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(Elliott)
May 2, 1983
6:00 p.m.

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL CONVENTION
PHOENIX, ARIZONA
FRIDAY, MAY 6, 1983

President Gaffney, officers, honored guests, and may I add with great pride and pleasure -- my fellow members of the National Rifle Association.

I'm delighted to be here in Phoenix, in this great, good neighbor State of Arizona. And I'm delighted to be with all of you. It does my spirit good to be with people who never lose faith in America, who never stop believing in her future -- and who never back down one inch from defending the constitutional freedoms that are every American's birthright.

What an honor to be together on the 110th annual meeting of this great organization. Nowadays, I'm honored to belong to any organization that's been around longer than I have.

Not too long ago, I had a very memorable visit from your officials. They walked into the Oval office with some members of the "F" troop of the Texas army. Now when I saw how those fellows were dressed, and what they were packing, I didn't know whether to stretch out my hand, or make a run for it through the Rose Garden.

Well, it turned out they wanted to induct me into the Texas army, and to give me a beautiful, hand-crafted flintlock rifle. Thank you for taking such good care of it. And Chris Hirsch -- are you out there? -- I just want you to know again how much I appreciate it and look forward to using it someday.

Being a part of this group, you know that good organizations don't just happen. They take root in a body of shared beliefs. They grow strong from leadership with vision, initiative and determination to reach great goals. And what you've accomplished speaks for itself: more than 2½ million members and NRA's getting stronger every day.

We saw proof of that strength recently. Many of you share a special blessing with me -- you're Californians. And you shocked California last November when you mobilized to help send Proposition 15 down to defeat. You pointed out that police would be so busy arresting handgun owners, they would be unable to protect the people against criminals. It's an annoying little truth, but those who seek to inflict harm are not fazed by gun control laws. I happen to know this from personal experience.

So if I may just put in a little plug: I believe in your leaders, Harlen Carter and Warren Cassidy, and I think they deserve to stay right where they are doing their great job. A house divided cannot stand. May you remain united and strong.

You know, I've always felt a special bond with the members of your group. You live by Lincoln's words, "Important principles may and must be inflexible." Your philosophy puts its trust in people. So you insist individuals be held responsible for their actions. The NRA believes America's laws were made to be obeyed, and that our constitutional liberties are just as important today as 200 years ago. And by the way, the Constitution does not say Government shall decree the right to keep and bear arms. The Constitution says ". . . the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed."

I believe you and I share the same goals: a strong America, carrying the banner of freedom, and secure from threats to her domestic tranquility, economic well-being and national security.

No group does more to promote gun safety and respect for the laws of this land than the NRA, and I thank you. Still, we've both heard the charge that supporting gunowners' rights encourages a violent, shoot-em-up society. But just a minute. Don't they understand that most violent crimes are not committed by decent, law-abiding citizens, they're committed by career criminals. Guns don't make criminals. Criminals use guns, and locking those criminals up and throwing away the key is the best gun control law we could ever have.

When I was Governor of California, we added 5 to 15 years to the sentence of any criminal who committed a crime with a firearm. I am even more convinced today that this is the right approach.

I've said many times that our Administration did not come to Washington to continue business as usual. Either we make fundamental reforms that change things for the better, or we aren't doing our job. We think it's time that our loved ones can walk the streets of America without being afraid. So we are making some changes.

We have declared war on organized crime and the career criminal element in America. More than 100 prosecutors' offices are working with special teams around the country to throw the book at career criminals in court. And we are determined to cripple the drug pushers who are poisoning the minds and bodies of our children. We want mandatory sentences, we want firm and

speedy application of penalties, and we want tougher parole laws. But there is one thing we do not want: We will never disarm any American who seeks to protect his or her family from fear and harm.

We are making headway in our crackdown on crime, while continuing to protect the rights of legitimate gunowners. A recent U.S. News and World Report story said, "It may be no accident that the first dip in U.S. crime totals in 5 years coincides with a nationwide crackdown on 'career criminals.'" Serious crime dropped by 4 percent in 1982, after rising more than 21 percent since 1977 and 254 percent since 1962.

Longer prison sentences and tougher treatment are beginning to pay dividends. Make no mistake: this is happening because you, the American people, are fed up with crime. You're the ones who are organizing neighborhood patrols, supporting your local police, insisting that justice be carried out -- and every time you do that you keep the flame of democracy burning across America.

We can't solve these terrible problems overnight, but we are on the right track. Since we established a Florida task force against drugs, under the Vice President's leadership, drug-related arrests have risen sharply. Just last week, our agents trailed and then landed behind a suspicious plane on a grassy strip, near LaBelle, Florida. Two drug smugglers jumped from the plane to run away. One of them swam across a canal and hid in the bushes. The alligators didn't get him, but our enforcement people did. They seized 625 pounds of cocaine valued

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I'm also pleased to announce the Department of the Army will be increasing the sale of M-1's to high-power competitors.

Permit me to say a few words about conservation and a group I've always considered to be the foremost conservationists of our wildlife resources: America's sportsmen -- hunters and

fishermen. As Teddy Roosevelt recognized, "The free, self-reliant, adventurous life, with its rugged . . . democracy; the wild surroundings, the grand beauty of the scenery, the chance to study the way and habits of the woodland creatures -- all these unite to give to the career of the wilderness hunter its peculiar charm."

Unfortunately, there has been a kind of elitist attitude in Washington that vast natural resource areas must be locked up to save the planet from mankind. I'm proud to say that Secretary of the Interior, Jim Watt, and I have a different philosophy -- one based on respect for both man and nature. We believe in the concept of stewardship, caring for the resources we have for the benefit of mankind.

Now let us be clear about those words: stewardship for the benefit of mankind. Our Administration favors economic development -- but not within our national parks or within our wilderness areas. We have not and will never propose that. What we are saying is: When the last Administration arbitrarily closed 40 million acres of Alaskan land telling sports hunters to stay out, then, yes, you bet we think that was wrong and we're trying to correct it.

We're trying to correct something else, too. A 1980 General Accounting Office report warned of shameful health and safety health hazards in our national parks. The previous Administration had cut the National Park Service budget for restoration and improvement every year. We have doubled it.

With the active support of NRA, we have also addressed one of America's most neglected and serious environmental problems --

the destruction of our wetlands. We have introduced in the Congress the most important wetlands protection legislative proposal in history.

Our national parks, national wildlife refuges, coastal barriers, wetlands, national forests and public lands are better managed today than they were 2 years ago -- and I think that story merits more attention than it's received.

Another point which should be better understood: The backbone of our conservation efforts begins with American sportsmen. For over 40 years, hunters have been paying a special excise tax on sporting arms and ammunitions through the Pittman-Robertson Act -- nearly \$1.2 billion since 1939. State wildlife managers have used these funds to preserve and enhance valuable wildlife habitat. Such wild creatures as the white tail deer, ruffled goose, wild turkey and pronghorn antelope have been brought back from the edge of extinction, in some cases, to great abundance today.

This past year alone, American hunters have paid more than \$107 million toward these conservation efforts. The money will fund important studies of game and their habitat; it will provide food and habitat projects for wildlife; and portions will go for hunter safety and education courses -- where our youngsters will be taught marksmanship, firearms safety, and some of the values and ethics of hunting and the outdoors.

I deeply appreciate your contributions to preserving our national treasures for the benefit of our people and future generations.

This idea of stewardship -- preserving and caring for what we have, bringing our economy back to health, so you, the people, can make us great again -- that's a crucial part of keeping America free and making her secure. I know the road to recovery has been long and hard. Too many people are still out of work. But I believe with all my heart that we have turned the corner, we are on our way back, and like that fighter, Rocky Balboa, America is getting strong now.

You know, when I see inflation down, interest rates down, tax rates being cut, savings pool up, industrial production and productivity up, housing starts and auto sales up, and workers being called back, I have to wonder about something: Now that our program is doing what we said it would, how come they don't call it Reaganomics anymore?

Oh yes, some critics say nothing is right. They oppose budget savings, they oppose tax cuts. Despite the calamity they created, they continue to resist reform. Their attitude reminds me of a comment a great American made about a similar situation. "Those who are frightened," he said, "by boldness and cowed by the necessity for making decisions complain that all we have done is unnecessary and subject to great risks. Now that these people are coming out of their storm cellars, they forget that there ever was a storm."

Those words were spoken by President Franklin Roosevelt in 1934. Well, I haven't forgotten the storm that was raging around every family in 1980. With all due respect, may I remind our critics: those who saddled this Nation with double-digit inflation, 21½ percent interest rates -- the highest in more than

100 years -- and the worst tax burden in our peacetime history, they are the last people who should be giving sermonettes on fairness and compassion.

If inflation had continued as it was when they were in office, a family of four on a fixed income of \$20,000 would be more than \$1,500 poorer in purchasing power today. If their tax increases had stayed on the books, and our tax cuts had not been passed, a median-income family of four would be paying \$700 more in Federal income taxes this year. If this is the liberal idea of fairness and compassion, may the good Lord be with you if Teddy and Tip ever get their Irish up.

President John F. Kennedy said in 1963, ". . . the largest, single barrier to full employment . . . and to a higher rate of economic growth is the . . . heavy drag of Federal income taxes on private purchasing power, initiative and incentive." Those wise words are just as true today. I will veto any attempt to tamper with the third year of your tax cut, or the indexing provision. Indexing is the best security middle-income families have against bracket creep -- inflation pushing you into higher and higher tax rates. Those who do not want you to have this protection are tax grabbers, pure and simple. The United States did not run up a trillion dollar debt because you're not taxed enough. We got that debt because Government spends too much. We need spending restraint, not tax increases. I want to work with the Congress, but not at your expense, or at the risk of sabotaging this recovery we worked so hard to achieve.

Nor must we gamble, ever again, with the security of this country by neglecting our defense readiness. The day I took

office, our armed forces were in a shocking state of neglect. Shortages of skilled manpower, faulty equipment, lack of spare parts, and insufficient fuel and ammunition for proper training had left us vulnerable. We had too many planes that couldn't fly, ships that couldn't leave port and helicopters that couldn't stay aloft.

No one should ask the sons and daughters of America to protect this land with second-rate equipment and bargain basement weapons. If they can put their lives on the line to protect our way of life, then by golly we can give them the weapons, training, and money they need to do the job right.

We are doing that. We've begun to pay our soldiers a decent wage. We've increased pilot flying time, extended basic training and restocked spare parts inventories. The level and quality of recruits are up sharply.

By providing adequate compensation for our soldiers, by giving them the tools they need to do their jobs, we are restoring dignity, honor and pride to the uniform of the United States military -- and we dare not sacrifice that.

The people who disagree with our side rebuilding its military security don't seem to understand: Our side is the only side where people are permitted to disagree -- and that should make them nervous. It is not America that attacks and occupies other countries; we conduct no worldwide campaign of subversion and terrorism; we build no walls to keep our people in, or use armies of secret police and gulag prison camps to keep them quiet.

We are a free people, a democratic people; we believe in God and we love peace. But let us remember what George Washington warned in 1790: That to be prepared for war is one of the best means of preserving the peace.

Now 9 days ago, I addressed the Congress on the subject of Central America, where the United States has fundamental and far-reaching interests. El Salvador is 10 miles closer to Phoenix than Phoenix is to Washington. The people of El Salvador are not perfect, they have made mistakes, and so have we. But they are trying, with great bravery and against tremendous odds, to build the dream of a society like ours.

They understand that government must rest on the consent of the governed; and that only when people are free to worship, create and build, only when they are given a personal stake in deciding their destiny, and benefitting from their own risks -- only then will their society become dynamic, prosperous, progressive and free.

But El Salvador is under attack. Guerillas who despise democracy, and who are armed-to-the-teeth by Nicaragua, Cuba and the Soviets, are determined to shoot their way into power. We have asked the Congress for a modest package of assistance -- with twice as much economic aid as military aid.

The question is: will we give El Salvador her chance to walk beside us in the sunshine of democracy? Or will we turn our backs on a friend, letting her slide into the clutches of tyrants as we console ourselves with a false morality?

I believe that to run away from this clear-cut responsibility would not only dishonor the good name of our

country, it would open the door to more aggression and much greater danger for ourselves and our children. I appeal to you today: let your representatives know they cannot remain indifferent to a Communist takeover in Central America.

Standing up for America also means standing up for the God who has so blessed this land. If we could remember that Moses brought down 10 Commandments, not 10 suggestions, and if those of us who live for Jesus could remember that He asked us to love the Lord and our neighbor, then there is no limit to the problems we could solve, or the mountains we could climb together as a mighty force for good.

The United States remains the last, best hope for a mankind plagued by tyranny and deprivation. America is no stronger than its people, and that means you and me. I believe in you. And I believe that if we work together, then one day, we will say: We have fought the good fight; we have finished the race; we have kept the faith. And to our children, and our children's children, we can say, we did all that could be done in the moment that was given to us here on Earth.

Thank you all, and God bless you.

(Elliott)
May 2, 1983
5:00 p.m.

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NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION
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The United States remains the last, best hope for a mankind plagued by tyranny and oppression. America is no stronger than its people, and that means you and me. I believe in you. And I believe that if we work together, then one day, we will say: I believe we can, because I believe in you. And then, when our

~~work is done, we can say that we have fought the good fight. We have finished the race. We have kept the faith. And to our children, and our children's children, we can say, we did all that could be done in the moment that was given to us here on earth.~~

Thank you all, and God bless you.

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Thank you all, and God bless you.

(Elliott)
May 2, 1983
5:00 p.m.

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: ANNUAL CONVENTION
NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION
PHOENIX, ARIZONA
FRIDAY, MAY 6, 1983

President Gaffney, officers, honored guests, and may I add with great pride and pleasure -- my fellow members of the National Rifle Association.

I'm delighted to be here in Phoenix, in this great, good neighbor state of Arizona. And I'm delighted to be with all of you. It does my spirit good to be with people who never lose faith in America, who never stop believing in her future -- and who never back down one inch from defending the Constitutional freedoms that are every American's birthright.

What an honor to be together on the one hundred tenth annual meeting of this great organization. Nowadays, I'm honored to belong to any organization that's been around longer than I have.

Not too long ago, I had a very memorable visit from your officials. They walked into the Oval office with some members of the "F" troop of the Texas army. Now when I saw how those fellows were dressed, and what they were packing, I didn't know whether to stretch out my hand, or make a run for it through the Rose Garden.

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Being a part of this group, you know that good organizations don't just happen. They take root in a body of shared beliefs. They grow strong from leadership with vision, initiative and determination to reach great goals. And what you've accomplished speaks for itself: more than 2½ million members and NRA's getting stronger every day.

We saw proof of that strength recently. Many of you share a special blessing with me -- you're Californians. And you shocked California last November when you mobilized to help send Proposition 15 down to defeat. You pointed out that police would be so busy arresting handgun owners, they would be unable to protect the people against criminals. It's an annoying little truth, but those who seek to inflict harm are not fazed by gun control laws. I happen to know this from personal experience.

So if I may just put in a little plug: I believe in your leaders, Harlen Carter and Warren Cassidy; and I think they deserve to stay right where they are doing their great job. A house divided cannot stand. May you remain united and strong.

You know, I've always felt a special bond with the members of your group. You live by Lincoln's words, "Important principles may and must be inflexible." Your philosophy puts its trust in people. So you insist individuals be held responsible for their actions. The NRA believes America's laws were made to be obeyed, and that our Constitutional liberties are just as important today as 200 years ago. And by the way, the Constitution does not say Government shall decree the right to keep and bear arms. The Constitution says ". . . the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed."

I believe you and I share the same goals: A strong America, carrying the banner of freedom, and secure from threats to her domestic tranquility, economic well-being and National security.

No group does more to promote gun safety and respect for the laws of this land than the NRA, and I thank you. Still, we've both heard the charge that supporting gunowners' rights encourages a violent, shoot-em-up society. But just a minute. Don't they understand that most violent crimes are not committed by decent, law-abiding citizens, they're committed by career criminals. Guns don't make criminals. Criminals use guns, and locking those criminals up and throwing away the key is the best gun control law we could ever have.

When I was Governor of California, we added 5 to 15 years to the sentence of any criminal who committed a crime with a firearm. I am even more convinced today that this is the right approach.

I've said many times that our Administration did not come to Washington to continue business as usual. Either we make fundamental reforms that change things for the better, or we aren't doing our job. We think it's time that our loved ones can walk the streets of America without being afraid. So we are making some changes.

We have declared war on organized crime and the career criminal element in America. More than 100 prosecutors' offices are working with special teams around the country to throw the book at career criminals in court. And we are determined to cripple the drug pushers who are poisoning the minds and bodies of our children. We want mandatory sentences, we want firm and

speedy application of penalties and we want tougher parole laws. But there is one thing we do not want: we will never disarm any American who seeks to protect his or her family from fear and harm.

We are making headway in our crackdown on crime, while continuing to protect the rights of legitimate gunowners. A recent U.S. News and World Report story said, "It may be no accident that the first dip in U.S. crime totals in 5 years coincides with a nationwide crackdown on "career criminals." Serious crime dropped by 4 percent in 1982, after rising more than 21 percent since 1977 and 254 percent since 1962.

Longer prison sentences and tougher treatment are beginning to pay dividends. Make no mistake: this is happening because you the American people are fed up with crime. You're the ones who are organizing neighborhood patrols, supporting your local police, insisting that justice be carried out -- and every time you do that you keep the flame of democracy burning across America.

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Unfortunately, there has been a kind of elitist attitude in Washington, that vast natural resource areas must be locked up to save the planet from mankind. I'm proud to say that Secretary of the Interior Jim Watt and I have a different philosophy -- one based on respect for both man and nature. We believe in the concept of stewardship, caring for the resources we have for the benefit of mankind.

Now let us be clear about those words, stewardship for the benefit of mankind. Our Administration favors economic development -- but not within our National parks or within our wilderness areas. We have not and will never propose that. What we are saying is: when the last Administration arbitrarily closed 40 million acres of Alaskan land -- telling sports hunters to stay out -- then, yes, you bet we think that was wrong and we're trying to correct it.

We're trying to correct something else too. A 1980 General Accounting Office report warned of shameful health and safety health hazards in our national parks. The previous Administration had cut the National Park Service budget for restoration and improvement every year. We have doubled it.

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I deeply appreciate your contributions to preserving our national treasures for the benefit of our people and future generations.

This idea of stewardship -- preserving and caring for what we have, bringing our economy back to health, so you the people can make us great again -- that's a crucial part of keeping America free and making her secure. I know the road to recovery has been long and hard. Too many people are still out of work. But I believe with all my heart that we have turned the corner, we are on our way back, and like that fighter, Rocky Balboa, America is getting strong now.

You know when I see inflation down, interest rates down, taxes being cut, savings up, industrial production and productivity up, housing starts and auto sales up, and workers being called back, I have to wonder about something: Now that our program is doing what we said it would, how come they don't call it Reaganomics anymore?

Oh yes, some critics say nothing is right. They oppose budget savings, they oppose tax cuts. Despite the calamity they created, they continue to resist reform. Their attitude reminds me of a comment a great American made about a similar situation. "Those who are frightened," he said, "by boldness and cowed by the necessity for making decisions complain that all we have done is unnecessary and subject to great risks. Now that these people are coming out of their storm cellars, they forget that there ever was a storm."

Those words were spoken by President Franklin Roosevelt in 1934. Well I haven't forgotten the storm that was raging around every family in 1980. With all due respect, may I remind our critics: those who saddled this Nation with double-digit inflation, 21½ percent interest rates -- the highest in more than

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President John F. Kennedy said in 1963, ". . . the largest, single barrier to full employment . . . and to a higher rate of economic growth is the . . . heavy drag of Federal income taxes on private purchasing power, initiative and incentive." Those wise words are just as true today. I will veto any attempt to tamper with the third year of your tax cut, or the indexing provision. Indexing is the best security middle-income families have against bracket creep -- inflation pushing you into higher and higher tax rates. Those who do not want you to have this protection are tax grabbers, pure and simple. The United States did not run up a trillion dollar debt because you're not taxed enough? We got that debt because Government spends too much. We need spending restraint, not tax increases. I want to work with the Congress, but not at your expense, or at the risk of sabotaging this recovery we worked so hard to achieve.

Nor must we gamble, ever again, with the security of this country by neglecting our defense readiness. The day I took

office, our armed forces were in a shocking state of neglect. Shortages of skilled manpower, faulty equipment, lack of spare parts, insufficient fuel and ammunition for proper training had left us vulnerable. We had too many planes that couldn't fly, ships that couldn't leave port and helicopters that couldn't stay aloft.

No one should ask the sons and daughters of America to protect this land with second rate equipment and bargain basement weapons. If they can put their lives on the line to protect our way of life, then by golly we can give them the weapons, training, and money they need to do the job right.

We are doing that. We've begun to pay our soldiers a decent wage. We've increased pilot flying time, extended basic training and restocked spare parts inventories. The level and quality of recruits are up sharply.

By providing adequate compensation for our soldiers, by giving them the tools they need to do their jobs, we are restoring dignity, honor and pride to the uniform of the United States -- and we dare not sacrifice that.

The people who disagree with our side rebuilding its military security don't seem to understand: our side is the only side where people are permitted to disagree -- and that should make them nervous. It is not America that attacks and occupies other countries; we conduct no worldwide campaign of subversion and terrorism; we build no walls to keep our people in, or use armies of secret police and gulag prison camps to keep them quiet.

We are a free people, a democratic people, we believe in God and we love peace. But let us remember what George Washington warned in 1790: That to be prepared for war is one of the best means of preserving the peace.

Now 10 days ago, I addressed the Congress on the subject of Central America, where the United States has fundamental and far-reaching interests. El Salvador is 10 miles closer to Phoenix than Phoenix is to Washington. The people of El Salvador are not perfect, they have made mistakes, and so have we. But they are trying, with great bravery and against tremendous odds, to build the dream of a society like ours.

They understand that government must rest on the consent of the governed; and that only when people are free to worship, create and build, only when they are given a personal stake in deciding their destiny, and benefitting from their own risks -- only then will their society become dynamic, prosperous, progressive and free.

But El Salvador is under attack. Guerillas who despise democracy, and who are armed to the teeth by Nicaragua, Cuba and the Soviets, are determined to shoot their way into power. We have asked the Congress for a modest package of assistance -- with twice as much economic aid, as military aid.

The question is: will we give El Salvador her chance to walk beside us in the sunshine of democracy? Or will we turn our backs on a friend, letting her slide into the clutches of tyrants as we console ourselves with a false morality.

X
I believe that to run away from this clear-cut responsibility would not only dishonor ~~on~~ the great name of our

country, it would open the door to more aggression and much greater danger for ourselves and our children. I appeal to you today: let your representatives know they cannot remain indifferent to a Communist takeover in Central America.

Standing up for America also means

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Thank you all, and God bless you.

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May 2, 1983
5:00 p.m.

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: ANNUAL CONVENTION
NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION
PHOENIX, ARIZONA
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I believe that to run away from this clear-cut responsibility would not only dishonor on the great name of our

country, it would open the door to more aggression and much greater danger for ourselves and our children. I appeal to you today: let your representatives know they cannot remain indifferent to a Communist takeover in Central America.

Standing for the God who has so blessed this land. If we could remember that Moses brought down 10 Commandments, not 10 suggestions, and those of us who are Christians and live for Jesus could remember that we are asked to love the land, and our neighbor, then there is no limit to the problems we could solve, or the mountains we could climb together as a mighty force for good.

I believe we can, because I believe in you. Then, when our work is done, we can say that we have fought the good fight. We have finished the race. We have kept the faith. And to our children, and our children's children, we can say, we did all that could be done in the moment that was given to us here on earth.

Thank you all, and God bless you.

(Elliott)
May 2, 1983
3:00 p.m.

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: ANNUAL CONVENTION
NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION
PHOENIX, ARIZONA
FRIDAY, MAY 6, 1983

President Gaffney, officers, honored guests, and may I add with great pride and pleasure -- my fellow members of the National Rifle Association.

I'm delighted to be here in Phoenix, in this great, good neighbor state of Arizona. And I'm delighted to be with all of you. It does my spirit good to be with people who never lose faith in America, who never stop believing in her future -- and who never back down one inch from defending the Constitutional freedoms that are every American's brithright.

What an honor to be together on the one hundred tenth annual meeting of this great organization. Nowadays, I'm honored to belong to any organization that's been around longer than I have.

Not too long ago, I had a very memorable visit from your officials. They walked into the Oval office with some members of the "F" troop of the Texas army. Now when I saw how those fellows were dressed, and what they were packing, I didn't know whether to stretch out my hand, or make a run for it through the Rose Garden.

Well, it turned out they wanted to induct me into the Texas army, and to give me a beautiful, hand-crafted flintlock rifle. Thank you for taking such good care of it. And Cris Hirsch -- are you out there? -- I just want you to know again how much I appreciate it and look forward to using it someday.

Being a part of this group, you know that good organizations don't just happen. They take root in a body of shared beliefs. They grow strong from leadership with vision, initiative and determination to reach great goals. And what you've accomplished speaks for itself: more than 2½ million members and NRA's getting stronger every day.

We saw proof of that strength recently. ^M Many of you share a special blessing with me -- you're Californians. And you shocked California last November when you mobilized to help send Proposition 15 down to defeat. You pointed out that police would be so busy arresting handgun owners, they ~~would be unable~~ ^{would not be} to protect the people against criminals. It's an annoying little truth, but those who seek to inflict harm are not fazed by gun control laws. I happen to know ^{this} ~~that~~ from personal experience.

So if I may just put in a little plug: I believe in your leaders, Harlen Carter and Warren Cassidy; and I think they deserve to stay right where they are doing their great job. A house divided cannot stand. May you remain united and strong.

You know, I've always felt a special bond with the members of your group. You live by Lincoln's words, "Important principles may and must be inflexible." Your philosophy puts its trust in people. So you insist individuals be held responsible for their actions. The NRA believes America's laws were made to be obeyed; and that our Constitutional liberties are just as important today as 200 years ago. And by the way, the Constitution does not say Government shall decree the right to keep and bear arms. The Constitution says ". . . the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed."

I believe you and I share the same goals: A strong America, carrying the banner of freedom, and secure from threats to her domestic tranquility, economic well-being and National security.

~~Now~~ No group does more to promote gun safety and respect for the laws of this land than the NRA ~~and~~ and I thank you, ~~for those efforts.~~ Still, we've both heard the charge that ~~by~~ supporting gunowners' rights ~~we~~ encourage a violent, shoot-em-up society. But just a minute. Don't they understand that most violent crimes are not committed by decent, law-abiding citizens, they're committed by career criminals. Guns don't make criminals. Criminals use guns, and locking those criminals up and throwing away the key is the best gun control law we could ever have.

When I was Governor of California, we added 5 to 15 years to the sentence of any criminal who committed a crime with a firearm. I am even more convinced today that this is the right approach.

I've said many times that our Administration did not come to Washington to continue business as usual. Either we make fundamental reforms that change things for the better, or we aren't doing our job. We think it's time that our loved ones ~~be~~ ^{can} ~~able to~~ walk the streets of America without being afraid. So we are making some changes.

We have declared war on organized crime and the career criminal element in America. More than 100 prosecutors' offices are working with special teams around the country to throw the book at career criminals in court. And we are determined to cripple the drug pushers who are poisoning the minds and bodies of our children. We want mandatory sentences, we want firm and

speedy application of penalties and we want tougher parole laws. But there is one thing we ~~will never ask for~~: we will never disarm any American who seeks to protect his or her family from fear and harm.

We are making headway in our crackdown on crime, while continuing to protect the rights of legitimate gunowners. A recent U.S. News and World Report story said, "It may be no accident that the first dip in U.S. crime totals in 5 years coincides with a nationwide crackdown on "career criminals." Serious crime dropped by 4 percent in 1982, after rising more than 21 percent since 1977 and 254 percent since 1962.

Longer prison sentences and tougher treatment are beginning to pay dividends. Make no mistake: this is happening because you the American people are fed up with crime. You're the ones who are organizing neighborhood patrols, supporting your local police, insisting that justice be carried out -- and every time you do that ^{you keep} the flame of democracy ^{burning} ~~burns brighter~~ across America.

We can't solve these terrible problems overnight; but we are on the right track. Since we established a Florida task force against drugs, under the Vice President's leadership, drug-related arrests have risen sharply. Just last week, our agents trailed and then landed behind a suspicious plane on a grassy strip, near LaBelle, Florida. Two drug smugglers jumped from the plane to run away. One of them swam across a canal and hid in the bushes. The alligators didn't get him, but our enforcement people did. They seized 625 pounds of cocaine valued at \$187½ million. The drug runners aren't sending up a white flag. But they're feeling the heat and that's what we want.

As we crackdown on criminals, we are trying to move forward on another front: to reform the firearms laws which needlessly interfere with the rights of legitimate gunowners like yourselves. We are working closely with your leadership and Congressional sponsors of firearms legislation, such as Senators Hatch, McClure and Volkmer. I look forward to signing a bill that truly protects the rights of law-abiding citizens, without diminishing the effectiveness of criminal law enforcement against the misuse of firearms.

Your leadership's support has been important to us. Just last year, I signed two amendments into law: one eliminated unnecessary recordkeeping requirements on 22 caliber rimfire ammunition; the other saved many custom gunsmiths from financial ruin.

Today I'm pleased to announce that the Department of Defense will be reissuing guidelines for our military ranges. The ranges will be open for civilian use, provided there are no conflicts with military priorities. I support this idea, because clear back to World War I, one of the great talents of American soldiers has been their marksmanship. And it turned^{out} they developed this from shooting at targets as young boys.

I'm also pleased to announce the ~~the~~ Department of the Army will be increasing the sale of M-1's to high power competitors.

Permit me to say a few words about conservation and a group I've always considered to be the foremost conservationists of our wildlife resources ~~are~~ America's sportsmen -- hunters and fishermen. As Teddy Roosevelt recognized, "The free, self-reliant, adventurous life, with its rugged . . . democracy;

the wild surroundings, the grand beauty of the scenery, the chance to study the way and habits of the woodland creatures -- all these unite to give to the career of the ^{!!!}wilderness hunter its peculiar charm."

Unfortunately, there has been a kind of elitist attitude in Washington, that vast natural resource areas must be locked up to save the planet from mankind. I'm proud to say that Secretary of the Interior Jim Watt and I have a different philosophy -- one based on respect for both man and nature. We believe in the concept of stewardship, caring for the resources we have for the benefit of mankind.

Now let us be clear about those words, stewardship for the benefit of mankind. Our Administration favors economic development -- but not within our National parks or within our wilderness areas. We have not and will never propose that. What we are saying is: when the last Administration arbitrarily closed 40 million acres of Alaskan land -- telling sports hunters to stay out -- then, yes, you bet we think that was wrong and we're trying to correct it.

We're trying to correct something else too. A 1980 General Accounting Office report warned of shameful health and safety health hazards in our national parks. The previous Administration had cut the National Park Service budget for restoration and improvement every year. We have doubled it.

With the active support of NRA, we have also addressed one of America's most neglected and serious environmental problems -- the destruction of our wetlands. We have introduced in the

Congress the most important wetlands protection legislative proposal in history.

Our National parks, national wildlife refuges, our coastal barriers, wetlands, national forests and public lands are better managed today than they were 2 years ago -- and I think that story merits more attention than its received.

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Another point which should be better understood: the backbone of our conservation efforts begins with American sportsmen. For over 40 years, hunters have been paying a special excise tax on sporting arms and ammunitions through the Pittman-Robertson Act -- nearly 1.2 billion since 1939. State wildlife managers have used these funds to preserve and enhance valuable wildlife habitat. Such wild creatures ^{as} ~~are~~ the white tail deer, ruffled goose, wild turkey and pronghorn antelope have been brought back from the edge of extinction, in some cases, to grant abundance today.

This past year along American hunters have paid more than \$107 million toward these conservation efforts. The money will fund important studies of game and their habitat; it will provide food and habitat projects for wildlife; and portions will go for hunter safety and education courses -- where our youngsters will be taught marksmanship, firearms safety and some of the values and ethics of hunting and the outdoors.

I deeply appreciate your contributions to preserving our national treasures for the benefit of our people and future generations.

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This idea of stewardship -- preserving and caring for what we have, bringing our economy back to health, so you^{the} people can

X make us great again -- that's ~~also~~ a crucial part of keeping America free and making her secure. I know the road to recovery has been long and hard. Too many people are still out of work. But I believe with all my heart that we have turned the corner, ^{are} we're ~~on~~ our way back, and like that fighter, Rocky Balboa, America is getting strong now.

You know when I see inflation ^{down} and interest rates down ~~dramatically~~, taxes being cut, savings up, industrial production and productivity up, housing starts and auto sales up, and workers being called back, I have to wonder about something. Now that our program is doing what we said it would, how come they don't call it Reaganomics anymore?

X ^{Oh, some} Yes, ~~our~~ critics say ~~we can do~~ nothing ⁱⁿ right. They oppose ~~our~~ budget savings, they oppose ~~our~~ tax cuts. Despite the calamity they created, they ~~oppose the need for~~ ^{continue to resist} reforms. Well ~~Well~~ Their attitude reminds me of a comment a great American made about a similar situation. "Those who are frightened," he said, "by boldness and cowed by the necessity for making decisions complain that all we have done is unnecessary and subject to great risks. Now that these people are coming out of their storm cellars, they forget that there ever was a storm."

Those words were spoken by President Franklin Roosevelt in 1934. Well I haven't forgotten the storm that was raging ^{around} ~~against~~ every family in 1980. ~~So~~ ^W With all due respect, may I remind our critics: those who saddled this Nation with double-digit inflation, 21½ percent interest rates -- the highest in more than 100 years -- and the worst tax burden in our peacetime history,

they are the last people who should be giving sermonettes on fairness and compassion.

If inflation had continued as it was when they were in office, a family of four on a fixed income of \$20,000 would be more than \$1,500 poorer in purchasing power today. If their tax increases had stayed on the books, and our tax cuts had not been passed, a median-income family of four would be paying \$700 more in Federal income taxes this year. Well, I if this is the liberal idea of fairness and compassion, may the good Lord be with you if Tip and Teddy ever get their Irish up.

President John F. Kennedy said in 1963, ". . . the largest, single barrier to full employment . . . and to a higher rate of economic growth is the . . . heavy drag of Federal income taxes on private purchasing power, initiative and incentive." Those wise words are just as true today. I will veto any attempt to tamper with the third year of your tax cut, or the indexing provision. Indexing is the best security middle-income families have against bracket creep -- inflation pushing you into higher and higher tax rates. Those who do not want you to have this protection are tax grabbers, pure and simple. The United States did not run up a trillion dollar debt because you're not taxed enough. !H We got that debt because Government spends too much. We need spending restraint, not tax increases. I want to work with the Congress, but ~~it must~~ not ~~be~~ at your expense, or at the risk of sabotaging this recovery we ~~have~~ worked so hard to achieve.

Nor must we gamble, ever again, with the security of this country by ~~sacrificing~~ Neglecting our defense readiness. The day I took office, our armed forces were in a shocking state of neglect.

Shortages of skilled manpower, faulty equipment, lack of spare parts, insufficient fuel and ammunition for proper training had left us ~~exposed and vulnerable~~. ^{We had too many} We had an ~~alarming number of our~~ planes that ~~could not~~ ^{couldn't} fly, ships that ~~could not~~ ^{couldn't} leave port and helicopters that ~~could not~~ ^{couldn't} stay aloft.

^{No one should} ~~How can anyone~~ ask the sons and daughters of America to protect ~~our~~ ^{this} land with second rate equipment and bargain basement weapons? If they can put their lives on the line to protect our way of life, then by golly we can ~~afford to~~ give them the weapons, training, and money they need to do the job right.

We are doing that, ^{We} we've begun to pay our soldiers a decent wage. We've increased pilot flying time, extended basic training and restocked spare parts inventories. The level and quality of recruits are up sharply.

By providing adequate compensation for our soldiers, by giving them the tools they need to do their jobs, we are restoring dignity, honor and pride to the uniform of the United States ^{sacrifice} and we dare not ~~lose~~ that.

The people who disagree with our side rebuilding its military security don't seem to understand: our side is the only side where people are permitted to disagree -- and that should make them nervous. It is not America that attacks and occupies other countries; we conduct no worldwide campaign of subversion and terrorism; we build no walls to keep our people in, or use armies of secret police and gulag prison camps to keep them quiet.

We are a free people, a democratic people, we believe in God and we love peace. But let us remember what George Washington

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warned in 1790: "To be prepared for war is one of the *best* ~~most~~ ~~effectual~~ means of preserving the peace."

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Now 10 days ago, I addressed the Congress on the subject of Central America, where the United States has fundamental and far-reaching interests. El Salvador is 10 miles closer to Phoenix than Phoenix is to Washington. The people of El Salvador are not perfect, they have made ~~many~~ mistakes, and so have we. But they are trying, with great bravery *b* and against tremendous odds, to build the dream of a society like ours.

They understand that government must rest on the consent of the governed; and that only when people are free to worship, create and build, only when they are given a personal stake in deciding their destiny, and benefitting from their own risks -- only then will their society become dynamic, prosperous, progressive and free.

But El Salvador is under attack. Guerillas *who despise* ~~with contempt~~ ~~for~~ democracy, *and who* (are armed to the teeth by Nicaragua, Cuba and the Soveits, are determined to shoot their way into power. We have asked the Congress for a modest package of assistance -- with twice as much economic aid, as military aid.

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And Standing

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standing

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If we could remember that ~~Moses~~ brought down ~~the~~

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Thank you all, and God bless you.