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REMARKS BY THE HONORABLE ROBERT J. MCKENNA, R. I. STATE SENATOR ON BEHALF OF THE BICENTENNIAL COUNCIL OF THE 13 ORIGINAL STATES PRESENTED TO THE PLATFORM COMMITTEE OF THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE AT THE TREADWAY INN, NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND, APRIL 3, 1976.

May I first of all express our appreciation to Governor Noel and the other members of the Platform Committee for this opportunity to offer our ideas regarding the significance of the Bicentennial of America's independence.

In June of 1970 the Rhode Island Bicentennial Commission invited delegates from the other original states to Newport to establish communications regarding those interests they shared in the celebration of the Bicentennial of American independence. Out of this initial meeting has developed the Bicentennial Council of the 13 Original States which I represent here today.

The Chairman of our Council, Mr. Walter T. Peters, Jr., had planned to present this testimony. He sends his sincere regrets on his inability to make these remarks personally. On his behalf, as well as that of the Bicentennial Commission of the 13 Original States, I would like to suggest that the Democratic National Convention adopt as a central theme of its 1976 platform, the motto which the Bicentennial Council has adopted as its fundamental principle: WE ARE ONE. This fundamental principle of unity within diversity has been a guiding principle for our country throughout its history. We must, as we enter our third century of national independence, re-emphasize the basic principles which guided our founding fathers in 1776 and re-affirm

our fundamental agreement with and support of these principles.

As Thomas Jefferson so eloquently said in the Declaration of Independence, the purpose of Government is the preservation "of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" and these are principles which we owe to "our Creator who has endowed us with these unalienable rights".

While these principles must continue to be our guide, it is essential for us to understand that these principles have endured because the patriots of 1776 did more than initiate them. They took the necessary actions to make them meaningful in the lives of the people of these United States in the period from 1776 until the conclusion of our War for Independence and finally on to the adoption of a new constitutional frame of Government in 1789. This whole period has been entitled the Bicentennial Era.

Just as it took these many years to bring to reality the ideals and aspirations of our founding fathers, as we rededicate ourselves to them, we too, must realize that this is not a matter for a day, a week or month, but must be celebrated and recalled during an era extending from 1976-1989. I think it is important that the Democratic Party commit itself to work for the ideals of equality and justice which are embedded in our Declaration of Independence and our Constitution. I would urge that the party adopt a strong platform plank acknowledging the Bicentennial Era and dedicating the party and its

candidates for public office to these ideals and a fresh renewal of the spirit of our Nation which has carried us to 200 years of challenge and accomplishment.

Today I think our country, as in 1776, is in need of a new beginning and rededication to the fundamental rights of all of our citizens and to a fresh commitment to achieve these with justice and compassion. The Democratic Party has, of course, been the vehicle for the development and implementation of these many ideals of our founding fathers. I would strongly recommend that the Bicentennial theme be adopted by the national convention in its platform and that through this platform, that all those who would support the Democratic Party would reaffirm their fundamental commitment to America and to its enduring ideals. We can do no less, and no one can do more.