

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2021

Remarks in an Exchange With Reporters at Bradley International Airport in Windsor Locks, Connecticut

October 15, 2021

Infrastructure, Jobs, Education, and Family Assistance Legislation

Q. Mr. President, can you give us some details on the talks you've been having this week: who you've been talking to, what the focus has been, if there's been any specific progress?

The President. That wouldn't be appropriate. It's still—negotiation is still going on. There has been progress, but—and I'll be meeting with and talking with folks today and tomorrow and on Monday.

Climate Change Legislation/Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John F. Kerry

Q. Secretary Kerry said the other day that if you come to Scotland without legislation passed by Congress—your climate bill—that would be as bad for credibility as when Trump pulled out of Paris. What do you make of that? That's what Secretary Kerry said.

The President. Well, I think it'd be good to have an agreement on the climate piece, but we're going to get the climate piece. And I think Senator Kerry has a little hyperbole there.

He pulled out. And the question is whether or not I have enough Republicans who understand the plan that's in jeopardy. And that's what we're working on.

Q. But what's your message to the union workers who are on strike across the country right now?

The President. I'm sorry?

Labor Issues

Q. What's your message to the union workers striking across the country right now?

The President. My message is that they have a right to strike and they have a right to demand higher wages. And the companies they're striking on are doing very well. I'm not going to get into the negotiation, but my message is: If you think that's what you need, then you should do it.

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Q. Mr. President, you expressed some uncertainty about the 2 years of free community college in your reconciliation package during your speech at the childcare center. Would you sign a package that doesn't include that proposal?

The President. Look—[laughter]—obviously—are you married?

Q. I'm not.

The President. Okay. Well, you're going to have to learn how to negotiate better.

All kidding aside, look, it's clear that it's not going to be \$3.5 trillion. So, the question is: How much of what is important do we get into the legislation? I'm of the view that it's important to establish the principle on a whole range of issues without guaranteeing you get the whole 10 years. It doesn't—it matters to establish it.

I don't know of any major change in American public policy that's occurred by a single piece of legislation. There probably is; I just can't think of one.

And so what happens is, you pass the principle and you build on it if in fact it either works or it doesn't work. And I'm convinced that's why I think you see so much support, even from the folks who are holding out, for the child tax credit.

Well, the child—but they didn't have that idea when I convinced them to pass it the first time when we did the act in January—I mean, yes, February. But now people are seeing it. It's practical, it works, and it's fair.

And so, you know, I doubt whether we'll get the entire funding for community colleges, but I'm not going to give up on community colleges as long as I'm President.

Child Tax Credit Extension

Q. What about just the child tax credit and all that childcare money that you talked about today? Do you have any sense of whether Senators Manchin and Sinema support putting that in the reconciliation package?

The President. Yes. Yes.

Q. Yes, they do? They both do?

The President. Yes, I have a sense.

Former President William J. Clinton

Q. What did you say to President Clinton today? How did you guys——

The President. Oh, I wanted to see how he was doing. And—because I've been trying to get a hold of him. He's doing fine; he really is. And he's going to be released from the hospital. And we talked about—which we were going to do before—getting together—I haven't seen him in a while—and for him to come over and have some lunch and talk.

He was very encouraging about why he thought the policies I was pursuing made sense, but we didn't get into much detail, except—it was mainly just to see how he's doing.

Q. Is he staying in the hospital, or is he getting out?

The President. I think he's not in any serious condition. He is getting out shortly, as I understand it. Whether that's tomorrow or the next day, I don't know.

Virginia Gubernatorial Race

Q. Did you guys talk about McAuliffe's race, Terry McAuliffe's race in Virginia?

The President. No, we didn't talk about any—that I can think of—I don't think we talked about any particular race. I'm going to go in for the Governor.

Virginia and New Jersey Gubernatorial Races

Q. Do you think McAuliffe—do you think Terry McAuliffe's race is a foreshadowing for what the Democrats—how the Democrats will fare in the midterm? Is that how you see it?

The President. No, look, I think everybody understandably reads the two gubernatorial off-year elections as being a bellwether of what may happen. Sometimes, it's been right; sometimes, it's been wrong. I think Terry is going to win. If he doesn't win, I don't know how much you read into that, but you know, I—but, I think he'll win.

Federal Reserve System

Q. Have you met recently with Lael Brainard or Chair Powell about the Fed Chair search?

The President. It's been nice talking to you. [*Laughter*]

Q. Senator Dodd has been a big supporter of Chairman Powell. I mean, did you talk to him about that today? Where are you?

The President. No, I didn't.

Q. No?

Infrastructure, Jobs, Education, and Family Assistance Legislation

Q. Earlier, you said that, in regard to not getting the full \$3.5 trillion, later you would go back for the rest.

The President. Sure.

Q. What exactly did you mean by that?

The President. Figure it out. If you can't figure it out, you shouldn't be a reporter.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:11 p.m. on the tarmac prior to boarding Air Force One en route to Joint Base Andrews, MD. In his remarks, he referred to former President Donald J. Trump; Virginia Democratic gubernatorial candidate former Gov. Terrence R. McAuliffe; and Lael Brainard, member of the Board of Governors, Federal Reserve System. A reporter referred to former Sen. Christopher J. Dodd.

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