

REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY
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OKLAHOMA STATE REPUBLICAN CONVENTION
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Thank you Don for that kind introduction. I'm delighted to be back in Oklahoma City, home of the National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center, and with you this afternoon. Your service to our party and the nation represents a personal commitment which stands as a model for all of us. I want to congratulate State Party Chairman Tom Cole, Vice Chairman Carol Acott, National Committeeman Lou Ward and National Committeewoman Grace Boulton for their tremendous leadership. It's thanks to these individuals, and all of you here today, that Oklahoma Republicans "can't wait 'till 88"

Bob would be so impressed with the enthusiasm of this convention. This conference is a wonderful demonstration of the remarkable growth of our party throughout the Sunbelt.

Yes, thanks to you, Oklahoma has become a two-party state. The Democrats can no longer take this state for granted. Oklahoma and the entire Sunbelt have become the center of the political battleground and will play a pivotal role in American politics for decades to come.

Here in Oklahoma, we have tremendous Republican leaders who are showing the people of the Sooner State that Republicans get the job done. It's so good to have Henry Bellmon back in the Statehouse to lead the state back to prosperity. I understand Governor Bellmon is meeting with the President in Washington today to discuss the problems of the oil industry in the state. We in the Reagan Administration are committed to working with you to repeal the windfall profits tax and the Fuel Use Act.

While we are all very disappointed we didn't retain control of the U.S. Senate, the Sooner State sent back your outstanding Republican Senator, Don Nickles, to Washington. Don proved his effectiveness in the Senate last year when he got the repeal of the windfall profits tax through the Senate, but unfortunately the bill did not pass the House. As I just mentioned, the Administration and Don will be working together to win passage in both Houses this year.

The election of Henry Bellmon and the reelection of Don Nickles marked the first time Oklahoma elected a Republican governor and Senator in the same year, and gives our party great encouragement as we look to the future.

And the good news doesn't stop there. Jim Inhofe's victory in the 1st Congressional District, joining Mickey Edwards in your GOP House Delegation gives our party two Republicans in the House of Representatives for the first time since 1972. I am looking forward to working with Congressman Inhofe on the House Public Works and Transportation Committee. And at the state level, we picked up three Senate seats while holding our own in the House. Those three Senate seats are crucial, because for the first time in modern history, the Democrats cannot pass emergency measures or override gubernatorial vetoes without Republican votes.

The fact that we now have such fine leaders is due in no small part to those who give to the political process their heart, as well as their material resources -- who share their time, their energy, their commitment. And we know that is what it takes to win elections.

I'm looking at just such a gathering today, and if I impart nothing else, I want to express the personal gratitude I feel, along with so many others in the Reagan Administration, for all you do to make what we do possible. You remind us -- as if we needed any reminding -- that a country is like a tree, strongest at its grassroots. Certainly that's the hallmark of Ronald Reagan's presidency.

Ladies and gentlemen, you do it again and again, for your party and your country. And I'm delighted to be able to thank you personally.

The Republican Party is a growing party in Oklahoma and throughout America because it favors growth and opportunity for all Americans. And Americans of all walks of life are finding a new home in the Republican Party.

The growth of the Oklahoma Republican Party is phenomenal -- long gone are the days where you could hold your party convention in a phone booth. As a native of North Carolina, I can remember similar situations, which are also happily a thing of the past. When I was growing up, if Republicans got two votes in my hometown, the registrar threw them out, figuring that someone had voted twice.

Thankfully, all that has changed, most notably right here in Oklahoma. Our party is a growing party here in Oklahoma and across America because we've restored hope to the vocabulary of American life. Events are not beyond our control. Our people are not without a future. For we were not meant to be victims of fate, but masters of destiny.

As we Republicans look to the future, we might do well to re-examine what it is we believe, what we hold onto in this fast spinning world. Today, we might well acknowledge that we live in a time of constant change.

Times of change are times of challenge. But they are also times of profound opportunity for those with the vision to see and the dedication to apply. Opportunity is what our party is all about: the opportunity to live as you choose, free from the dictates of government, and yet bound up with the conscience of a caring community.

The opportunity to test oneself on the running track of life, knowing that competition is the key that unlocks every closed door, levels every artificial barrier, overcomes every obstacle and surmounts every difficulty. It is a confident people who believe in their own ability to compete. It is a self-assured people who extend a helping hand to others. It is a prosperous people who give generously of their bounty. Such are the people of Oklahoma, never more so than in times of stress.

Today, there are people in pain, because they fear the loss of all they have known and loved. There is no reason to deny that fact. Neither is their any reason to get partisan about it. No party has a monopoly on compassion, nor a patent pending on wisdom. But our party, if it believes in anything, believes in the dignity of individual men, women and children. That dignity is upheld whenever national leaders arise to meet their responsibilities, and raise the spirits of the people around them.

Stop and think for a moment. Six years ago, our entire country was in both economic shambles and psychological doldrums. Double-digit inflation, interest rates the highest since the Civil War, and the lowest annual rate of growth of any major industrial power. All that is changing across the country.

Republicans have cut inflation by two-thirds. We have held inflation at our below four percent for four consecutive years, and last year's inflation rate was the lowest in 25 years. We have cut interest rates by more than half. Since November of 1982, more than 12½ million more people are working.

What's needed is self-evident. No one has been more eloquent in making the case for some budgetary common sense than Don Nickles. Every Sooner can be proud to have such a man representing this state in Washington. Indeed, it seems to me as if Don was onto something early -- that if you tell the truth to the American people, that if you level with them, ask some sacrifice now in order to sustain prosperity for their children and their children's children -- then their will, their drive, their determination, cannot be held back.

For all parts of our economy, our best hope lies in sustainable economic growth, expanded markets overseas, a fair trade policy which will tolerate no special favors and no government barriers. Free trade is a two way street, not a one-way alley. As the President has said, "We will not stand by and watch American businesses fail because of unfair trading practices abroad. We will not stand by and watch American workers lose their jobs because other nations do not play by the rules."

We can shrink the size of our federal government -- so as to expand the range of economic opportunities. We can press ahead with innovations all along the line, in government in business, and in agriculture alike.

We've got some big challenges ahead of us, some tough choices. With them comes the opportunity to put our stamp on history. Within our grasp are permanent solutions to problems that have plagued us for decades.

The tide of affairs is indeed at flood stage. But let's not deceive ourselves. In politics as elsewhere, those who rest on their laurels soon find themselves pretty uncomfortable. Ronald Reagan opened up a lot of doors for our party. Now it's up to us to walk through them.

It is in our power to regain a Republican majority in the Senate and forge a majority in both Houses of Congress in the not-to-distant future.

In the 1990 census, officials predict as many as many as 19 House seats will be added in the South and West, which will increase our opportunities to become the majority party in the House of Representatives. We must seize upon this chance to increase our ranks in the House.

In addition to regaining control of the Senate and electing more Republicans to the House, we're embarked on a long-range effort to increase our strength in state legislatures and governors' mansions in 1988, 1990 and beyond. Last November, here in Oklahoma you showed how much could be achieved when a lot of people, of all ages and backgrounds, pooled their idealism and sacrificed their shoe leather to persuade your friends and neighbors that Republican ideas should not be restricted to the White House. Indeed, there isn't a single state in the Union that we can't win -- nor a single state the Democrats can take for granted.

During the past six years, our party has established a benchmark of leadership that will require those who follow not merely to piece together a mosaic of political and special interests, but to assemble a constellation of ideas that weave together the aspirations of the people themselves. And to get the job done, we must renew our moral commitment to that spirit of service and selflessness that "flows like a deep and mighty river through the history of our nation."

Recently, a Washington cab driver was taking some tourists past the National Archives Building, where words carved over the door read, "What is Past is Prologue." The little girl in the family asked her father what it meant. Before he could reply, the cabbie said, "Honey, that means you ain't seen nothing yet!"

Ladies and gentlemen, I suggest that we ain't seen nothing yet! Together, we can secure the promise we made back in 1980, to give America back to the American people, to restore her will, to raise her spirits, renew her sense of destiny and reach out to all those who have yet to share in her abundance.

From this point on, which will it be for us as a party? A time of uncertainty -- or a time to seize our window of opportunity -- to solidify our gains and move into the future with a solid majority?

The future of our party and our nation begins here and now. Sometimes it seems as if the challenges are insurmountable -- it's at times like this I think of President Reagan's comment about his early days as Governor of California. "Each morning began," he said, "with someone standing before my desk describing yet another disaster. The feeling of stress became unbearable. I had the urge to look over my shoulder for someone I could pass the problem to. One day it came to me that I was looking in the wrong direction. I looked up instead of back. I'm still looking up. I couldn't face one day in this office if I didn't know I could ask God's help. Let us never forget the source of our strength and our courage.

Ours is neither the time nor is this the place for men or women with faint hearts, feeble courage, weak commitment or selfish motives. We will pursue our vision, and complete the task. Our party deserves it, history demands it, and our children will reward it.