit, once called America's genius for great and generous deeds. And I take special pride in our YES, our YES program, Youth Entering Service, which I proposed last fall to encourage American youth to give of themselves to help others in need. And I'm convinced that we can help alleviate many national problems by substantially increasing the involvement of young Americans in voluntary service. And the establishment of the YES Foundation will help lead that effort. Together, we can show that what matters in the end are not possessions. What matters is engaging in high moral principle of serving one another. And that's the story of America that we can write through voluntary service.

Eight days ago, in a joint session of Congress, I proposed a budget to complement voluntary efforts to help serve the gentler impulses of mankind. I listed four national objectives: to bring the deficit down, to invest in America's future, to find solutions to an urgent set of national priorities, and no new taxes. And our budget curbs the growth of Federal spending while providing for the most vulnerable among us. It is responsive and responsible, and it will ensure a strong and stable economy. Our budget balances social concern with fiscal sanity and leaves power in the hands of the people. It shows that we can have a government with a heart as well as a head.

And when it comes to reducing the deficit, some people say it can't be done without neglecting our urgent social needs. It can be done, but it can't be done with business as usual. Next year alone, thanks to economic growth -- it's essential we keep the economic growth going in this country -- but thanks to economic growth next year alone, Federal tax revenues under existing law will rise by more than \$80 billion -- more than \$80 billion in new revenues under existing law in 1 year alone. And our job is to allocate these new resources wisely: to reduce the Federal deficit by more than 40 percent, with no new taxes, and yet investing in key priorities.

Budget consultations with the Congress, as some of you may have read, are already underway; and we are making progress. And yesterday I called the five congressional leaders and invited them to come to the White House for another round of budget talks next Tuesday morning. I am committed to working closely with my friends on the Hill to help them meet the target date set by Gramm-Rudman-Hollings for an April 15th budget resolution. And together, we've got to make the process work.

There are certain priorities that demand attention. And, yes, we can afford to increase spending -- modestly, selectively, but only after tough choices are made. And we must spend enough to protect our national security, and that is a chief responsibility of every President of the United States. And certainly we must not fall back on the tax-and-spend policies of the past. But programs that can work must be protected and, in some cases, funding increased. Our budget is fair to recipients, fair to taxpayers, and fairminded in its strategy. It embodies two qualities which are always in season: the common sense that

Justice Learned Hand termed ``the eventual supremacy of reason'' and America's capacity to care.

Most Americans believe that in the America of the 1990's our challenges must be met in several ways -- by government, by thousand upon thousands of other institutions, and by the people themselves working together -- or they won't be met at all. The Government's contribution is critical, but by itself is insufficient to solve all of our national problems. And yet most Americans believe that our efforts must reach beyond government to care about our communities and to assist our neighbors. I called it, in a speech earlier on, a thousand points of light; and some of the columnists have had fun with that, interpreting it as a thousand pints of lite. I'm surprised you didn't get that one here in Missouri. But I think people are beginning to understand what I mean by ``a thousand points of light.'' And if they'd look at these signs and talk to some of you responsible for them, I think they'd understand it without contradiction. I believe that government can be an important catalyst in that process of helping individuals, helping our communities, helping our nation.

And our budget does more, for instance, for environment, more for the space program, invests almost \$2.2 billion for the National Science Foundation -- a lot of that going to universities to help basic research. It increases funding for the Head Start Program and allocates \$1 billion more in additional outlays to stop the deadly scourge of drugs. We have got to fight the drug fight on two fronts -- supply and demand -- to reclaim the lives of addicts who want help, educate young people about the dangers of drugs, and then enforce our laws. All this is what I mean when I speak of investing in the future.

To minority Americans, this budget says: Education means opportunity, and bigotry will not be tolerated anywhere in the United States of America. To the homeless, this budget targets \$1 billion, saying: Our nation must leave no one out. To the elderly, this budget vows: Your dignity and concerns will be respected. And to the Nation's youth, the budget says: The promise of tomorrow lies in the children of today.

Consider this: We've proposed a new child care initiative. It's not going to take care of everybody. It's targeted at low-income families. We've restored and doubled the tax deduction for adopting special needs children. We want those kids in families of love. And even more, we've made education the gateway arch of the Bush administration. For our pursuit of excellence is central to the future of America; and if excellence breeds achievement, then excellence must be rewarded in grade school, in high school, and in the colleges and universities of America.

Last Thursday, I asked Congress to begin a \$500 million program to reward America's best schools, merit schools, and to establish special Presidential award for the best teachers in every State. I urged expanded use of what are known as magnet schools, giving families and students a choice in education. And I proposed a new program to encourage what we call alternative certification. It is wrong if one of you guys who graduate from this school of excellence, one of you wants to go and give of

yourselves to teach in some urban area in a public school -- it is wrong to have this excellence go to waste because of some hide-bound restrictions having to do with too many certifications that keep idealistic young people from teaching. I want to change that and have alternative certification.

We must bring more of our best minds back to the teaching profession. And through a new program of National Science Scholars, we can inspire their students, also giving America's youth a special incentive to excel in science and mathematics. In short, I wish to achieve nationally what this university has done historically: to make excellence in learning a national way of life. Education can ennoble the American story. It's the best way to invest in our future and to make this better, more selfless, and a more tolerant world.

And, yes, in some areas, I've got to confess, I wish we did have more money to spend -- key areas like drugs and education. I will candidly admit that the Federal Government could use more resources to bring to bear on these problems. But we've had to set priorities. We've had to make the tough choices. And I believe we have set the right priorities in this budget. Ours isn't the total answer, but in this budget, we've made a good beginning. And now I've asked the Congressmen to come -- the leaders to come -- meet with me and, in a spirit of bipartisanship, get on with the Nation's business of getting a quick and early resolution to this budget crisis. And now we have work to do. There are many problems that must be solved in America today, and I remain confident that our nation can solve them. But America must go far beyond the Federal budget to achieve its goals. We've got to forge strong partnerships between all levels of government and voluntary organizations and business corporations and individuals, to lend a hand and mend a wound and help the less fortunate.

Next week, Barbara and I are going to embark on a long journey. We're going to be trying to pursue peace and friendship, a journey that's going to take us across the Pacific to Japan and China and to Korea. And we go to attend the funeral of the late Emperor and to consult with the leaders of many of America's allies and friends there in Tokyo, who will be attending those ceremonies. And my visit to China is a bit of a sentimental journey to a country where I served as America's equivalent then of Ambassador 14 or 15 years ago. And several days ago, preparing for our trip, I came across these words of an old Chinese proverb: "One generation plants the seed; another gets the shade." Think of the investments that we make in our future as America's seeds. And we can lift hearts. We can change lives. And we can shape the 1990's, just one decade before a whole new century.

It's a tall order, but it has been the American story for over 200 years. And let's write it together. And let me say in conclusion, just being here, just seeing these symbols of voluntarism, make me absolutely convinced that if we take this spirit evident in this gym here today and then multiply it by those thousands we can do the job. Let's write the next chapter together.

Thank you all for this wonderful welcome, and God bless you

all. Thank you very much.

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

April 10, 1991

Appointment of C. Gregg Petersmeyer as Assistant to the
President and Director of the Office of National Service

The President today announced the appointment of C. Gregg Petersmeyer, of Colorado, to be Assistant to the President and Director of the Office of National Service at the White House.

Since January 1989 Mr. Petersmeyer has been Deputy Assistant to the President and Director of the Office of National Service. Prior to this Mr. Petersmeyer was a senior officer of the General Atlantic Energy Corp., a private oil and gas exploration company in Denver, CO. Before moving to Denver in 1982, Mr. Petersmeyer was with McKinsey & Co., Inc., in New York and has also been a member of the Hudson Institute. From 1972 to 1974 Mr. Petersmeyer served as a staff assistant in the White House. Mr. Petersmeyer is chairman of the Fitzie Foundation, a nonprofit public foundation that annually recognizes and rewards outstanding girls and young women from four schools in the Boston area.

Mr. Petersmeyer received a bachelor of arts degree with honors from Harvard College, a master of literature degree from Oxford University, and a master of business administration degree from Harvard Business School. Mr. Petersmeyer resides in Bethesda, MD, with his three children.

*Note: Petersmeyer testified before the House Education
Subcommittee on 6/24/89.*