

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2022

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Portland, Oregon
April 21, 2022

The President. Well, thank you all. Joe, thank you, thank you, thank you.

I—there's a guy in here wearing a hat. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. Right here.

Audience member. Ron Wyden!

The President. Oh, it's Ron Wyden. That's who it is. Hey, Ron. Poor Ron has had to see me all day, God love him. He didn't—

Senator Ronald L. Wyden. Oh, lucky me.

The President. [*Laughter*] Yes. Well, look, first of all, Joe, thank you very, very much. I appreciate it. And Carol and Win, I—you also supported me from the beginning.

It's wonderful to be back in Portland. I'll try to make this brief because you're all standing and I don't want to keep you on your feet that long.

But look, I'm here for a simple reason, and I mean this sincerely: to say thank you. So many of you were with me when I was trying to get the nomination. And you know that, at the time, when I came to see you, it was shortly after I decided to run. Because I hadn't planned on running again. For real. I had no intentions of running again.

And, tell you a little story. We—when I saw those folks come out of the fields down in Charlottesville, carrying those torches—literally out of the fields—with Nazi banners and chanting the same anti-Semitic bile that was chanted in the thirties, Gov, not a joke, that was when I decided that I thought, this can't be happening in America.

And then when my predecessor was asked what did he think, he said there were very good people on both sides. And—but I still concluded that I—you know, I didn't want to run, but I felt like I should. But I just thought it was going to be a really ugly campaign because of the circumstances.

And we have a tradition in my family—for real: Any child can ask for a family meeting. I'm being deadly earnest about this; it's important. And I got a phone call from my eldest granddaughter, Naomi—Naomi Biden, named after my deceased daughter. And she was, at that time, a freshman in Columbia Law School. And her—and then her sister, who was at Penn, and another sister, who was in Washington and still in high school, and my deceased son Beau's two young children. And they—so they said, "Okay." This was on a Wednesday. So we met in Wilmington, at my home in Wilmington, with Jill and I.

And they started off and said, "Pop, you've got to run." And I said, "Boy, I don't think I want to do that. It's going"—[*laughter*]. No, I'm serious. "It's going to be just a very mean campaign, and I don't want you guys to have to go through it."

Because their whole lives, they have been—either had a grandfather who was a Senator, a Vice President, or a—~~or~~ as a Vice President. And one of their dads had been an attorney general for a long time as well. And so they knew what it was going to be like. And they started off and said that: "Daddy wants you to do it. He wants you to do it," and made the case.

And my youngest—now he's 16 years old—grandson, my son Hunter's son—my son Beau's son named Hunter said, "Pop"—and he took out his cell phone and showed a picture. I hadn't planned on saying this. I don't know why I'm telling you, but Joe reminded me of it. *[Laughter]*

He showed me a picture of coming out of Mass, the memorial Mass and burial of my son Beau. And I had my hand on the hand-draped coffin in the military funeral. And I had my hand around the neck of my little—then he was 14 years old—I mean, excuse me, about 12 years old—grandson. And the caption underneath the picture was, "Biden molests another child." And I said—and he said: "But, Pop, it's okay. Daddy wants you to run. You've got to run."

And when I ran—when I came out to see some of you at that time, I told you I was running for three reasons. I was running to restore the soul of this country—some decency and honor. And I meant that sincerely. And I remember I got widely criticized for saying it.

And secondly, I was going to rebuild the backbone of this country, which I consider to be the middle class. When the middle class does well, everybody does well. The poor have a way up and the wealthy still are able to do very well.

And lastly, I was going to try to unite America. Because I think in a democracy, you cannot sustain growth unless—without unity. It's just not possible.

And during the campaign, I talked about the fact that in my time as—the 8 years as Vice President, I spent a fair amount of time doing foreign policy for the President and traveling around the world. And I spent more time with Xi Jinping than any other world leader, just in terms of raw numbers. I traveled 17,000 miles with him throughout Asia and the United States.

And he's very straightforward and blunt. He doesn't think democracies can function in the 21st century. Not a joke. This is deadly earnest. Deadly earnest. Same attitude with less grace than—that Putin has and many other leaders around the world.

Because things are changing so rapidly, they do not believe that democracy can—that democracies can adjust. If the world is changing, we're at one of those inflection points in world history where, regardless who's the head of what state, there's fundamental change taking place. Whether it's a negative—place—change taking place because of climate, or things that are not bad, but just technology changing everything.

And so one of the things that happened was, I found, working with—and I mean it sincerely—working with Ron and your delegation, that we all figured out we had to begin to invest in America. We had to invest in America. Not a joke.

We used to have, for example, the number-one infrastructure in the world. We invested in America. We invest—one of the reasons why we were the leading country in the world in the 20th century was because we were the best educated country in the world. Others had more prominent education systems for the narrow minority, but we were the only country in the world that had universal education from kindergarten through high school, for 12 years, regardless. And it mattered.

And so one of the things that we started talking about was: How do we invest in our people? What do we do? Because so many people were being left behind. And so that's what this was all about when we started.

And one of the things that we did when we began this administration, we found ourselves in the situation where I believe we had to have a Recovery Act that was consequential. And I know everybody thought it was crazy. It had nothing to do with inflation because what we decided to spend, one trillion nine hundred billion dollars investing in America—and we did. We brought the economy back. And by the way, that same budget year in 2021, we reduced the Federal deficit by \$350 billion at the same time.

And investing in America was investing in our infrastructure as well. We used to be the number-one country in the world in terms of the most modern infrastructure. We're now number 13. Thirteen other countries—12 other countries have better infrastructure than we do.

And what the hell do you think grows the economies? Infrastructure grows economies, and it gives people opportunities. It creates good jobs. It creates opportunities for people to move.

Now, with the help of Ron and the rest of your delegation, we passed a \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill that was designed—[*applause*—I hope some of you are making more than \$400,000 a year—[*laughter*—but if you made less than 400, you didn't pay a single penny in taxes—in your taxes. [*Laughter*] Not a joke. Not a joke.

And so what began to happen is, we began to rebuild and invest in our people in ways we hadn't done before. And the other thing I decided to do when I said "restore the soul of America," I believe America should look like the—that my administration should look like America—[*applause*—look like America.

Of over a thousand appointments I've made in the Federal Government and my Cabinet as well, there are slightly more women than men. Because—[*laughter*—no, it's important. No, no. But it really is important for all those young women out there. It's critically important.

I've been able to appoint more African American Circuit Court of Appeal judges than every other President in the history of the Nation combined. Because, look, in the 21st century, we've got to be who we are. We are a multiethnic nation. But we all have one fundamental commitment we've all made. You know, we're the only country in the world that is formed based on an idea, not geography, not ethnicity. I'm honest—I'm deadly earnest about this. Only one.

Now, what is the reason why we came together? Because we said, "We hold these truths to be self-evident," all men and women are created equal, endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights: life, liberty. I know it sounds corny, but that's who we are. No other nation in the world has been built on an idea—an idea we have never realized—we have never realized but, until the last guy came along, we have never fully walked away from. We've gradually made progress.

And so the point that I want make to you all is: There is so much that we still have to do. Because, you know—and one of the things that's changed is that—and I'll be very brief: On foreign policy, you recall that the last administration, some—by the way, I'm not just talking about former President Trump. We have a whole—this is not your father's Republican Party, by any stretch of the imagination. This is the MAGA Party. Not a joke.

Think about it: This is a party that's owned wholly by guys like the Senator from Texas and others. I mean, really and truly, did you ever think we'd be in a circumstance where the Republican platform would be that—and that led the guy in the head of the—[*inaudible*—head of the Senate campaign committee in the United States Senate and Republican Party put out a platform that even Republicans have walked away from, saying—what?—that every 5 years we should reconsider whether we keep Social Security—[*inaudible*].

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. This is the God's truth. If you want a copy of it, I will send it to you. [*Laughter*] No, no, but this is what they're running on.

And by the way, remember why we won all those seats back in 2018? Because they kept, for the 500th time, trying to do away with Obamacare. But what people didn't know was—and the point I'm about to get to: They don't know a lot about what we've already done, just like they didn't know then because things move so quickly.

All we had to do—I went into 58—56 races as a guy who was out of office for 2 years, as a former Vice President. Guess what? We—in all Republican districts, incumbent Republicans—we won 46 of them. And here's the deal—[*applause*—no, here's what we ran on—it's a really important point, at least from my perspective. We said: "Do you know why you have a preexisting condition and you can't be no—denied insurance? Because of Obamacare."

Audience member. Yes.

The President. Nobody knew it. We won all those races.

Well, what I'm worried about now is that we've done one hell of a job, but the fact is that because things have moved so rapidly, so profoundly, it's hard for people—no, let me just give you a few statistics.

We have created 7.9 million jobs in the first 14 months of my administration, more than any in history. [*Inaudible*—even said manufacturing is dead in America. Well, guess what? We've created 430,000 new manufacturing jobs, and it's still climbing. We—also unemployment rate went from 3—went from 6.4 percent to 3.6 percent, the fastest decline in American history.

We're in a situation where—[*applause*—and reduced the deficit by \$350 billion in last year's budget. And this year, it's on track, literally, to reduce it by one trillion three hundred billion dollars.

All we're saying is—[*applause*—I'm a capitalist; I'm a guy who thinks if you can make a million or a billion or a hundred million dollars, you should do it. But everybody has to pay their fair share. Just pay a little bit.

Today, as Ron will point out—not a joke—there's 790-some—I think that's the number—or 60-some billionaires in America. Average tax paid: 3 percent. Okay?

I don't want—just pay a little of their—I come from the corporate State of the world, Delaware. [*Laughter*] There are more corporations in my State registered than every other State in the Nation combined. But guess what? Of the Fortune 500 companies, 40 of them made a total of \$40 billion and did not pay a single penny. Nothing.

Look at the firemen who come to help you out. Look at the cop, the school teacher, the nurse.

Audience member. Yay!

The President. [*Inaudible*—7 months in an ICU, when I had two craniotomies because of aneurisms and a major embolism. My son lay in a bed for 19 months. The doctors let you live; the nurses make you want to live.

Audience member. Oh.

The President. No, no—male and female. I swear to God. [*Inaudible*]

Oh, I didn't see you, Senator. I'm sorry. [*Inaudible*] [*Laughter*]

But here's the deal, guys: There's so much we can do—so much we can do. But what I realized is, I'm making the same mistake—and I mean this as a compliment because he's still my best buddy—that we made when—in the Obama-Biden administration. I remember saying to Barack after we passed the Affordable Care Act, I said, "Let's take a victory lap." He said: "We don't have time. We don't have time."

But guess what? No one knew what was in it. They didn't know why they had what they had. They didn't know why we were able to do the—people were covered when they were never covered before.

Well, here's what we—I have to do. I'm not doing a very good job because so much—it's like—you know, I used to say in Barack's administration, "Everything landed on his desk but locusts." [Laughter] Well, they landed on my desk. [Laughter]

So here's the thing, and I'm going to hush up: One of the things I was absolutely—been convinced of, because I've been involved in American foreign policy for my whole career since I was a 29-year-old kid in the Foreign Relations Committee—[inaudible]—and that is that NATO, what happens in Europe, is the foundation of what we can do around the rest of the world. Because there's no way we can escape the conflict that occurs in Europe. It's never occurred, never happened.

And so remember: The last guy treated NATO like it was a protection racket. "If you"—not a joke. "If you don't do such and such, we're not going to protect—we're not going to honor article 5. We're not going to honor our commitment."

Well, guess what? As Ron will tell you, I was predicting that we would have serious problems and there would be an invasion of Ukraine by Putin. Well, he not only invaded Ukraine, he's done so much more. He's a butcher. We're seeing an actual butcher.

I've been to Ukraine many times. Folks, these—it's just what's happening is just sinful. And I'm not trying to be moralistic, but it's true: It's sinful what he's doing.

But the point is: The most important thing to have happen that we've had to do is how do we keep NATO and Europe united—united. Because I guarantee you Putin has been hoping and believing that NATO would crack and we would not make any—[inaudible]—sacrifice to help and deal with what he was doing in—in Eastern Europe.

But guess what? I've had over 120 meetings and/or—and/or what—what do we call them on the—when we do the—

Audience members. Zoom.

The President. Zoom. [Laughter] With the world leaders. I'm serious. Over 120 times.

A matter of fact, the press was pointing out that—I guess it was 2 days ago—I called all the world—the major leaders together in the world to say, "We've got to stick together," and keeping them together. Because if we break—if it breaks up, we've got a real problem in terms of our long-term security and a lot else that's going to happen.

So it takes time and effort. But we're—I'm not going to send a single American force into Ukraine to start World War III. But we're going to give every Ukrainian military capability that they have—that they need, in order to protect themselves.

Between Ukraine and COVID, we have been really stymied in a big way. Look what we have. Although we have—although jobs are open, jobs are up, pay is up for people—the average pay has gone up. But guess what? Inflation really is killing people.

I came from a family that, when the price of a gallon of gasoline went up, it was a topic of conversation at the kitchen table. I mean, for real. Not a joke.

Well, we've got two bad things happening at one time. One, one of the major suppliers of oil and gas in the world happens to be an absolute—well, anyway. [Laughter] Not a good person. [Laughter] But guess what? As we cut off the oil for it to slow up—slow him up and make sure that there's a price to be paid, it raises the price of gas. And it affects a lot of people. It affects, in Europe, particularly, home heating oil and a whole range of other things.

And so one of the things that we have to do is figure out how—and the second thing is—the reason why you go buy a dozen eggs and it costs more money, the reason why you buy a loaf of

bread and it costs more money is because the breadbaskets of the world starts off in Ukraine, Russia, and then United States, in terms of wheat and corn. And so we—we're going to go through a tough period.

But the thing is that there's nothing beyond our capacity. We can do all of these things if we, in fact, have the gumption and confidence of who we are. This is the United States of America. There's not a damn thing we can't do—nothing we can't do.

And with the help of your two Senators and your congressional delegation—and I'm not being solicitous, because they have been major leaders in this effort. We're in a situation where we're going to gain control of this. For example, you know, one of the reasons for inflation last year was that one-third of all the inflation is because of the lack of computer chips.

You've ever heard of a little outfit called Intel? [Laughter] Well, guess what? The head of Intel came to see me—asked if he could come and see me. He's going to invest \$20 billion in new facilities—[inaudible]—in Cleveland. And if we pass the bill that—[inaudible]—Senators are trying to get done in the United States Senate, we're going to—he's going to invest another \$100 billion—\$100 billion.

The United States of America invented the computer chip. We're the ones who made it—who made the—progressed all along. But we just stopped investing in ourselves, so you go to Taiwan, you go to other places to get computer chips.

Well, because the automobile—there's nothing, from that cell phone you have in your hand to the automobile you're driving, that can be functioned or made without a computer, those chips.

Well, guess what? The fact is that we weren't making them in the United States. And so what I decided, with the help of your delegation, is that there's—and I'll end with this. I'm sorry to go on so long. [Laughter] [Inaudible]—I want you to know, I believe in every fiber of my being—and I've been doing this my whole life—we're on the verge of such incredible breakthroughs in this country across the board.

Every—out of—my mother, God love her, she'd say, "Out of everything bad, Joey, something good will come"—[inaudible]. We're in a position where, you're going to see, we're going to move—I was—I led the effort on COP in the—in, anyway—[laughter]—that will—what we did was we—you know, I got another 120 nations to sign a commitment that we were going to plant another trillion—a billion trees in the next year.

[Inaudible]—all the research we're doing, in terms of breakthrough technology, that deal with the whole notion of climate change and what we can do. And now we're in a position where we should look at it—we have no choice but to do it. Nations that were reluctant to step up and do what they had to do are now going, "We have no choice."

So I guess what I'm trying to say to you all is—and I should have stuck to my speech. [Laughter]

Audience members. No!

The President. What I'm trying to say is: I just want you to know I am absolutely, positively certain that we can once again lead the world in a way that's consistent with who we are as a people, and we can grow this country in ways where we can benefit not only ourselves, but the rest of the world.

And all the things we're doing on the climate change side, that's all technologies we will be able to export and not only help the rest of the world, but make sure that we, in fact, create all these good-paying jobs.

For example—I'll end with Intel. Intel—they're going to have a total of—I think it's 13,000 jobs on this one site, the \$20 billion. Well, 7,000 of those jobs are the construction phase; there are four phases. Well, guess what? The fact of it is that the remaining jobs—running the factory—you know that the average salary is going to be? And you can be a blue-collar worker and still make it. A hundred and thirty-four thousand dollars a year.

We are in a position like no other nation. And we can do it and benefit ourselves while benefiting other countries as well. So, if there was any time to be engaged, I think this is the time. I really mean it. I can't think of any other time. And again, I'm a kid who got elected from a, I guess, technically lower middle class—but a middle class household when I was 29 years old—in the United States Senate.

And as my Senate colleagues may remember, I used to have the dubious distinction every year of being listed as the poorest man in Congress. *[Laughter]* But I was making a good salary because I was a Senator.

But my generic point is: There's nothing we—beyond our capacity. There really and truly isn't. And I'm going to need you to join me, to help me in this off-year election, making sure that we keep the Senate and keep the House. I think we can pick up two Senate seats.

But I admit to you, what I haven't done—and the reason I'm getting out on the road again instead of dealing with the day-to-day emergencies of the office—is making the case of what we've done. And I mean this sincerely: No congressional delegation has done more for the things I'm talking about than your Congressmen and Senators in this State. That's the God's truth.

So, if—*[inaudible]*—knocking on your door, saying, "I'm trying to raise money to help the following people"—*[laughter]*—you know, just think of what our Republican colleagues would do if they win.

Audience member. Oh-oh. *[Laughter]*

The President. No, no, I'm serious. Think of what they—and they're saying. They're not kidding about it. And we haven't even talked about voting rights and gun violence and criminal justice, immigration. All things—and we just have—you know, the good news is we have 50 Senators and the Vice President. And the bad news is, there are 51 Presidents. *[Laughter]* Any one can declare themselves President, as two Democrats have.

The idea that somehow we have split the Democratic—which all people read about is the Democrats are divided. Forty-eight Members of the United States Senate have voted with me on 96 percent of the time. Forty-eight. Two—*[inaudible]*—have not. *[Laughter]*

But all kidding aside, think about it. There's virtually no Republican support. My—as my colleagues can tell you—and by the way, I've been a guy who's not been one of these guys suggesting the other guys are always bad. I mean that sincerely. And I had a reputation—I think my colleagues would tell you—in the Senate of putting these things together, Democrats and Republicans.

But what's happened is that there are a number of Republicans who know better, but they're afraid. I know—I won't ask for names, but I'm sure my colleagues can tell you from the Senate, at least six United States Senators have come to me and said: "I know—I know I should vote for this, Joe. But if I do, they'll primary me and I'll be out." It's not very courageous, but this—the far right has taken over that party.

And it's not even conservative in a traditional sense of conservative. It's mean. It's ugly. It's the way—look what's happening down in Florida. *[Inaudible]*—Mickey Mouse. *[Laughter]* *[Inaudible]* I mean, seriously, think about it.

Audience members. [Inaudible]

The President. As my friend used to say, named Bob, "Who woulda thunk it?" [*Laughter*]

Folks, look, I've talked—spoken too long. I want to thank you for all you did for me last time around. I'm determined to make sure we keep the House and the Senate. And so, thank you for the help you've given me before, and I hope you can help the DNC move along and raise money to help these people who are going to need our help.

Thank you. And, Governor—[*inaudible*].

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:38 p.m. at the Portland Yacht Club. In his remarks, he referred to Joseph P. Boyle, executive vice president, Columbia Sportswear Co., who introduced the President; Carol Butler, political consultant, and her husband Win McCormack, editor in chief, the New Republic magazine, who hosted the event; Gov. Katherine Brown of Oregon; President Xi Jinping of China; President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia; Sen. Edward R. "Ted" Cruz; Sen. Richard L. Scott, in his capacity as chairperson of the National Republican Senatorial Committee; Sen. Jeffrey A. Merkley; Patrick Gelsinger, chief executive officer, Intel Corp.; and Sens. Joseph A. Manchin III and Kyrsten L. Sinema. He also referred to his grandchildren Naomi K. Biden, Finnegan J. Biden, Roberta M. "Maisy" Biden, Natalie P. Biden, and R. Hunter Biden II; S. 1260; and the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26).

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Democratic National Committee fundraiser in Portland, OR.

Locations: Portland, OR.

Names: Biden, Finnegan J.; Biden, Jill T.; Biden, Naomi K.; Biden, Natalie P.; Biden, R. Hunter; Biden, R. Hunter, II; Biden, Roberta M. "Maisy"; Boyle, Joseph P.; Brown, Katherine; Butler, Carol; Cruz, R. Edward "Ted"; Gelsinger, Patrick; Manchin, Joseph A., III; McCormack, Win; Merkley, Jeffrey A.; Obama, Barack; Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich; Scott, Richard L.; Sinema, Kyrsten L.; Trump, Donald J.; Wyden, Ronald L.; Xi Jinping.

Subjects: Agriculture : Food markets and prices; Budget, Federal : Deficit and national debt; Business and industry : Manufacturing industry :: Advanced manufacturing, promotion efforts; China : President; Democratic Party : Democratic National Committee; Diseases : Coronavirus, domestic prevention efforts; Economy, national : Household income and wages; Economy, national : Inflation; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Elections : 2022 congressional elections; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Employment and unemployment : Unemployment rate; Energy : Gasoline, oil, and natural gas costs; Environment : Climate change; Environment : United Nations Climate Change Conference; Health and medical care : Health insurance reforms; Infrastructure, national improvement efforts; Legislation, proposed : United States Innovation and Competition Act of 2021; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Oregon : Democratic Party event; Oregon : Governor; Oregon : President's visit; Russia : President; Russia : Ukraine, airstrikes and invasion; Taxation : Corporate tax rates; Ukraine : Russian airstrikes and invasion; United Nations : Framework Convention on Climate Change.

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