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Leadership (Rohrabacher)(Penniman) 04/17/1984 (4 of 4)

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Last Updated: 04/01/2025

(Rohrabacher)
April 16, 1984
9:30 a.m.

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: HISPANIC COALITION LEADERSHIP LUNCHEON
TUESDAY, APRIL 17, 1984

Buenas tardes. Welcome to the White House. I am delighted to have had this chance to break bread with you. Some of us met last year at a roundtable discussion in El Paso. It's good to see you again. As I said then, I encourage you to keep in direct contact with my staff. Your input and opinions are most welcome.

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Being a Californian, I've for a long while appreciated our country's rich Hispanic tradition.

Back when I was Governor, I remember visiting the site of a natural disaster in the Santa Barbara area. Mudslides had been playing havoc with people's homes. I came to one place and there was an elderly American man of Hispanic descent standing knee deep in mud, the ruins of what once was his living room all around him. Even amid this great catastrophe he looked at me and in all sincerity said, "Mi Casa es su casa."

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Americans of Hispanic descent have every reason to be proud of the many contributions they have made and are making to our way of life. The strength of your basic values, even in the face of discrimination and hardship, is an inspiring story of dignity and courage. The current emergence of Americans of Hispanic descent in business and government is proving that the American dream is alive and well, if we just give it a chance.

I could go through a litany of success stories of Hispanic men and women, who with hard work and strong values have made their mark. All of us know people like my friend Hector Barreto

(Bar-aye-toe) who came here 25 years ago. As a struggling immigrant, he dug potatoes for 80 cents an hour. From those humble beginnings, he built several successful businesses and eventually became the President of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, an organization that does much to help men and women in your community get started and succeed in the world of small business.

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Four years ago, talk about economic advancement and increasing opportunity was a cruel hoax. Economic stagnation and murderous inflation were destroying the dream of a better life for all Americans. Our senior citizens helplessly watched as the value of their savings eroded. Poor and middle class working people saw their real wages and their standard of living begin to shrink.

I know there are many shades of opinion represented here today, but let us agree that we could not have gone on the way we were. The policies of tax, spend, and inflate took us to the edge of economic disaster. Inflation had been running at double-digit levels for 2 years straight. Long-range investment and planning were useless. Capital was flowing into non-productive inflation hedges, instead of job-creating investment. A spirit of pessimism totally inconsistent with the American character permeated the land. Even our leaders were

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By getting control of spending, by keeping people from being mauled by higher and higher taxes, by decreasing the regulatory burden, by bringing down inflation, we've set this country back on the road to real economic growth. We've broken the grip stagnation has had on our throats for the last 5 years.

From the pit of pessimism, a stronger and more vital America is emerging. The Gross National Product was up 6 percent last year. This year's first quarter growth rate of 7.2 percent suggests the recovery is continuing at a fast clip. Compare that to the negative growth rate of 0.8 percent in 1980. After falling in the 2 years before we took office, productivity was up 3.2 percent last year. Putting us on the road to an even better tomorrow, venture capital, which rose only \$1 billion in 1980, shot up \$4 billion last year.

In 1983, 4 million more people found jobs, bringing employment to its highest level in our history. The unemployment rate is declining faster than anyone predicted. In the Hispanic community, unemployment has dropped almost an entire percent just since the beginning of this year.

Unemployment is a painful curse for far too many Americans. We didn't think temporary make-work jobs were the answer. Our program was designed to attack the root causes of stagnation so that once it had a chance to work, our program would create a lasting non-inflationary recovery.

Making the job even tougher, our country was also facing heavy structural unemployment, which was eliminating certain jobs forever. The Hispanic community can be proud that of all the job training and employment programs in the Department of Labor -- and there are many -- the top two are sponsored by Hispanic organizations.

Ranking first in placement and cost effectiveness is the American G.I. Forum's National Veteran's Outreach Program. Second only to the G.I. Forum is the well known SER -- jobs for progress program. Last year, we passed the Job Training Partnership Act to help those who need it the most to develop marketable skills. These two Hispanic organizations, both of which were helping people even before the legislation, have used this opportunity to do even more. I just want all of you to know that I am fully aware of this example of good citizenship and heartily applaud it.

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We have every reason for confidence, but our country does not exist in a vacuum. There is an external threat looming to this our security with which we must come to grips or our children will pay dearly for our irresponsibility. For decades, America has ignored our neighbors to the South, focusing instead on Europe and Asia. We can no longer afford to involve ourselves in faraway places while paying little attention to those close to home.

Today, a far away totalitarian power is committing enormous resources to changing the strategic balance of the world by turning Central America into a string of anti-American, Soviet style dictatorships. The evidence of this is overwhelming. The Soviet Union has shipped massive amounts of military hardware into this region. If we do not have the courage and political will to counter this power play, no one anywhere in the world will -- or should they -- trust us. This is a matter of the freedom of the people of Central America and the security of the United States.

A prominent bipartisan commission studied the situation thoroughly and came up with the unanimous conclusion that a major threat exists and that we should commit ourselves to helping our fellow Americans who are now under siege with economic and military assistance.

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

4/16/84

MEMORANDUM

TO: JAMES CICCONI/JAMES ROSEBUSH

FROM: FREDERICK J. RYAN, JR. *FJR*

SUBJ: APPROVED PRESIDENTIAL ACTIVITY

MEETING: Luncheon for National Hispanic Leadership Conference

DATE: April 17, 1984

TIME: 12:00 noon

DURATION: 60 minutes

LOCATION: Residence

REMARKS REQUIRED: Yes

MEDIA COVERAGE: Coordinate with Press Office

FIRST LADY
PARTICIPATION: No

NOTE: PROJECT OFFICER, SEE ATTACHED CHECKLIST

cc: R. Darman	J. Rosebush
R. Deprospero	R. Scouten
B. Elliott	B. Shaddix
D. Fischer	W. Sittman
C. Fuller	L. Speakes
W. Henkel	WHCA Audio/Visual
E. Hickey	WHCA Operations
G. Hodges	A. Wrobleski
C. McCain	Nell Yates
B. Oglesby	