Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2022

Remarks on Infrastructure Improvement Efforts in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
January 28, 2022

Please sit down. Please, please sit down.

JoJo, thank you very much. You know, I can picture him in Desert Storm as a sergeant, barking out orders, can't you? When my son Beau was promoted to major in Iraq and I said, "Now you're a field-grade officer," he said: "Dad, I have no illusions. I know who runs the Army: sergeants. Sergeants. They're the officers."

Well, hello, Pittsburgh. It's good to be back. It really is good to be.

Fern Hollow Bridge Collapse in Frick Park

Before I begin, let me just talk a little bit about what we all just saw—many of us saw this morning. A bridge more than 50 years old—a hundred—I think it 150 years; it says "50 years old," but I thought it was older—collapsed right here in Pittsburgh. It had been rated in "poor" condition for the past 10 years.

What you all know—if you don't, you should know—there are another 3,300 bridges here in Pennsylvania, some of which are just as old and just as decrepit condition as that bridge was, including here in Pittsburgh, the "City of Bridges."

I've been coming to Pittsburgh a long time. I'm a Pennsylvania kid. I was born and raised, the first part of my life in Pennsylvania, and I've been to Pittsburgh a lot. But all these years, I never knew—I never knew Pennsylvania—Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, had more bridges than any other city in the world. Yo!

Infrastructure Improvement Efforts

But across the country, there are 45,000 bridges in "poor" condition. It's just simply unacceptable. That's why your Governor, and your Members of Congress, your mayor have been saying for years that we have to do something about this.

I've talked about it every time I've come to Pittsburgh, and we finally got it done: a bipartisan infrastructure law, including the largest investment in our Nation's bridges since the—since the—Eisenhower put together the Interstate Highway System. And, I might add, this was the first time in the country's history that we dedicated a national program to repair and upgrade bridges. And it's about time.

The Governor can tell you: We're giving State and local leaders historic funding to make national projects real. Here in Pennsylvania, that means at least $1.6 billion for bridges alone, $327 million in 2022 alone just to repair bridges.

We've got to get it—on with it. We've got to move. The next time, we don't need headlines saying that someone was killed when the next bridge collapses.

We're also providing billions more for roads and so much more. As we saw today, when a bridge is in disrepair, it literally can threaten lives. As soon as we heard about the bridge, we were immediately in contact with the mayor—Mr. Mayor, you're doing a hell of a job—and the Governor and other officials on the ground.

And we're going to rebuild that bridge, along with thousands of other bridges in Pennsylvania and across the country, because it's in our interest for our own safety's sake and it generates commerce in a way that we can't do now.

That's part of how we're going to build a better America. And that's what I want to talk to you about today.

So thank you for the introduction, JoJo. Mayor—Mr. Mayor, County Executive Rich Fitzgerald, it's great to see you again, pal.

And it's good to be here with so many outstanding folks, particularly the Governor—Lieutenant Governor John Fetterman. John, I—if I had you in front of me when I was playing at Delaware, I could have been an All-American. I could have been big. [*Laughter*] But—and, Conor Lamb, it's great to see you, man. And you're doing a hell of a job, all of you.

And my good friend and former neighbor in Scranton, Bobby Casey. Now, his dad—we're about the same spread. His dad wasn't much older than me than I am than Bobby, but we lived—I lived on North Washington Avenue. You noticed they changed the end of the road name? It's the Joe Biden Way now. [*Laughter*] Do you know—no, really. Did you see that?

I shouldn't say this. I'm going to get in trouble in Delaware, Mr. Secretary, but the first thing I asked on the election results—I said, "How did I do in Scranton?" I won every precinct. [*Laughter*]

And so—I used to drive up Route 81 all the time to get—not just to get to Scranton, but to get up to Syracuse when I was at Syracuse Law School. And they now—the entrance to go—to get to Scranton off 81 is the Joe Biden Expressway. So I'm coming home, Bobby. I'm coming home.

Look, all kidding aside, I want to thank our Commerce Secretary, former Governor Gina Raimondo, for joining us today.

And I want to thank Congressman Mike Doyle, who couldn't be here today, but who has done so much for this district.

Nearly 3 years ago, I began my campaign for President right here in Pittsburgh—the first major stop I made. I said back then I was running to restore the backbone of America: the middle class. It's time we began to build this country from the middle up and the bottom out so that we—I've never known when a wealthy person didn't do well when the middle class was doing well. We always do better when ordinary, hard-working people have a shot.

And after I accepted the party's nomination in August of 2020, I came here to Mill 19 for my first major campaign stop, and I laid out my vision to build a better America with better pay and greater dignity for the working people, who are the ones who built this country. I often hear about how—who built the country. Guess what? The middle class built this country, and unions built the middle class.

And, folks, making it in America with American manufacturing and easing the financial burdens on millions of families—that's the same vision I laid out once again when I was here in Pittsburgh when—after—the first stop I made after I was sworn in as President.

Now after my first year, I wanted to come back to Pittsburgh—this is my third time here in this facility—to take stock of what we've accomplished together and look forward to the extraordinary opportunities that lie ahead for Pittsburgh and America if we continue to do our job.

From day one, every action I've taken to rebuild the economy has been guided by one principle: Make it in America, like we used to. No one knows that better than all of the folks here in Pittsburgh, and that's why it matters so much. Making it in America is what built this city: the Steel City.

The arsenal of democracy during World War II when Pennsylvania generated as much steel as Germany, Japan, and Italy combined, right here in the city of Pittsburgh. But Pittsburgh also knows the consequences when we ignore the backbone and fail to invest in ourselves, fail to invest in our people.

Some of you have been around long enough to remember how this city lost 100,000 steel jobs between 1970 and 1990. I was raised, when I moved from Scranton—my dad didn't have any work and we moved to Claymont, Delaware. There used to be an outfit called Worth Steel where over 6,000 steel—the town was a company town. There's not a single steelworker there now.

And, by the 1980s, more than three-quarters of Pittsburgh's steel capacity had been shuttered. You or your parents remember what you felt like in your neighborhood. It didn't feel good, the painful ripple effect it had: jobs lost, families ripped apart.

So you know that to build a truly strong economy, we need a future that's made in America. That means using products, parts, and materials built right here in the United States of America. It means bringing manufacturing back, jobs back; building the supply chains here at home, not outsourcing abroad, so we have better jobs and lower prices here.

It means betting on America's workers. And it takes a Federal Government that doesn't just give lip service to buying American, but actually takes action. That's the approach I've taken from day one. And now we're beginning to see the results.

We learned this week, after my first year as President, the United States had the fastest economic growth in nearly four decades, along with along with the greatest year of job growth in American history: 6.4 million jobs created in 1 year.

And instead of losing manufacturing jobs, since I've been in office, America has actually added an additional 367,000 manufacturing jobs in America—good-paying jobs. The highest increase in U.S. manufacturing jobs in 30 years.

Last week, the CEO of Intel, Pat Gelsinger, came to the White House because he wanted to support the Build Back Better initiative and to also let me know—two of your neighboring Senators were here—were there: Portman and Brown, a Democrat and Republican from Ohio.

He came to announce a new $20 billion semiconductor campus outside of Columbus, Ohio, that's going to create 10,000 jobs: 7,000 constructing the facility and 3,000 permanent jobs. And by the way, I was joking—I said, "I may need a job." He said: "Well, it's not bad. The average salary is $135,000 a year."

Folks—and the key is, these are jobs manufacturing essential products stamped "Made in America." Semiconductors are the—you all know—they're small computer chips that power virtually everything in everyday life. And they were—originated here in the United States of America. We used to own not only the patent, but the technology and the production.

Your phone, your car, your refrigerator, your washing machine, hospital equipment, the internet, the electric grid, and so much more depend on these chips. So this is going to create thousands of additional jobs, helping build more American products.

For example, you know, inflation is a problem, which I'll speak to in a second, and it's real, and a lot of people are being hurt by it. But guess what? One-third of the inflation in America is a consequence of the cost of automobiles—one-third. You know why? Because of the shortage of semiconductors. They can't build them. And therefore, the ones that aren't being built cause the price of those that are being built to go much higher. This announcement helps fix that problem.

Three days ago, I called a meeting in the White House of CEOs from General Motors, Ford, Microsoft, Hewlett Packard, and others. Mary Barra, General Motors CEO, announced in the White House an initial $7 billion investment in Michigan to manufacture electric vehicles, creating 4,000 new quality jobs. That's on top of the announcement made by the CEO of Ford, Jim Farley, last year, investing $11 billion in electric vehicles, creating 11,000 new jobs.

And today, right here in Western Pennsylvania, the Union Pacific Railroad is announcing the largest purchase of American-made battery-electric locomotives in all of history. And by the way, guess who's supplying those batteries? General Motors. Folks, I want to tell you: It matters. It matters a lot.

The company that will build those locomotives is called Wabtec. "W–A–B" in their name is because they grew out of the old Westinghouse Air Brake Company, a classic Pittsburgh manufacturer. Wabtec is based here in Pittsburgh. And these locomotives will be built up in Erie at the same plant that Thomas Edison built the General Electrics—for General Electric more than a century ago.

Not only will these locomotives be running here at home, powering our economy and decreasing pollution, Wabtec will also be exporting them to Canada, to Australia, and all around the world, again, creating more good-paying jobs, folks, in the process, reducing climate change, generating jobs here in Western Pennsylvania. As I said, good-paying jobs you can raise a family on.

My dad said that all you need—a family needs just a little bit of breathing room. A little bit of breathing room. And so many people don't have it now.

But it also means something else. It means that right here in Pittsburgh, the future is being built on the foundation of this city's storied past.

An announcement like this doesn't happen in a vacuum. The manufacturing resurgence we're seeing today is no accident. It takes local leaders, Federal leaders, foundations, businesses, unions, universities all pulling together. It requires a mindset like you have here at Mill 19.

Here's what I mean by that: Generations ago, Mill 19 used to roll out 10-inch steel bars. Today, it rolls out the latest innovations in advanced manufacturing, robotics, 3D printing, and artificial intelligence. It's simply rolling out the future. That's what it's going to be doing. That success is a result of a partnership.

The Federal Government provides funding from everything from basic research to great universities like Carnegie Mellon, to supporting partnerships that help small businesses in Western Pennsylvania get into the game in the first place, like the businesses here at Mill 19; organizations like one called Catalyst. They work with small businesses to adapt to the latest technologies they need and grow—and grow and compete globally.

The work—the work—is made possible by funding from my Commerce Department. And they partner with engineers and researchers from Carnegie Mellon University who design the next generation of advanced manufacturing equipment, creating technologies that work alongside workers instead of replacing the workers. In fact, Carnegie Mellon and the AFL–CIO are teaming up to make sure these technologies—make sure they're designed to support workers.

Another organization at Mill 19 is called ARM Institute. ARM Institute is a public-private partnership, funded in part by the Federal Government, to help robotics technology move into the marketplace and to help train workers to build, operate, and repair robots so that working folks right here can take on good-paying jobs that companies like Wabtec are helping to create.

And by the way, thanks to the American Rescue Plan—the first major bill we got passed in March—my Commerce Department is investing an additional $1 billion in local efforts to strengthen regional economies throughout the country.

Some of that money is coming right here to Western Pennsylvania in support of efforts that include partners here at Mill 19, helping spread new robotics, artificial intelligence, manufacturing technologies, and create more jobs across the Nation.

Look, you all get it. The bottom line is this: It takes all of us working together—all of us working together—to get this done. And that's finally beginning to happen. When the Federal Government invests in innovation, it powers up the private sector to do what it does best: creating incredible new technologies and new industries and, most importantly, new jobs, good-paying jobs.

These are the kinds of investments and partnerships that help us build a "Made in America" future. We can't slow down now. We can't slow down now. We know what happens when we stop investing in the future of places like Pittsburgh.

Decades ago, we used to invest 2 percent of our gross domestic product in research and development here in America. Let me emphasize that: research and development. Today, we invest less than 1 percent.

The United States of America used to be ranked number one in the world in investing in the future. Now we rank number nine in research and development. China was number eight three decades ago; today, it's number two. And other countries are catching up fast.

But we can and we must change that trajectory. We have an opportunity ahead of us right now. The House and Senate—the United States Congress and the United States Senate—are working out a bill that's going to provide an extra $90 billion for research and development, manufacturing all the elements of the supply chain needed to produce the end products. And this would help create more partnerships like the ones you have right here at Mill 19.

Secretary Raimondo, former Governor of Rhode Island, she has been helping lead this effort. She knows what it takes.

And my expectation is that this will continue to be a bipartisan effort, God willing, just like the infrastructure law.

And by the way, regarding the infrastructure law, we brought together Democrats and Republicans being led by Senator Casey and Senator [Congressman][*] Lamb and other Members of your delegation here—Democrats—along with Republicans to do something about infrastructure.

Now, just 74 days after signing that law, we're already making tangible differences for highways, ports, airports, rail, high-speed internet, clean air, clean water. That includes $1.6 billion over the next 5 years for Pennsylvania to repair its bridges. As I said earlier, there are more than 3,300 bridges across Pennsylvania and over 7,500 miles of highway in poor condition.

It also means jobs, replacing lead water pipes so families in 10 million homes and in 400,000 schools and childcare centers can drink clean water, not lead-based. Jobs. Jobs providing the labor and infrastructure, making high-speed internet affordable and available everywhere in America—cities, suburban, rural areas—so that nobody is left behind—nobody is left behind.

You know, when—you can pause for a second; if you think about it: How many times during the period when COVID was so bad—it's still not good, but we're getting there—when COVID was so bad and schools were closed, you'd drive by a McDonald's and see a family sitting in the parking lot so the kid could use his computer or her computer to be able to tie into

[*] White House correction.

the Internet out in the McDonald's or any other fast-food restaurant? This is the United States of America, for God's sake. What are we doing? What in God's name are we doing?

We've announced a major investment of five hundred—excuse me, $858 million to modernize the Montgomery Lock in—northwest of Pittsburgh here—so the water levels are—stay high enough for barges to pass through the upper Ohio River. We move about half a trillion dollars' worth of goods through those locks like these across the country every single year. When we're not—when they're not working, it creates chokepoints. Barges break [back]* up and goods don't get to where they need to go.

Bob Casey has been on my back about this for so long. [*Laughter*] And as we get this Montgomery Lock project done, I think we should call it the "Casey Lock." I mean—[*applause*]—Bobby, I didn't know anybody in Scranton knew what the hell a lock was. You know what I mean? [*Laughter*] But all kidding aside, it's going to happen. It's going to happen.

I've also announced—after consulting with my friend Cecil Roberts, the president of the United Mine Workers—a plan to cap and plug orphaned gas wells and oil wells spewing methane into the air—over 100,000 of them—and clean up abandoned mines.

I come from Coal Country—Scranton. Thousands of these wells helped generate economic growth here in Pennsylvania. But now it's time to create good-paying union jobs capping those wells. They're abandoned. And they get the same salary as those who dug them in the first place.

Look, this will also deliver $7.5 billion to build a network of electric vehicle charging stations. A good friend of mine, Lonnie Stephenson, the president of the IBEW—they're going to have a good time, man. Five—over 500,000 of these charging stations on our highways. And by the way, when you build these stations, what happens is like when you build a gas station on a highway: Other things grow up around it. You're going to see communities grow as a consequence, making us more globally competitive in the future of electric vehicles while helping fight climate change.

And, folks, here in Pennsylvania, you all know best the cost of inaction when it comes to climate. Extreme weather costs this State $10 billion over the last decade. Ten billion. You all remember last fall when Hurricane Ida made landfall in—and he's running my operation now, in—the former mayor of Louisiana—when it hit Louisiana. Winds hit 178 miles an hour. And guess what happened here? It flooded businesses in Oakdale and homes in Millvale.

Nationally, last year, extreme weather cost us $145 billion. That's what it cost the American public. And extreme weather is not going to ease up on its own. We have to be ready.

That's why we're investing in our resilience and building roads higher when we rebuild them, our levees stronger, our power grids more durable so they don't get blown down and cause massive, massive, massive wildfires: to withstand the increasing ferocity of extreme weather.

You know, I went all over the country last year visiting these sites, flying over vast, vast stretches of land in the West, in Oregon, in Washington, in Idaho—looking down from that helicopter and seeing nothing, but barren, barren land.

You know, more timber, more housing, more businesses burned to the ground last year in the United States than the entire physical size of the State of New Jersey, from the New York State line down to the Delaware Bay. That's how much burned to the ground this last year.

All of these investments—in making it in America, in research and development, in infrastructure—are really about one thing: empowering more cities and more towns to do what

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* White House correction.

you're doing right here in Pittsburgh, transforming yourself from being told you're a city without a future to becoming a city of the future.

Think what—think what your kids are going to have with this leadership you have in front of you here, 15 years from now, here in Pittsburgh. We're going to lead the world again. It's not hyperbole, it's a fact.

Where, instead of shuttering factories along the Allegheny River, we're going to now talk about—not "Steel Row"—we're going to talk about "Robotics Row," a 3-mile run with some of the world's most innovative businesses; a place where the future is being written, where families can have good paychecks, a good home, a future, and a little bit of breathing room.

The story we have kept writing here in Pittsburgh and can keep writing in communities across the country is the one you've begun. But we can't slow down, folks. We need to ease the burden on working families, making thing—everything—everything more affordable and accessible to hard-working people.

And that's what my Build Back Better plan is all about. That's why those major corporations came to the White House asking to see me to tell me they supported Build Back Better, even though it was going to increase their taxes—going to increase their taxes.

This plan will not cost the American people a single penny beyond—no one making less than $400,000 will pay a single additional penny in their taxes. That's a—and it reduces the deficit. And 14 Nobel laureates in economics wrote to me, telling me that it will also diminish the impact of inflation.

Take childcare. How many families in this town can continue to afford to pay $14,000 per kid for childcare? Well, the plan I have cuts that in half for most families, helping them—helping with their budgets, helping millions of parents, especially women, to go back to work.

How many of you know anybody who has type 1 diabetes? They need insulin. Do you know how much it costs to make that insulin? Less than $10. Do you know how much it costs, on average, nationwide, for a monthly supply of insulin, which you need it every single month? Six hundred and fifty-six dollars, as high as a thousand dollars.

Imagine being the parent making the minimum wage or twice the minimum wage and having a child with type 1 diabetes, knowing that if you can't—and have no insurance—knowing if you cannot get that money for the insulin, your child might die.

In addition to your child, it strips you of your dignity, damn it! Can you imagine looking at your child and you know what they need and not be able to do it? Many of you have lost children. Many of you have seen—imagine. It's outrageous. And we have an answer.

At the same time, the same is true for home- and community-based services for seniors and people with disabilities. Folks, look, what's the one thing if you—you know, a lot of you are part of the so-called "sandwich generation." You have a child that you need to get daycare so you can go out and work, as well as you've got a mom or a dad who's elderly and living at home, and they don't want to move out of their house. They don't want to have to sell every single thing they have to be able to move into a nursing home.

But you know, the data shows 88,000 people qualify—800,000 people qualify under Medicare to get that help, but it's not available. And sometimes, it's as little as making sure there's someone there just to pick up the prescription, put a handrail on the shower, making sure someone can show up and help the meal. It's cheaper for everybody. It's a decent thing to do, because the parents deserve to have a little bit of dignity.

And it will not cost—it will not increase the deficit, and it will not cost anybody making less than four grand—400,000 bucks a penny. I'm a capitalist. If you can make a billion dollars, a million dollars, go at it. It's good. But at least pay a little bit. Fortune 500 companies—[*applause*]—of Fortune 500 companies the last 2 years, there were 55 who made over $40 billion and didn't pay a cent in taxes.

I'm not talking about anybody paying any more than they did 10 years ago. Look, we see the—we know how to ease the pressure on families. We're increasing productivity and the potential for our economy.

We can afford these investments by making sure the wealthiest just pay a little bit without increasing the deficit. As I said, no one earning less than—I guarantee you; check it out: No one earning less than 400 grand will ever pay another penny. And I told you about the impact of—17 Nobel laureates saying it's going to decrease inflation, not increase it.

So here's the bottom line: The United States is in a position to outcompete the rest of the world once again. We're at a real inflection point. Technology, society is changing. And we've always been ahead of the curve.

We have an incredible opportunity ahead of us, but we still face tremendous challenges. But if we can keep coming together and invest in the backbone of this country, there's no limit to what we can achieve.

So let's continue: continue to give working families a fighting chance. Let's keep investing in the future of every city and town in this country. Let's face the challenges head on. Let's keep building a better America, because it's totally, completely within our power. I promise you. I promise you.

It's about time we stopped fighting, and it's about time we start working together again. Thank you for your consideration for what we're talking about. We can do an awful lot.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Folks, a guy who's helping all those vets coming back is the head of the VA, Denis McDonough. Denis, raise your hand, pal. Let them know who you are.

I—he's back—anyway. We'll get him. We'll get him. But there's a lot going on, folks.

God bless you all. May God protect our troops. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:21 p.m. in the Mill 19 research and development facility at Carnegie Mellon University. In his remarks, he referred to JoJo Burgess, member, United Steelworkers Local 1557; Gov. Thomas W. Wolf of Pennsylvania; Mayor Ed Gainey of Pittsburgh; Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald; and Senior Adviser and Infrastructure Act Implementation Coordinator Mitchell J. Landrieu, in his former capacity as mayor of New Orleans, LA. He also referred to H.R. 5376.

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Locations: Pittsburgh, PA.

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