

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2021

**Remarks at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory Flatirons Campus in
Arvada, Colorado**
September 14, 2021

Thank you very much, Julian. I—Governor—and I want to thank you as well for all you do. You know, and the IBEW is the—one of the outfits, as they say in Claymont, Delaware, that "brung me to the dance." And they're the best in the world. And really great seeing you all working together.

Dr. Keller and the N-REL team, thanks for welcoming me here. And, Governor, it's good to see you again and your whole team.

Lieutenant Governor Primavera, Attorney General, Secretary of State. You know, you've got the mayor—Mayor Hancock. I think he's here, or he was here. I thought I saw him earlier today. I want to thank you for the welcome to Denver and for making the trip out here.

And to my friends in Congress—Chairman Baker—thank you for being here. My team—we have the Energy Secretary, Jennifer Granholm, who I always say, were she born in America and not Canada, she'd be standing here as President. *[Laughter]* But she's doing a heck of a job for me and for the country. And a proud electric car driver as well.

And also, a former Secretary and former mayor of Denver, Federico Peña, a good friend of mine who's here today. There you go, Fred. Good to see you, pal.

And while he couldn't be here, I wanted to mention that the Senator and our—my nominee for Ambassador to Mexico is Ken Salazar. And I'm glad to see Congressmen Perlmutter and Neguse and Crow. I want to thank you all. You have other places to be, I know.

And three good friends who wanted to be here are in Washington today, right now. And so—you know, there's a lot: Senator Bennet and Hickenlooper and Congresswoman DeGette. They're all in Washington doing what they have to do.

When you look—we look at who you've heard from, it's clear: Whether you're an engineer or on a—at a lab bench, the IB—or an IBEW worker working on a combine—a turbine—a turbine, when you work for a power company or a small construction business, everyone—everyone—has a role to play and everyone is building a clean energy future and a stronger economy. Because that's what this is about. And we need everyone's contributions. We need everyone's contributions.

Yesterday I saw firsthand the devastation of the Caldor Fire in California as we flew over it in a helicopter. And in the last 2 weeks, I traveled to Louisiana, New York, and New Jersey to see the destruction from Hurricane Ida. More people killed in New York with flooding, 20 inches of rain—and what's happened up there—than were killed when 178-mile-an-hour winds hit Louisiana.

The extreme weather is—we're seeing is only going to come more frequently and with more ferocity. And we're blinking code red as a nation, and we really are. So far this year, nationwide, there are 44,000 wildfires that have burned nearly 5.6 million acres. That's enough—that's the size of the entire State of New Jersey burned flat. They've caused billions of dollars in damage and forced tens of thousands of people to evacuate their homes and businesses.

And even if it's not in your backyard, you feel the effects, as you mentioned earlier. You turn on the local weather—in addition to telling you what the temperature is and what the precipitation

will be, you want to know what the smoke forecast is going to be. When parents fear letting their kids play out to play, that, outside, it may trigger an asthma attack.

You saw the vicious cycle this summer when heavy rains combined—combined with the burn scar of 2020 Grizzly Creek Fire, it resulted in mudslides, as we've pointed out, that washed out an entire section of Interstate 70, adding hours of people's drives and cutting off a vital commercial artery.

The bottom line is, it's everywhere. It's everywhere. Communities that nearly 1 in 3 Americans call home have been struck by weather disasters in just the past few months. Hurricanes in the Gulf Coast are up to the—and up the Eastern Seaboard. Wildfires threatening throughout the West and tearing it apart. Droughts and heat waves across the country, devastating farmers and ranchers and draining the Colorado River.

In addition to the lost lives—lives shattered, extreme weather cost America, last year, \$99 billion; \$99 billion extreme weather cost last year. And it's going to break the record this year. It's going to be well over \$100 billion.

We know what the driver is: climate change. And we know what's causing climate change: human activity. This is no longer subject to debate. And, I might add, windmills do not cause cancer. *[Laughter]* You know, look, we've got to get real about what's going on. I really mean it. Think about it.

The only debate is around what we do to confront this crisis, and that shouldn't even be a debate. You know, we have to invest in being more resilient because of the impacts of climate—the climate change that's occurring today, not next year, not 10 years from now. And we have to make the investments that are going to slow our contributions to climate change today, not tomorrow.

And here's the good news: Something that is caused by humans can be solved by humans. I've set a course for the United States to achieve 50- to 52-percent reduction in greenhouse emissions by 2030 and for us to reach that net-zero emissions in the economy—all—economy-wide, across the board—by 2050.

As part of that, I set a goal of having our country produce 100-percent carbon pollution-free power by 2035. We can do that. We can do all of this in a way that creates good jobs, lowers costs to consumers and businesses, and makes us global leaders in an entirely new industry that other countries are really working hard to try to dominate.

I just toured the Renewable Energy Lab, which I hadn't been here—not the same lab—but I hadn't been here since 2011. Which was started under President Carter and expanded under President Bush—H.W. Bush. Leaders of both parties have recognized that clean energy future and economic—is an economic imperative and a national security imperative and an environmental imperative.

That's why my Build Back Better plan calls for significant new investments in upgrading research infrastructures, laboratories all across the country. We'll be making one of those breakthroughs in solar, wind, and storage on—out of these facilities—out-innovate the rest of the world and drive down the costs of renewable energy. Of course, we have to invest in the future. We need to deploy cutting-edge technologies, and we have to deploy them today, not tomorrow.

I had a chance to see the state-of-the-art wind turbine testing and new battery technologies. Because of the years of work that have taken place here—and these technologies aren't science fiction—they're ready to be installed and scaled up across the country, right now, by union members like the ones we heard from today. And that's what we're going to do.

You know, as we just heard from the CEO of Xcel Energy, they've set a goal of producing 100 percent carbon emission-free power. They're the first major utility—the first major utility—to set that goal. And today, over 20 large facilities around the Nation have set a similar goal. You've led the way.

Today, one of every three Americans lives in a city or a State transitioning to clean energy—clean energy electricity. But, folks, we have to pick up the pace. When I rejoined the Paris climate accord after we had been pulled out of it, the goals set when our administration—the last administration, the Obama-Biden administration—when that was set, they were—said that we had more time. We don't have time now. The goals are different because the necessity is there. We don't have a lot of time. We don't have much more than 10 years. For real. And this is a decisive decade.

Already, the price of solar generation in this country has dropped 80 percent over the past decade. Eighty percent. The price of wind turbine generation has dropped 55 percent. And a lot of it is because of the investments we made in the Recovery Act, back when I was Vice President. And today, renewables are now cheaper than fossil fuels in many parts of the country.

Now we need to take the next step of continuing to drive prices down and job creation up, because those renewable goals create demand for more wind turbines and more installations—solar installations, which means good jobs for workers like Julian and his union brothers and sisters. And you can see why I think that climate change, when I think of it, I think jobs.

I had a meeting with over 140 heads of state on the Zoom when we hosted it out of the White House. And one of the things—by the time I finished, everyone was talking about jobs. It's not about costing jobs.

Initially, as you remember—even you guys—I spent a lot of time, before I announced my plan, meeting with all the unions to convince you all that this is the future; these are where the jobs are. When I say "jobs," I'm not talking about \$15 an hour. I'm not talking—am I not speaking loudly enough? I can see you're having trouble hearing me back there. *[Laughter]*

You know, I'm talking about union jobs—not 15, 20 bucks an hour; 45, 50 bucks an hour. Benefits. That's going to grow the country too. I've never seen the wealthy do poorly when the middle class does well. That's never happened.

So, to accelerate that progress, we need invest and innovate. We need a modern electric grid—one that has much higher capacity and more resilient transmission wires; and—you know, and with—has more storage capacity, using advanced batteries so we can hold on to surplus energy generated when the sun is not shining and the wind is not blowing.

Right now it's going to rain—no. *[Laughter]* Right now we've got transmission projects that could carry enough power for millions of homes, but they need catalytic investment to move to the construction phase.

Our bipartisan infrastructure bill contains the largest Federal investment in power transmission in our history so that our grid is more reliable, we can carry more renewable energy, so we can create good union jobs building that new grid. We're also making dramatic investments in public transit, electric buses, charging stations.

In Denver, we're going to help Mayor Hancock achieve his goal of reducing greenhouse gases in the city by 80 percent. It's going to create jobs that we know the Local 68 apprentice center is busy training workers to be able to perform.

And by the way, I'm bringing the automakers, including the Big Three and the UAW, along so we have more electric vehicles on the road and fewer tailpipe emissions in the air.

We're going to cap thousands—[*applause*]*—*we're going to cap thousands of abandoned oil wells and gas wells leaking methane, threatening public health in communities, and get paid the same price for capping them as it was to dig them.

We're going to provide support to make our communities, including Tribal nations, much more resilient to the impacts of climate change.

Every dollar we invest to flood-proof a power station, install power lines underground, "winterize" a power plant, or to build advanced turbines, like the ones here—every dollar we spend saves \$6 down the road, because the next time a disaster strikes, flooding is contained, the fire doesn't spread as widely, the power stays on.

And these investments can also save lives, save homes, and create good-paying jobs for Americans to make our country stronger and more resilient.

In fact, experts tell us that the bipartisan agreement we've reached in the American infrastructure bill will put 800,000 people to work—800,000—including plumbers, pipefitters, electrical workers, steel workers—modernizing roads, bridges, water systems, broadband systems; making high-speed internet available to 85,000 Coloradans who currently don't have it. That's what's in the infrastructure bill that's already agreed to.

And we're negotiating right now for my plan to build back better, which includes additional action to address climate crisis. It includes tax credits that will effectively cut the cost of building a utility-scale solar farms by 30 percent; shorten the time it takes for resident-scale—residential-scale solar systems to pay for themselves in around 8 years—and instead of 8, less than 5 years; save consumers 1,250 [12,500]* bucks for an electric vehicle, like a Ford F-150. By the way, 0 to 60 in 4.1. That's a different—[*laughter*]. Help us reach the goal of half of new cars sold in America will be electric by 2030, saving billions of gallons of gasoline.

And I want to see—I want to create a Civilian Climate Corps—I've been pushing that for a long time—similar to the Conservation Corps that President Roosevelt created during the Great Depression, put a new generation of Americans to work, helping us connect and conserve our public lands and become resilient in the process.

Yesterday I visited the National Interagency Fire Center in Idaho where we coordinate our Federal fire response to wildfires. They told me that the climate—the Civilian Climate Corps would make an enormous difference by cleaning away combustible underbrush enable fires—that enable fires to spread, by planting trees to fight climate change.

In the end, it's not about red States or blue States. A drought or a fire doesn't see a property line. It doesn't care—give a damn for which party you belong to. Disasters aren't going to stop. That's the nature of the climate threat. But we know—we know—what we have to do. We just need to summon the courage and the creativity to do it.

Yes, we face a crisis, but we face a crisis with an unprecedented opportunity to create good jobs of the future, to create industries of the future, to win the future, to save the planet. Ladies and gentlemen, we can do this. This is the United States of America. There has never been a problem we faced when we set our mind to deal with it, we haven't been able to—I mean it literally. Never have we failed to meet an objective we set.

And what's happening now with both the industry, government, unions, people around the country is that we've set a goal, and the goal is achievable.

* White House correction.

And I promise you—I promise you—it's going to create great economic growth, reduce inflation, and put people in a place where those beautiful children in the back are never going to have to worry about what we're worrying about right now.

So thank you. Remember, there's not a damn thing we're unable to do in America when we put our—when we come together. Never, ever have we failed. And we're not going to fail now, because of all of you.

Thank you for everything. Thanks, everybody. I really mean it. Thank you, thank you, thank you. Appreciate it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:29 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Julian Aguilar, general foreman, Dynelectric Colorado, and member International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 68, who introduced the President; Gov. Jared S. Polis, Attorney General Phil Weiser, and Secretary of State Jena Griswold of Colorado; Martin Keller, Director, National Renewable Energy Laboratory; former Secretary of Energy and former Secretary of Transportation Federico Peña; and Ben Fowke, executive chairman, Xcel Energy Inc. He also referred to H.R. 3684.

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Locations: Arvada, CO.

Names: Aguilar, Julian; Bennet, Michael F.; Carter, James E., Jr.; Crow, Jason A.; DeGette, Diana L.; Fowke, Ben; Granholm, Jennifer M.; Griswold, Jena; Hancock, Michael B.; Hickenlooper, John W.; Keller, Martin; Neguse, Joseph D.; Peña, Federico; Perlmutter, Edwin G.; Polis, Jared S.; Primavera, Dianne; Salazar, Kenneth M.; Weiser, Phil.

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