



Secretary Gardner, distinguished Members of the leadership of the Congress and Members of the Congress, and all other lovers of beauty:

America likes to think of itself as a strong and stalwart and expanding Nation. It identifies itself gladly with the products of its own hands. But there is more to America than raw industrial might. There is a part of America which was here long before we arrived, and will be here, if we preserve it, long after we depart: the forests and the flowers, the open prairies and the slope of the hills, the tall mountains, the granite, the limestone, the caliche, the unmarked trails, the winding little streams-well, this is the America that no amount of science or skill can ever recreate or actually ever duplicate.

This America is the source of America's greatness. It is another part of America's soul as well. How do you measure the excitement and the happiness that comes to a boy from the old swimming hole in the happy days of yore, when I used to lean above it; the old sycamore, the baiting of a hook that is tossed into the stream to catch a wily fish, or looking at a graceful deer that leaps with hardly a quiver over a rock fence that was put down by some settler a hundred years or more ago? How do you really put a value on the view of the night that is caught in a boy's eyes while he is stretched out in the thick grass watching the million stars that we never see in these crowded cities, breathing the sounds of the night and the birds and the pure, fresh air while in his ears are the crickets and the wind?

Well, in recent years I think America has sadly neglected this part of America's national heritage. We have placed a wall of civilization between us and between the beauty of our land and of our countryside. In our eagerness to expand and to improve, we have relegated nature to a weekend role, and we have banished it from our daily lives.

Well, I think that we are a poorer Nation because of it, and it is something I am not proud of. And it is something I am going to do something about.

And that is why today there is a great deal of real joy within me, and within my family, as we meet here in this historic East Room to sign the Highway Beautification Act of 1965.

As I rode the George Washington Memorial Parkway back to the White House only yesterday afternoon, I saw nature at its purest. And I thought of the honor roll of names – a good many of you are sitting here in the front row today – that made this possible. And as I thought of you who had helped and stood up against private greed for public good, I looked at those dogwoods that had turned red, and the maple trees that were scarlet and gold. And not one single foot of it was marred by a single, unsightly, man-made construction or obstruction – no advertising signs, no old, dilapidated trucks, no junkyards.

Beauty belongs to all the people. And so long as I am President, what has been divinely given to nature will not be taken recklessly away by man.

And unless I miss my guess, history will remember on its honor roll those of you whom the camera brings into focus in this room today.

Thank you very much.

Adapted from President Lyndon B. Johnson's *Remarks at the signing of the Highway Beautification Act of 1965, October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1965*