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Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Reception in Boston, Massachusetts

September 12, 2022

The President. Well, Jonathan and Jeannie, thank you very much for hosting me again. And we were talking about it: It was 2008 or '10 that I was here.

Bain Capital Co-Managing Partner Jonathan S. Lavine. Nine.

The President. Nine, 2009. And they still invited me back. [*Laughter*] It's amazing.

Folks, you know, I am optimistic. I genuinely am. I've never been more optimistic about the prospects for America, not because I'm President, but because the nature of where we are as a country. And——

[*At this point, the President checked his microphone.*]

Does this work? Yes, I guess it does.

You know, one of the things that I realized is that, you know, I was Vice President for 8 years, and I got to know most world leaders because the President asked me to do an awful lot of the foreign policy. And I traveled around the world and—at his request. And one of the things that I've come to realize is how much the rest of the world looks to us, the United States—it sounds like hyperbole, but it's for real—for—to measure their own security. And there's a lot going on. An awful lot going on.

And I think we're at one of those inflection points in world history where the things—we're going to look back and kids are going to look back 10 years now and say, "How did they handle those several years at that point when things all began to change?" And I think we have an opportunity not to build back—the phrase that's overused by me now—but not just to build back to what it was before this pandemic and before Trump came into office, but build back a hell of a lot better than it was before.

I really think that inflection points are times when you're going to look back, as I said, 10 years now and say they either did it or they didn't do it; they either changed direction for the country and improved it, or they lost the opportunity.

And when I talk about democracy, it's not just the United States, it's around the world. The good news, or the bad news, is I've been around so darn long, I know every one of these heads of state, and I've known them well. I mean it sincerely—for a long time.

And it is one of these things where you see what's happening around the world. I called a meeting of the Summit of the Democracies. And there are 15 fewer democracies today than there were 4 years ago in the world. Fifteen fewer than there were 4 years ago. And a lot of countries are struggling. And they look to us. I know it's not our responsibility, but they look to us to determine whether or not people are going to be able to see our way through this next 10, 12, 15 years.

And, folks, you know, there's a lot that's been happening, a lot that we've been able to do. And I know when I ran, you may recall I said I was running for three reasons: one, to restore the soul of this country. By that, I meant just graciousness, decency in the way we treat each other, the way we talk to one another, Mr. Ambassador. Just the way—just the way we act. Just the way we act. Because we lost an awful lot of that.

One of the reasons I ran—and I wasn't joking about it; I had no intention of running again—I ran because seeing those people come out of the field, those—carrying torches and Nazi banners and singing the same antisemitic bile they sang in the thirties, down in Virginia, and then a young woman would end up being killed. And the President was asked, "What did you think?" And he said, "There are very fine people on both sides." And I thought I couldn't imagine any President saying something like that, how that could be.

And that's when I decided to run. And the press has heard me say this before, but I was still reluctant to run because I knew how ugly it would be. I knew how ugly the fight would be. And I got a call. We have a—we have a rule in the Biden family for two generations now—longer maybe, but only that I'm aware of—that said any child can ask for a family meeting. Not a joke. And it has to be taken seriously. And they have to—if they ask for a family meeting, it means the family meets, and whatever is on that child's mind, they get to raise.

And I got a phone call from my oldest granddaughter, who is a graduate of Columbia Law School, works for one of the mega law firms in the country now. And they said, "Pop, we want a family meeting." And so my—at that time, my five grandchildren—Beau's two children, who were younger—they're now 17 and 18—and my son Hunter's children, who are—now range in age from 21 to 27, or 28 actually. And—and they said they wanted to meet.

So we met in the library 2 days later. And they said: "Pop, we've been talking. We think you ought to run." And I said: "Well, honey, I don't know if I should do this. It's going to be a very difficult race, and it's going to be a very mean race. And they're going to—you're going to be in the bullseye of a lot of people, and it's going to just be tough."

And my—they explained to me—since their entire life, all of them, either I've been a Senator, a Vice President, or a candidate for President. And they—so they're sophisticated; they know what it's like. It's not like it's new to them. Their entire lives.

And they went through as to why I should run. And my granddaughter, Beau's son said, "You know, Daddy would want you to run," et cetera. And my little grandson then—this is 5—4 years ago now—said to me—and he's now 17 years old—he took out his phone and he said, "Pop, we know it's going to be mean." And he showed me a picture on his cell phone taken at my son's funeral—Beau's funeral—where I had my hand on the flag-draped coffin, and I had my arm around him, and I was sort of holding him on his chin, holding him up. And the saying on the bottom of the photograph was, "Biden molests another child." And he said: "We know it's going to be mean. We know it's going to be mean." And that's when I decided I was going to run.

And here's the deal: You know, we're now in a situation where we're less than 60 days from the midterms. And the stakes are as crystal clear as any of you thought. I know we talked about them earlier. As crystal clear as they could ever be. And it's about the right to choose. It's about the right to privacy. It's about whether Social Security will be paid for or whether or not it's going to be something every year that comes up on the ballot and it has to be voted on again. That's the Republican platform so far, in writing.

It's about the safety of kids and the school violence. Instead of dealing with reading and writing and arithmetic, learning how to duck and cover.

And it's about the survival of the planet—literally, not figuratively—in terms of the environment. It's about the right to vote. It's really about democracy itself. And I don't think that's hyperbole. It's about democracy itself.

And I believe, as I said, America is at an inflection point. And not every Republican is—I'm getting criticized for calling out the MAGA Republicans, the extreme Republicans. Well, you

know, not every Republican is a MAGA Republican. This is not your father's Republican Party. This is a different breed of cat we're dealing with.

And so, you know, the fact is that extreme Republicans are going to take us backwards—the MAGA Republicans, full of hate and disorder. And it's just—there's just a lot at stake. And we have to choose a different path.

And you know, we've had some success. I've stuck to what I said I was going to try to do from the American Rescue Plan, which we got passed without a single Republican vote in February, which literally turned the economy from one that was in decline to one that's in recovery.

We had the—in addition to that, we found ourselves in a position where it was able to keep cops, firefighters, schoolteachers employed, because the States didn't have the income to do it. It kept thousands and thousands of people on the job. That came from the American Rescue Plan. The American people don't even know that. They don't even know where that came from, nor do they necessarily need to. But that's what kept things moving.

We found ourselves, as well, with the—and it—by the way, it generated 10 million jobs. We've created more jobs in the first 18 months of the administration than any President in the history of the United States of America. Ten million new jobs and increases in wages in almost all those jobs.

And we found ourselves with an infrastructure law. I was able to, after painful negotiations, get at least at—more than a handful of Republicans to vote for it so we could pass it. And it's a billion two—a trillion 200 million dollars—200 billion dollars to rebuild America.

We know what people decide where they're going to place their facilities based on how quickly they can get product out to market through their ports, how they can—whether they can get from point A to point B. I was down in Pittsburgh, the city of bridges, seeing them collapsing, over 100 feet falling. I mean, there's—there's so much that's out there. But we're going to be in a position where they're going to be able to provide for everything—roads, bridges, not only the highways but also the internet. I mean, there's just a range of things we can do.

We used to invest—we used to invest over 2 percent of our GDP on research and development. We don't—we invest less than seven-tenths of 1 percent now. And the rest of the world is moving.

You know, we—the CHIPS and Science law. You know, the reason why inflation was so high last year was the cost of automobiles. Why? Because there weren't the computer chips to build the automobiles. Everything that affects your life needs one of these computer chips the size of a fingertip. And they're getting more and more sophisticated.

The irony is, we invented them here in the United States, and we stopped making them. The rest of the world owns it. And we're coming back. So we're investing tens of billions of dollars in chip manufacturing, creating thousands of good-paying jobs so that we have control over our own supply lines.

We find ourselves in a position where that—you know, we—there are two outfits I've been fighting my whole career: Big Pharma and the NRA. Well, we took them both on, and we beat them.

We had the most extensive gun legislation pass since I was able to pass the—when I was a Senator—pass the assault weapons ban, and the most extensive law, period, that's been passed, with no Republican votes. But we got it passed, and things are beginning to change. And I'm going to get the assault weapons ban.

And in addition to that, we found ourselves in a position where, you know—as I said, we found that Big Pharma—we've been trying—we've been—I've been talking about, and many others have, being able to have—we pay the highest drug prices of any nation in the world—any nation in the world.

For example, that little vial of insulin you need for type 2 diabetes or type 1 diabetes, for example—that costs 10 bucks to make and package. It costs as much as $675 a month for families in need of it. What do you do to—look at your child if you need it—your child needs it and you—don't have the insurance or don't have the cash? What the hell do you do?

And so what we did—we finally took on Pharma and said that Medicare should—could start to negotiate the cost of drug prices—the cost of drugs. And so, you know, it was a gigantic—a gigantic win with, again, no Republican help.

But here's the deal: We're now in a situation where that—and, by the way, the last thing was: I—in my State of the Union, I said I was using, sort of, three consensus items. One was to deal and care for our veterans.

Well, you know, you got thousands of veterans who have been the victim of burn pits. These are pits that are 8, 10, 12 feet deep, the size of a football field, where they'll burn everything from jet fuel to human waste to—everything in the world gets in those pits. And they have toxic smoke. And a lot of people lived in their—they call them "hooches." They're within, literally, hundreds of yards of these facilities. And they're dying of cancer, the highest rate of cancer out of any war in American history—amputees and cancer. And they're dying.

So we said we were going to provide for—anybody who was around those burn pits would be able to get help, not only help from—the medical help they needed, a little bit like Agent Orange kind of thing. And we finally got it passed with only—not very many Republican votes. They were holding out on it.

The generic point was: We only have—we have a lot of obligations, but in my view, we only have one truly sacred obligation: to prepare and equip those we send to war and to care for them and their families when they come home.

So my generic point is that we've made significant progress on a whole range of things. And we've even made project on—progress of inflation.

You know, everybody—not everybody—a lot of folks criticize me for my efforts to try to control gas prices more rationally. Well, the price of gas is down $1.30 a gallon. And it's down every single month since the beginning—excuse me—the beginning of the year. Not the full answer, but we're making progress.

And so, folks, you know, the Inflation Reduction Act we passed—the American people, you know, won and special interests lost. We have low prescription, lower health care costs, lower energy costs.

We provided—we've invested—we got passed a total of $368 billion for climate adjustments. Originally, I had $500 billion, but we got 368 of it. We're going to change the way—and no one anymore, because of what's happened in the environment, can deny we have a climate crisis.

I've flown over more land as President of the United States, in States observing in the helicopter the fires and the floods, than—than occupies—burned to the ground—than the entire State of New Jersey, from the New York border all the way down to the Delmarva Peninsula. That's how much has burned to the ground. So people aren't denying anymore. They realize that we can begin to make some real progress.

But look, I—doing all of this—we've done all this, and our Republican friends talk about, well, "Big Spendin' Biden." Well, guess what? I lowered your deficit by $350 billion the first year and over $1 trillion this year. We can easily afford it.

And by the way, we didn't raise a single, solitary tax on anybody making under $400,000. And the only tax we really raised was, we made corporations pay a minimum of 15 percent. Because guess what? In 2020, you had 55 corporations making over $400 billion and not paying a single, solitary penny in taxes. All I want them to do is pay part of their fair share to make sure we have things moving.

So I guess what I'm trying to say is that—you know, my dad used to have an expression. He'd say, "Joey, don't compare me to the Almighty, compare me to the alternative."

Well, let me tell you something, the alternative choice is: Do I want to codify *Roe* v. *Wade*? If we lose this off-year election, you're going to have an effort to codify *Roe*—codify the Supreme Court decision, eliminate *Roe*, because it's—they've made it a totally State issue. Now, if they do that, as long as I'm President, I would veto that. But we want to codify *Roe*. That's a gigantic issue.

And mark my words: You're going to see moves on other privacy issues, from contraceptions to marriage—the whole range of things.

And in addition to that, the Republicans did put out a plan, and I was going to bring a copy. I forgot to bring it, but look it up online.

Rick Scott, the Senator from Florida, who heads up the Senate Campaign Committee, he wants to sunset Social Security, Medicare every single year, meaning that if you don't affirmatively vote it back in office as it is, it goes out of existence. I'm not making this up. Check it out. Affirmatively goes out of existence. Now, he wants to do it every 5 years.

Now, you have a Senator from Wisconsin—he's a different breed of cat as well, and—Johnson; he says that we do it every single—every single year.

So this is not just a usual fight over whether or not we increase or diminish Medicare, Medicaid, or Social Security. It's about whether or not you sunset this legislation every single year.

Find me something that the Republican Party is running on. What are they for? I'm not joking now. Find any place where you can look up—text—I mean, go online: "The Republican platform for 2022." See what you come up with.

My generic point is that, you know, we haven't finished yet. We have a lot more we can do to remain in the battle for the soul of this country. And I beat my predecessor in 2020, but we need to control the House and the Senate to win the race up and down the ticket to beat back the MAGA Republicans.

And the vast majority of Republicans aren't the MAGA Republicans. But I can tell you—and the press has heard me say this, and I'll say it again: Six Republican Senators, who I know, came to me since I've been President and said, "I know you're right, but I just can't vote with you because I'll get defeated in a primary."

Now, there's Democrats who don't have a lot of political courage as well. But the idea is that, right now, the MAGA operation in the Republican Party owns the Republican Party—lock, stock, and barrel. And so, folks, look at the candidates.

My generic point is: This is a really important off-year election. And the fact is that—how can I say it?—that if we lose the House and lose the Senate, it's going to be a really difficult 2 years. I'll be spending more time on the veto pen than being able to get anything done.

And so, you know, I haven't even talked about foreign policy, which I'm happy to do, but my point is that I'm optimistic about America's future for a couple reasons. One, if you look at the data, everything we propose is overwhelmingly, substantively positive—positive in the minds of the American people. Not a joke. Every major initiative we proposed, the majority of the Republican people support. The majority of the—of the Republic supports.

And so we've got more to do. And we can still do it—not raise taxes on anybody making less than 400 grand and, in the process, make some real progress.

And the other reason why I'm optimistic—and I'll end with this—is that, you know, if you take a look at the younger generation, the 18- to 30-year-old vote, it's the most open, it's the least prejudiced, it's the most forward-leaning generation, the most volunteers—more than any than, quote, "my generation," which is the—you know, the generation coming—it's the single most engaged generation. And they're where we are. They're where we are.

Now, I know I don't count a lot on the polls, but right now, you know, a new poll out today—I'm at 48 percent. Well, that's higher than any Senator has been at this point—any President.

But my generic point is: I don't know how that holds, but I know the reason for it. It shows that people, they do—everything between the ages of 45 and below, and 45 and above—people are beginning to focus on what's going on and beginning to look at what's going on.

And we have to stay in the game. We have to stay in the game in a big way. We can't afford to lose this off-year election. Yet, with one exception, every President in his first—his or her—and it happened to be "his"—first term in the first 2 years has lost an off-year. Remember Barack? We lost 60-some vote—we lost 60-some House Members, et cetera.

So there's a lot at stake. A lot at stake. We—I don't want to start from scratch again. And I really appreciate your help.

And why don't I—as my mother would say, "Hush up, Joey," and take some questions. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:35 p.m. at the residence of Jonathan S. and Jeannie Lavine. In his remarks, he referred to former President Donald J. Trump. He also referred to his grandchildren Naomi K. Biden, Finnegan J. Biden, Roberta M. "Maisy" Biden, Natalie P. Biden, and R. Hunter Biden II. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 13. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

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Medicaid; Health and medical care : Prescription drugs, affordability and costs; Infrastructure, national improvement efforts; Judiciary : Supreme Court :: U.S. Supreme Court opinion overturning 1973 decision in Roe v. Wade; Law enforcement and crime : Gun control; Law enforcement and crime : Gun violence, prevention efforts; Massachusetts : Democratic Party events; Massachusetts : President's visits; Republican Party : National Republican Senatorial Committee; Science and technology : Research and development; Social Security and retirement : Social Security program; Taxation : Tax Code, reform; Veterans : Benefits; Veterans : Health and medical care; Virginia : 2017 civil unrest and violence in Charlottesville.

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