Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2017

Remarks on the 250th Anniversary of the Birth of Andrew Jackson in Nashville, Tennessee
March 15, 2017

Thank you very much. Wow. What a nice—what a nice visit this was. Inspirational visit, I have to tell you. I'm a fan. I'm a big fan.

I want to thank Howard Kittell, Frances Spradley of the Andrew Jackson Foundation, and all of the Foundation's incredible employees and supporters for preserving this great landmark, which is what it is. It's a landmark of our national heritage.

And a special thank you to Governor Bill Haslam and his incredible wife, who—we just rode over together—and Senators Lamar Alexander and Bob Corker, two great friends of mine, been a big, big help. Both incredible guys.

In my address to Congress, I looked forward to 9 years, to the 250th anniversary of American independence. Today I call attention to another anniversary: the 250th birthday of the very great Andrew Jackson. And he loved Tennessee, and so do I—to tell you that.

On this day in 1767, Andrew Jackson was born on the backwoods soil of the Carolinas. From poverty and obscurity, Jackson rose to glory and greatness, first as a military leader and then as the seventh President of the United States. He did it with courage, with grit, and with patriotic heart. And by the way, he was one of our great Presidents.

Jackson was the son of the frontier. His father died before he was born. His brother died fighting the British in the American Revolution. And his mother caught a fatal illness while tending to the wounded troops. At the age of 14, Andrew Jackson was an orphan, and look what he was able to do. Look what he was able to build.

It was during the Revolution that Jackson first confronted and defied an arrogant elite. Does that sound familiar to you? [Laughter] I wonder why they keep talking about Trump and Jackson, Jackson and Trump. Oh, I know the feeling, Andrew. [Laughter]

Captured by the Redcoats and ordered to shine the boots of a British officer, Jackson simply refused. The officer took his saber and slashed at Jackson, leaving gashes in his head and hand that remained permanent scars for the rest of his life. These were the first and far from the last blows that Andrew Jackson took for his country that he loved so much.

From that day on, Andrew Jackson rejected authority that looked down on the common people: first as a boy, when he bravely served the Revolutionary cause; next, as the heroic victor at New Orleans where his ragtag—and it was a ragtag—militia, but they were tough, and they drove the British imperial forces from America in a triumphant end to the War of 1812—he was a real general, that one; and finally, as President, when he reclaimed the people's government from an emerging aristocracy.

Jackson's victory shook the establishment like an earthquake. Henry Clay, Secretary of State for the defeated President John Quincy Adams, called Jackson's victory "mortifying and sickening". Oh, boy, does this sound familiar. [Laughter] Have we heard this? [Laughter] This is terrible. He said there had been "no greater calamity" in the Nation's history.
The political class in Washington had good reason to fear Jackson's great triumph. "The rich and powerful," Jackson said, "too often bend the acts of government to their selfish purposes." Jackson warned they had turned government into an "engine for the support of the few at the expense of the many."

Andrew Jackson was the people's President, and his election came at a time when the vote was finally being extended to those who did not own property. To clean out the bureaucracy, Jackson removed 10 percent of the Federal workforce. He launched a campaign to sweep out government corruption totally. He didn't want government corruption. He expanded benefits for veterans. He battled the centralized financial power that brought influence at our citizens' expense. He imposed tariffs on foreign countries to protect American workers. That sounds very familiar. Wait till you see what's going to be happening pretty soon, folks. [Laughter] It's time. It's time.

Andrew Jackson was called many names, accused of many things, and by fighting for change, earned many, many enemies. Today, the portrait of this orphan son who rose to the Presidency hangs proudly in the Oval Office, opposite the portrait of another great American, Thomas Jefferson. I brought the Andrew Jackson portrait there. Right behind me, right—boom—over my left shoulder.

Now I'm honored to sit between those two portraits and to use this high office to serve, defend, and protect the citizens of the United States. It is my great honor. I will tell you that.

From that desk I can see out the wonderful, beautiful, large great window to an even greater magnolia tree, standing strong and tall across the White House lawn. That tree was planted there many years ago, when it was just a sprout carried from these very grounds. Came right from here. Beautiful tree.

That sprout was nourished, it took root, and on this, his 250th birthday, Andrew Jackson's magnolia is a sight to behold. I looked at it, actually, this morning. Really beautiful.

But the growth of that beautiful tree is nothing compared to the growth of our beautiful nation. That growth has been made possible because more and more of our people have been given their dignity as equals under law and equals in the eyes of God.

Andrew Jackson as a military hero and genius and a beloved President. But he was also a flawed and imperfect man, a product of his time. It is the duty of each generation to carry on the fight for justice. My administration will work night and day to ensure that the sacred rights which God has bestowed on His children are protected for each and every one of you, for each and every American.

We must all remember Jackson's words: that in "the planter, the farmer, the mechanic, and the laborer," we will find muscle and bone of our country. So true. So true.

Now, we must work in our time to expand—and we have to do that, because we have no choice—we're going to make America great again, folks; we're going to make America great again—to expand the blessings of America to every citizen in our land. And when we do, watch us grow. Watch what's happening. You see it happening already. You see it with our great military. You see it with our great markets. You see it with our incredible business people. You see it with the level of enthusiasm that they haven't seen in many years. People are proud again of our country. And you're going to get prouder and prouder and prouder, I can promise you that.
And watch us grow. We will truly be one Nation, with deep roots, a strong core, and a very new springtime of American greatness yet to come.

Andrew Jackson, we thank you for your service. We honor you for your memory. We build on your legacy. And we thank God for the United States of America.

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:44 p.m. on the front steps of the Hermitage Mansion. In his remarks, he referred to Howard J. Kittell, president and chief executive officer, and Frances Spradley, regent, Andrew Jackson Foundation; and Crissy Haslam, wife of Gov. William E. Haslam of Tennessee.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Andrew Jackson, 250th anniversary of birth.

Locations: Washington, DC.


Subjects: Holidays and special observances : Andrew Jackson, 250th anniversary of birth; Tennessee : Governor; Tennessee : President's visit.

DCPD Number: DCPD201700169.