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Statement by:

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ANNOUNCEMENT OF CANDIDACY FOR  
THE UNITED STATES SENATE

Let me thank the members of the news media for accepting our invitation to attend this news conference today. It is good of you to come.

I also am pleased that so many of our friends from throughout North Carolina have taken the time to come to Raleigh and be with us. I can't tell you how much I appreciate the loyalty you have shown and the support you have extended to me during the past several years. To be quite honest, your interest and concern often have been that extra something that has helped me meet and overcome the challenges that have faced me as an elected official.

Today we meet to consider a new challenge, a new opportunity, and I am encouraged and inspired by your presence and the enthusiasm you already have lent to this occasion.

I am particularly pleased as I look out across this room to see many of the same faces I saw at the Sir Walter Hotel in November 1971, when, after much soul searching I announced my decision not to seek the Democratic nomination for Governor.

You were ready to go that day. You were prepared to wage a vigorous campaign on my behalf, and I shall never forget your willingness to do so.

But in 1971 I felt as deeply as I have ever felt anything in my life that I had unfinished business in the Attorney General's Office. In spite of the excellent prospects for victory, I felt sincerely that duty called elsewhere. Many of you left Raleigh that day disappointed.

But I promise you that you will not go home disappointed today.

We have kept our promises.

We have put our house in order.

We have assembled the finest staff of any Department of Justice in these United States, and I have complete confidence in their ability to serve and continue to serve

well the people of North Carolina.

We have developed strong and vital programs, which are now firmly rooted and growing.

I note with some pride that a recent State Government Efficiency Study Commission Report concluded it could make no significant suggestions for increasing the efficiency of our operation. In short, we have a Department which is second to none, and therefore I have no reservations about launching a bold new venture today.

Let's take a moment and look at some of the things we've accomplished in the North Carolina Department of Justice during the last five years.

First of all we have assembled an excellent legal staff which I believe renders the most competent and efficient legal services ever provided in the history of the Office of Attorney General. Because of their efforts, the citizens of North Carolina know for the first time the fact that their interests will be represented before State regulatory agencies where multi-million dollar decisions are made affecting the pocket-books of individual consumers.

We have made "consumer protection" a household phrase in North Carolina and fair dealing in the marketplace a requisite for doing business in our State. Consumers and honest businessmen alike have benefited, and we are proud of the support our efforts have received from both.

We have developed a Police Information Network which now links together more than 180 law enforcement agencies in their efforts to combat increasing crime. I have heard officer after officer say that this network is the greatest single step forward ever taken by law enforcement in North Carolina.

The State Bureau of Investigation has become one of the best in the Nation. Investigative skills and services have improved as the size of the agency has grown through strong legislative and citizen support. The crime laboratory is an invaluable aid to local law enforcement officials and has received national recognition and awards.

Special units have been formed to fight the drug traffic and organized criminal activity and their effectiveness already has been proved.

I'm extremely proud of the progress made by the State Bureau of Investigation, the good men it has attracted to

its ranks, and the high quality of leadership exhibited each day by its Director, Charles Dunn, and his associates. Every North Carolinian has reason to be proud also.

Our legislative efforts on behalf of local law enforcement personnel have been very successful, and we are still building in this area.

We have established minimum standards for all criminal justice personnel in North Carolina. At the same time, we have helped secure the enactment of a minimum salary bill, insuring every officer that he will be compensated for the services he performs and hopefully enticing more qualified persons to enter the field of law enforcement.

We have advocated an improved retirement program for these officers in an effort to see that they can live their later years in security and dignity. This program was passed by the last General Assembly.

And last, but certainly not least, we now have established a statewide training system for criminal justice personnel and have plans well on the way for creating a full-fledged training academy which I predict will become the envy of law enforcement officials throughout the United States.

We have begun a well-reasoned effort to revise the criminal code of our State in order to improve the administration of our criminal laws.

We have formed a special prosecutorial unit to aid District Attorneys in trying difficult cases in their areas.

And I could go on and on.

But let me conclude these observations by repeating a statement which I made earlier. These programs of the North Carolina Department of Justice are strong and vital, firmly rooted and growing. Therefore, I have no reservations about launching a bold, new venture today.

Having looked back to review the accomplishments of the last five years, let us now turn our attention to the future.

I have asked you to meet with me today to tell you and all the people of North Carolina that I shall be a candidate for the Democratic nomination for the United States Senate.

I announce my candidacy for the United States Senate today with the sure knowledge that there is no experience and

no single set of credentials which completely qualify any person to assume this high office. I would be less than wise, therefore, to assume that for some reason I am the perfect candidate.

But please allow me to comment for a few moments concerning what I believe I have to offer the voters of this State.

The people of my home county of Harnett, many years ago, elected me to the office of clerk of court - a local office - which gave me the opportunity at a very early age to work with and serve on a personal basis, my neighbors and friends. Many of them are here today.

I learned there that government is a personal thing; that it affects, in a very real way, the everyday lives of people. Consequently, officials of government who serve at the will of the people should be conscious of this fact.

I offer to the voters of North Carolina my consciousness of government's increasingly important role in their lives and my desire to keep government as close to the people as possible and as personal as possible.

The people of my legislative district on five occasions elected me to represent them in the North Carolina General Assembly. By doing so, they allowed me to obtain experience as a lawmaker and legislative leader.

I learned there the ins and outs, the give and take of the legislative process. And I developed a love for lawmaking.

I offer to the voters of North Carolina my lawmaking experience and my understanding of how the legislative process at any level functions.

In 1968 and again in 1972, the people of this State elected me to the Office of Attorney General. As the "People's Attorney," I had an opportunity to represent the interest of individual citizens and translate their concerns and hopes into positive, effective programs.

As Attorney General of North Carolina, I learned that government can be innovative and became more convinced than ever that the average person needs and, in fact, deserves to have an advocate in high office.

I offer to the people of North Carolina a record of advocating the people's interest and treating every citizen

fair and equal regardless of his race, creed or social status.  
I offer you a record of being straightforward and honest.

Accordingly, I want there to be no question in anyone's mind concerning my financial status, and my personal financial independence. Therefore, I soon shall make a complete disclosure of my personal finances. In my opinion, the public is entitled to know this information.

In keeping with my feelings about financial openness, I filed a report with the Secretary of the Senate in early November of last year showing my previous campaign expenses, and as required by law, I submitted another report this month with complete campaign financial information as of December 31.

As I talk with you today I am optimistic, and I am prepared to wage a vigorous campaign to win this election.

But I shall be fair.

I shall be honest.

And I shall be ethical.

I respect the people of this State too much to be otherwise.

I will not now or later attempt to convince you that I am the perfect man or the perfect candidate.

So I ask you in advance to forgive my shortcomings and pardon my oversights during the next several weeks and months. There will be hectic times and difficult days. I know, because every campaign, no matter how well planned and no matter how carefully executed, has them.

But working together, we can win the Democratic nomination. Working together we can be victorious in November.

The office of United States Senator is indeed a high office and it carries with it in North Carolina a rich tradition of outstanding leadership.

To be a United States Senator from this State is a great honor, reserved for few people, and bestowed only by the voters of this State.

North Carolina voters today are a diverse people, there is no longer a Tar Heel stereotype. We are white, black, Indian. We are farmers, industrialists, professionals, factory workers, housewives, merchants, salesmen, teachers, and craftsmen. We are unionists and non-unionists. We are

rural cooperatives, and we are private power.

We are large public universities, and we are small private colleges. We are municipalities, and we are counties. We are "wets" and we are "drys". We are the very rich and, regretfully, we are the very poor. And we are a thousand other things.

Woven together we make the fabric of what I believe to be the greatest State of these United States. The diversity of our present-day interests sustains us as a State, supports our economy, and provides us with the key to the great progress which we have made as a State.

But needless to say, this same diversity creates new problems and conflicts, challenging the creativeness and ingenuity of both federal and state government, and demanding wise and aggressive leadership from every public official, including the United States Senator from North Carolina.

Thus, I launch this bold new venture to respond to the challenges of our day and these demands for responsive, aggressive leadership.

It is clear these demands for leadership are justified when one considers the personal impact on individual

North Carolinians of such problems as the energy crisis, inflation and resulting economic chaos, and insufficient health care, at a time when public confidence in government and governmental officials is at an all-time low. These problems must be dealt with; this confidence must be restored.

So, this is a difficult time to be a public official, to be a United States Senator. But, I seek this honor, and today ask you for the privilege of representing you.

In turn, I pledge to honor you, my fellow North Carolinians, and my State, by dedicated service, complete devotion to the duties and responsibilities of a United States Senator, and the exercise of good judgment, integrity, and independence from special interests.

When I first ran for the Office of Attorney General in 1968, I promised that if elected, I would be the "People's Attorney." I believe I have kept that promise.

I promise today that if nominated by the Democratic Party and elected by the voters of this State as United States Senator, I likewise will be the "People's SENATOR." Nothing could please me more.

Thank you.

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