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REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY
SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION ELIZABETH HANFORD DOLE
TO THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TOWNS AND TOWNSHIPS
NATIONAL CONFERENCE
WASHINGTON, D.C.
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It's a real joy to be with you for your 1984 national conference. I feel a close kinship with this organization, from my White House days and from the commitment to public service we both share. Then, too, George was telling me how many husband-wife teams there are in local government. That, of course, doesn't surprise me at all. It even happens occasionally in Washington. And, I might add, I recommend it.

Speaking of Bob Dole, I have to tell you another reason that I feel such a closeness and kinship with all of you this morning. Bob and I are both from small towns and I think that most of you here would say the same. I recall when he first met me he asked, "Where are you from?" I said from a small town in North Carolina. He asked "How many people?" When I said 22,000, Bob said, "Elizabeth, you don't know what a small town is." He is from Russell, Kansas, population 6,000.

It wasn't long after we were married that Bob was nominated to run with Jerry Ford as his Vice President on the Republican ticket. One of his first campaign stops in 1976 was Russell. It was one of the most heartwarming experience for a bride of six months. I will never forget my husband standing there making a speech to not only the 6,000 people of Russell, but to the 10,000 who had come in from the surrounding areas. As he was speaking, for a moment his voice wavered. He had to stop. He put his hands to his eyes. He was so touched and so moved as he looked at those warm, smiling faces in that audience that day. His mind was going back to not only the eleven elections that all these wonderful people had helped him win but also to the moral and financial support they had given him at the end of World War Two when he had come home in a body cast completely paralyzed. The people of the town had turned out for him that day too; just as they had in 1976. They contributed nickels, dimes and fifty-cent pieces in a cigar box to raise the money for the eight operations he had to have during the three year period he was hospitalized. And that's what it means to the two of us to come from a small town. The fact that people will really give you that kind of moral and financial help, whatever you might need. They are there to fully support you at times of joy and sorrow. It is a tremendous heritage. So indeed, I feel very close to you and this organization. I'm delighted today to have a chance to visit with you for a few

moments. I appreciate so much your asking me to be one of your speakers at your 1984 national conference.

Like your Association, as expressed in the theme of this Conference, we do have "a reason to be proud." President Reagan has restored our nation's confidence. We are engaged again in the pursuit of excellence in this country -- both in our national life and in world affairs. We are rediscovering in my view the bedrock values that made our country great in the first place -- values that began in America's town meetings and still are expressed most eloquently in our hamlets and rural communities. I know when I meet with members of this organization, I'm talking with people firmly dedicated to representative government and to the personal and political freedoms we cherish.

We are a nation renewed in substance as well as spirit. Our economy continues to advance, at healthier rates than even the most optimistic had predicted. GNP grew at a 7.6 percent annual rate in the second quarter, following the first quarter's phenomenal 10.1 percent increase. At the the same time, inflation fell -- averaging a modest four percent through July of this year. Statistically, unemployment remains too high, at 7.4 percent, but there are 3½ million fewer people unemployed today than at the depths of the recession. More than 107 million Americans are working, and "help wanted" signs are appearing again in stores and plants and at construction sites all across our country. America's vital signs are good; the prognosis for further recovery and continuing growth is excellent.

The miracle that is America has its roots in the volunteer spirit that shines like a beacon from every village green and town square across this great country of ours. I grew up in Salisbury, North Carolina, but my values could have been shaped in any small American town.

I learned from my parents about moral courage. I was taught to despise tyranny and defend democracy. I was raised believing in Roosevelt's insistence on equal opportunity, as well as Lincoln's commitment to equal rights. And I learned that in America neighbor helps neighbor, and public service is every citizen's privilege.

That voluntary spirit still thrives in our communities. I saw it in Lynchburg, Virginia, recently on the 50th anniversary of that city's Life Saving and Rescue Squad. There, as in the 246 other rescue squads in the Commonwealth of Virginia alone, volunteers donate their time and dedicate their lives to helping those in need.

The tradition is most evident in America's towns and townships, community service organizations and volunteer fire departments. Salaries are usually small, if there are salaries at all. Men and women, imbued with the spirit of public service, take time out of their private lives and money out of their pockets --and even days away from their private sector jobs to attend conferences like this one: all for the satisfaction of helping others.

For half a century in America, big government tried to improve on that. When the depression hit and dire hardship forced millions to turn to the Federal government for food and shelter, that government responded. It fed the hungry, housed the homeless, sustained the jobless, and corrected past abuses. Over time, it came to believe that it might one day mandate an end to poverty itself. Yet it simultaneously acted as if the creation of new wealth -- the lifeblood of expanded prosperity -- were somehow an affront to those most in need.

Promising much, big government performed erratically. Reserving the riches of the nation for its own coffers, it dulled the cutting edge of American ingenuity, that remarkable machinery which has given more people a higher standard of living than any other system in the long chronicle of mankind.

Caught up in a cynical society, we began to wonder if individuals counted any longer. In the most painful irony of all, a government in Washington that regarded itself as the social conscience of our nation helped create the "me generation."

Thankfully, that has changed. The "me generation" has again become the "we generation," as Americans regain confidence in the spirit of public service and the helping hand of friendship that built our great nation in the first place.

I don't have to remind this audience of who we are, and where we came from. Before there was an American government, there were Americans drawn together in voluntary associations. From our earliest days, we have been prone to organize for the betterment of the community. Prior to independence, there were sons of liberty and committees of correspondence to raise the flag of a new nation. Government arose to defend our territory, promote our enterprise, and embody the charitable attitudes of the people themselves. Over the years, the volunteer tradition continued: on Western prairies and in urban slums, at church suppers and community chests, in town halls and city councils.

When we think about it, the dominance of big government in our lives arose in relatively recent times. Historically, we Americans have never needed government to instill in us compassion for our neighbors. In no other land does philanthropy rest on as broad a base as here. A Frenchman, Alexis de Tocqueville, found it flourishing more than 150 years ago, while visiting the shores of our infant republic. The great French writer discerned something uniquely American. "If I were asked ... to what the prosperity and growing strength of that people ought mainly to be attributed," he wrote, "I should reply: to the voluntary association -- that unique American institution whereby people associate together to strengthen their cause as well as their voice."

In truth, we are still what we were then -- a philanthropic family: one million voluntary organizations rolling up their sleeves instead of twiddling their thumbs; millions of individuals who gave billions of dollars in charitable donations last year alone; thousands of corporations and foundations, who chipped in billions more on top of that amount. And in America, generosity is not measured by economic attainments; much of the giving in this country comes from families with moderate incomes. Much of it comes from public-spirited citizens giving liberally of themselves.

Lately we have seen another example of voluntarism at work on a broad scale in our country. Today's national campaign against drunk driving began at America's grassroots, powered by a groundswell of action by volunteers: Mothers Against Drunk Drivers (MADD) and allied organizations such as Students Against Drunk Drivers (SADD) and Dealers Against Drunk Drivers (DADD); as well as another pioneer group RID (Remove Intoxicated Drivers) and what have grown to be a host of advocates for tougher drunk driving legislation and enforcement.

The results have been impressive. Virtually every state has passed or proposed new anti-drunk driving laws. Enforcement agencies are cracking down. Communities are showing concern through rehabilitation programs. Americans are no longer willing to tolerate lax laws and lenient judges.

Two months ago, President Reagan signed into law a bill providing federal incentives for states dealing sternly with those convicted of drunk driving -- and encouraging states to set twenty-one as their legal minimum drinking age for all alcoholic beverages. About half the states already have such a law. A uniform drinking age, as the President said, will do away with today's "crazy quilt" of different state drinking laws that has resulted in what have been called "blood borders" -- where teenagers have an incentive to drink and drive by crossing state lines to take advantage of lower drinking age laws. We normally defer to state governments on traffic law issues, but this was one instance where we believed federal leadership was justified. We know there are a lot of responsible young people, but statistics show that drivers between the ages of eighteen and twenty are more than twice as likely as older drivers to become involved in alcohol-related accidents. In every state where the drinking age has been raised, teenage driving deaths have declined.

Our goal is to save young lives nationwide, and spare many families the heartache and financial tragedy of loved ones lost or seriously injured. More than that, we must raise the drinking age to protect all our people. And we will not rest until every last drunk driver is off the roads and highways of this country. And in this effort we return where the crusade started -- to the communities: individual citizens, service groups, local officials, volunteers who care about what happens in their localities.

Like you, I view the safety of our citizens as a high priority, and that extends to all forms of transportation. We are involved, along with the private sector, in a nationwide campaign to increase automobile seat belt usage. We recently completed a "white glove" safety inspection of 350 air carriers, inspecting flight operations, maintenance procedures and maintenance records. We're currently looking at general aviation to see if its safety record can be improved. And along with the Association of American Railroads, the National Safety Council and others, we're participating in "Operation Lifesaver" -- a program to reduce grade crossing accidents, where most railroad fatalities occur.

Our safety interests extend as well to America's roads and bridges. The Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1982 added a nickel a gallon to the Federal gas tax, the first increase in 25 years, to help meet highway needs. As a result, states received a record \$12.8 billion in federal highway funds last year, 56 percent more than in 1982, and overall, rural highway improvements, including rural Interstate segments, represent about 50 percent of federal-aid highway funding.

While the higher funding levels permitted by the greater user fee revenues have not increased secondary road funds directly, states are receiving more federal dollars than before with greater flexibility to determine their needs and priorities. As local officials, you can and should work closely with state authorities to assure that road and bridge resources are being used to the best advantage for all our people. I know your president is committed to closer ties with state legislators. The tour he arranged recently for members of the Illinois legislature, and his work as a member of the Agriculture Department's Rural Advisory Committee, exemplify the greater understanding of needs and problems developing between township officials and those at the state and federal levels.

Let me assure you, we are aware of your special concerns and will continue to assist you in every way possible. Our Federal Highway Administration's Rural Technical Assistance Program provides \$5 million a year to rural agencies having transportation

responsibilities. The 33 projects approved under this program since 1981 have been designed to assist local governments in meeting rural transportation needs. One of the largest of the projects, our Technology Transfer -- or "T-Square" program, as you know it -- provides special training for public works professionals. Technology Transfer Centers are now in place at 23 universities throughout the country. Nine of these Centers alone already have assisted more than 5,000 local officials in subjects ranging from rural road maintenance and right-of-way acquisition to financial management and microcomputer use.

And we don't believe for a minute that public transportation is only for our cities. Under the Surface Transportation Assistance Act, \$70 million a year is available for small and rural communities in transit formula funding. This program assists more than a thousand transit operations across the country.

In Klamath Falls, Oregon, for example, a pilot project begun a few years ago with just four small buses has been so successful that first-year ridership forecasts were met in just two months. An expanded fleet now serves 22,000 people a month over six fixed routes. And down in Carolina, in my home town, Salisbury recently joined Rowan county in a transportation development plan providing coordinated transit services at a lower overall cost.

Around the clock, trucks and trains carrying hazardous cargo travel the roads and rails in or near thousands of American communities. We work hand-in-hand with this organization and with state and municipal officials to assure the maximum safety of those materials in transport, and to reduce risk when an accident does occur. We set packaging standards. We enforce shipping regulations. Along with the industry, we are continually looking for ways to make the trucks, tank cars and vessels carrying hazardous materials safer. And the nation's chemical and trucking companies are involved in programs to help assure safety precautions by both shippers and carriers.

Part of the increase in the federal gasoline tax provides federal assistance for state motor carrier safety inspection and enforcement services. In addition, we have prepared and distributed technical assistance materials to local fire and emergency response agencies in towns throughout the country. You are helping substantially in this drive to assure that communities are both prepared and equipped to cope with emergencies. The guidebook that NATaT, as a member of the Rural Governments Coalition, recently helped publish is an excellent manual on emergency preparedness.

I am confident that, working together, we will achieve those goals we share in common -- better, safer transportation for all our people. I am always greatly encouraged by opportunities, such as I have had this morning, to meet with the people who see our great country from the home town perspective of local government. Rural America is enjoying a renaissance of popularity. And with good reason. America's small towns offer an abundance of what we most respect in life -- family values, friendship, neighbor-helping-neighbor and an honest appreciation for both private enterprise and public service.

Our nation's great strength always has been and always will be her people -- hometown people like Irene Huller who is here today from Fallon Township, Illinois. Irene is a township road commissioner -- responsible for 36 miles of road in St. Clair County. She represents a growing number of women dedicated today to public service who fill roles in both the private and public sectors. I'm delighted to greet her and each of you here today.

As town and township officials, you are united in a common bond of dedication to voluntary public service. The breadth and energy of your programs and activities touch so many people. You demonstrate the difference a person can make in our society. I frequently think of a woman who knew great adversity, one whose spirit and example inspired millions. Her name was Helen Keller -- and she summed up her philosophy in a single sentence. "One can never consent to creep," she wrote, "when one feels an impulse to soar." Your commitment makes our spirits soar and we all prosper from your work. As a fellow public servant, I salute you. As a fellow American, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

God bless you all.

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