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Ford: 'I Promise . . . to Do the Very Best I Can for America'

Following is the prepared text of Gerald R. Ford's acceptance speech after being sworn in as Vice President:

Together we have made history here today. For the first time we have carried out the commands of the 25th Amendment. In exactly eight weeks, we have demonstrated to the world that our great Republic stands solid and strong upon the bedrock of the Constitution.

I am a Ford, not a Lincoln. My addresses will never be as eloquent as Lincoln's. But I will do my best to equal his brevity and plain speaking.

I am deeply grateful to you, Mr. President, for the trust and confidence your

nomination implied. As I have throughout my public service under six administrations, I will try to set a high example of respect for the crushing and lonely burdens which the nation lays upon the President of the United States. You have my support and loyalty.

To the Congress assembled, my former colleagues who have elected me on behalf of our fellow countrymen, I express my heartfelt thanks. Let me reaffirm my conviction as a man of Congress that the collective wisdom of our two great legislative bodies, while not infallible, will in the end serve the people faithfully and well.

I will not forget the people of Michigan who sent

me to this chamber or the friends I have found here.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that the United States Senate intends in a very few minutes to bind me by its rules. For their presiding officer, this amounts practically to a vow of silence. You know how difficult this is going to be for me. Before I go from this House which has been my home for a quarter century, I must say I am forever in its debt.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your friendship, which I certainly am not leaving.

To you, Mr. Speaker, and to all my friends here—how ever you voted an hour ago—I say a fond goodbye. May God bless the House of Representatives and guide you in all the days ahead.

Mr. Chief Justice, may I

thank you personally for administering the oath, and thank each of the honorable justices for honoring me with your attendance.

I pledge to you, as I did the day I was first admitted to the bar, my dedication to the rule of law and equal justice for all Americans.

For standing by my side as she always has, there are no words to tell you, my dear wife and mother of our four wonderful children, how much their being here means to me.

As I look into the faces that fill this familiar room, and as I imagine those in other rooms across the land, I do not see members of the legislative branch or of the executive branch or of the judicial branch of our government, though I am

very much aware of the importance of keeping the separate but co-equal branches of our federal government in balance.

I do not see senators or representatives. Nor do I see Republicans and Democrats, vital as the two-party system is to sustain freedom and responsible self-government.

At this moment of visible and living unity, I see only Americans. I see only Americans who love their country, Americans who work and sacrifice for their country and their children. I see Americans who pray without ceasing for peace among all nations and for harmony at home. I see new generations of concerned and courageous Americans—but the same kind of Americans—

the children and grandchildren of those Americans who met the challenge of Dec. 7 just 32 years ago.

I like what I see. I am not discouraged. I am indeed humble to be the 40th Vice President of the United States, but I am proud—very proud—to be one of 200,000,000 Americans.

I promise my fellow citizens only this: To uphold the Constitution, to do what is right as God gives me to see the right, and within the limited powers and duties of the vice presidency, to do the very best I can for America.

I will do these things with all the strength and good sense I have, and with your help, and through your prayers.