

want to thank you for giving me a chance to come by and make my case.

God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:20 a.m. in Presidential Hall in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to California State Senator Jim Costa, president, and New York State Senator Steven M. Saland, president-elect, National Conference of State Legislatures; and Prime Minister Jean Chretien of Canada.

Remarks at the Swearing-In Ceremony for Anthony J. Principi as Secretary of Veterans Affairs

March 2, 2001

The President. Thank you all for coming. Liz, thank you for being here, and family members who are here, Mom. We are honored you are here, and thank you so much for witnessing the swearing-in of a good man.

Today we honor a man and swear in a man who has served his country in many ways. Tony Principi came to understand the military in war time as a decorated soldier in Vietnam. As a veteran, he came to understand the Department of Veterans Affairs by serving there. To fill this position, I looked carefully, and I chose well.

America has 25 million veterans. They ask that their Government honor its commitments as they honored theirs. They ask that their interests be protected, as they protected their country's interests in the line of duty. Secretary Principi is prepared not only to lead this Department but to modernize it.

Veterans' claims are often poorly handled, and many veterans are not treated as well as they should be by the health care bureaucracy. Tony and his Department will set new goals for better service. More importantly, we both expect the Department to meet the goals.

As I said to Congress on Tuesday night, we must honor our commitment to veterans by ensuring access to the finest health care. This is a basic obligation of our country. In last year's campaign, I promised American veterans they'd have an advocate in the White House. In Secretary Principi, they

now have a strong and faithful friend at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Mr. Secretary, thank you for your service. Congratulations.

[At this point, Secretary Principi made brief remarks.]

The President. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:28 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary Principi's wife, Elizabeth, and his mother, Theresa. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary Principi.

Remarks at the Swearing-In Ceremony for Ann M. Veneman as Secretary of Agriculture

March 2, 2001

The President. Well, it's my honor, along with the Vice President, to welcome Secretary Veneman and her sister, Jane, who did a fine job of holding the Bible, and Veneman family members. Welcome to the Oval Office, and thank you all for coming.

Ann is new to the Cabinet but not to the Department she leads, nor the issues that her Department will face. Having served as California's highest agricultural official and in prominent posts here in Washington, she comes to the job very well prepared.

Agriculture represents 13 percent of our Nation's economy and remains central to prosperity at home and competitiveness abroad. In many ways, it is the most crucial of all industries and, yet, the most easily taken for granted. American farmers are without rival in their ability to produce and compete. But they face every kind of challenge, from bad weather to closed markets.

This administration is going to be a friend to the American farmer. In times of emergency, they will get the assistance they need, when they need it. We will support tax-deferred savings accounts, to help farm families guard against downturns. And to keep family farms in the family, we're going to get rid of the death tax.

For many farmers, the greatest challenge today is finding markets for their products. Americans represent just 4 percent of the

world's population. But our farmers have the technology and the skill to feed much of the world beyond.

Ann and I will carry out this equivocal message to the world: Markets must be open. The United States will not tolerate favoritism and unfair subsidies. We want to compete, and we want our farmers to compete on level ground. And agriculture will no longer be traded away or ignored when we sit down at international negotiating tables. It will be a top priority of ours.

America's farmers will have a strong advocate in the new Secretary. Today, the number of women-owned farms is the highest ever, and Ann Veneman is the first woman ever to hold this position. I'm confident she'll be one of the most successful leaders that this Department has ever had.

Madame Secretary.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:44 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary Veneman. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at the Swearing-In Ceremony for Spencer Abraham as Secretary of Energy and an Exchange With Reporters

March 2, 2001

The President. It's my honor to welcome the Secretary and his family. I forgot that he and I were members of the fathers of twins club. [*Laughter*] Jane, it's good to see you. I want to welcome you all here. We look forward to having a picture-taking session next door after our brief remarks.

Two months ago, in Austin, I announced my intention to nominate Senator Spence Abraham as the Energy Secretary. He's obviously since then been confirmed by the Senate. His performance in office has already confirmed that I chose the right man for the job.

Secretary Abraham knows energy policy. He understands the many challenges and opportunities before us. Today, we are seeing the consequences of going too long without an energy policy. Many Americans are strug-

gling with the high cost of energy. People who live in the West face a major energy shortage, which has caused rising prices and growing uncertainty.

I have asked Federal agencies to work with California officials to bring more energy to the people of that State, as quickly as possible. Also I've asked Secretary Abraham to work with Vice President Cheney and Secretary of Commerce Evans and other senior officials to develop a comprehensive energy policy for the United States.

Our objective should not only be to manage the current situation but to avoid any crisis in the first instance. This requires a four-part strategy: first, to make energy security a priority of our foreign policy, by restoring American credibility with overseas suppliers and building strong relationships with energy-producing nations in our hemisphere; second, to encourage environmentally friendly exploration and production of domestic energy sources like oil, natural gas, and coal; third, to promote the production of electricity to keep pace with America's growing demands; fourth, to support the development of cost-effective alternative energy sources.

The goals of this strategy are clear: to ensure a steady supply of affordable energy for America's homes and businesses and industries, and to work toward the day when America achieves energy independence.

It was in the State of Michigan that I first pledged a comprehensive energy policy for our country. This afternoon I welcome to the Cabinet a proud son of Michigan, a grandson of immigrants, and a good man.

Mr. Secretary.

[*At this point, Secretary Abraham made brief remarks.*]

Q. Mr. President, do you have time for questions, sir?

The President. No. [*Laughter*]

Camp David

Q. You're going to Camp David a lot. Can you tell us why you like going there, what you do when you're up there?

The President. I guess I do. He's asking—I'm going to Camp David, and I like to spend time with my family. And my brother Marvin and my sister, Dorothy, will join us up there.