

*Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023*

**Remarks on Career-Connected Learning and Workforce Training Programs in Rocky Mount, North Carolina**

*June 9, 2023*

*The President.* Hello, hello, hello. Well, thank you all for allowing us to come.

Governor, thank you for allowing us to be here. I think we have everyone on the city council here and the county council and the Congress. Anyway, this is a—North Carolina is a great State.

And, America, thank you for that introduction. I told America, the hardest thing to do, at least for me, when I was her age was to introduce someone. I think it's—no, I really mean it. And I—anyway, I won't go into all that. But anyway.

Folks, I'm Jill Biden's husband. *[Laughter]*

And we brought some friends with us today. Governor Roy Cooper, a terrific partner in creating economic opportunity for the people of North Carolina.

Congressman Don Davis used to work in tobacco fields, became an officer in the United States Air Force, a minister, a professor with a doctorate, a Member of the House of Representatives. I don't know what the hell to call him—doctor, minister, reverend—I—*[laughter]*—but he's got it all. He's got it all. And he's got three sons with him that are going to take care of him—all these boys sitting next to him.

And, Mayor—Mayor Roberson, thank you for the passport into the city. I appreciate it very much.

And I want to thank everyone on Rocky Mountain City Council, Nash County, Edge—Edge—excuse me, Edgecombe County. And they're here today because we believe in you—all the students here. We're proud of you, and that's not hyperbole. Great things are ahead of you, and there are a lot of training you're going to be getting.

But you know, Jill—my wife has taught in community college now for some years. And she has her doctorate as a professor there. And she has an expression. She says that, "You know, community colleges are the best secret in America." And then she goes on to say—and I—she's right that "any country that outeducates us will outcompete us." Any country that outeducates us will outcompete us.

And we're in an incredible competition worldwide, economically, politically, and militarily. And you know, just—this best kept secret is not being kept secret much anymore. Just in this community college—and the community colleges, since—in North Carolina since 2021, private investors have invested \$16 billion in community college—private investors, \$16 billion. That doesn't count the billions of dollars we're investing from the Federal Government and the programs we've had.

The point is, these investments were made in good-paying jobs all across North Carolina, not just here.

Let's remember where we were just a few years ago. When I took office, the community was—the economy was reeling. We were in tough, tough shape. Unemployment was extremely high. And across the country, the pandemic—it hit us very hard. Millions were out of work. And I'm not—it's not hyperbole. Millions were out of work.

But the problems we were facing started a lot earlier than that. For decades before the last administration—Democrat and Republican—the middle class and working class folks—families I come from—were being hollowed out. Too many good-paying manufacturing jobs were moved overseas. Why? Because of cheaper labor. So we started—instead of sending product overseas, we sent people—or jobs overseas, and they'd send product back to us. And factories closing down all over America.

I look at a few guys in the audience, who go back a little bit, may remember what it does when a community has a factory that's working where you had 1,000, 700, or 2,000 people working and all of a sudden it closes down. The community loses its heart. It just—it absolutely gets—it's devastated. What to do?

How many people in North Carolina, in my home State of Delaware, and around the country have had to walk up to their mom and dad and say: "Mom, we've got to—I got a good high school education, but I've got to leave. There's no jobs. There's nothing here." Well, guess what? It's coming back. It's coming back big time. *[Applause]* No, it really is.

And so one of the things that we're talking about here is: What do we do to make us, once again, the most competitive nation in the world? And you know, we're here today because, as Jill said, we believe in y'all. And I—that's not hyperbole. We believe in y'all.

You know, the—we're in a position where things ahead of you are, thanks to the training you're going to get and investments we've made, going to be good-paying jobs all across—not just here in the East, but all across North Carolina, the entire State.

Let's remember who we are.

You know, as I said just a few years ago, we were really in trouble. But the problems we're facing today started, as I said, a lot earlier than that.

You know, the bottom line is this: I ran for President—I ran for President for a basic reason. And I hadn't planned on running again for President. I had run when I was Vice President, and then Barack and I spent 8 years together. And then the new administration came in. And in the meantime, things changed in our life and our family. I lost my son. We lost our son in Iraq. Anyway.

I hadn't planned on running. But one of the things that didn't make—what I really decided was, we stopped paying attention to the neighborhoods that I came from. You know, I come from a neighborhood like maybe a lot of you, in Scranton, Pennsylvania, which closed down because of the mines closed down. And then we moved to a place called Claymont, Delaware, where they had 4,500 steelworkers working in the factories. That shut down completely.

All across the country, we were seeing things change. And I came because I thought we could fundamentally change the direction we were going in, to make sure the economy works for everybody, for—to feel a sense of pride in what we do.

You've heard me say it before, but where in the hell—where in heck is it written—*[laughter]*—excuse me. Where is it written that America can't lead the world again in manufacturing? Where is that written? And I was determined to make sure it got unwritten.

Because, folks, look, here's where we are: Just in a few weeks after I became President, I wrote the—we wrote the American Rescue Plan, the most aggressive economic recovery package since Franklin Delano Roosevelt. It delivered immediate relief to folks in—most in need to get our economy back on track.

Next, we—I enacted—which we were told we couldn't do—I was told by the press and everyone else that we couldn't do a bipartisan bill. Well, we've invested more money in roads,

bridges, internet, and clean water, et cetera—the largest investment in infrastructure since Dwight Eisenhower's Interstate Highway System.

And now we have the best economy in the world. We need the best infrastructure in the world. How can you be the best economy without the best bridges, roads, ports, et cetera?

So, to date, we've invested nearly \$5 billion—\$5 billion—in 158 infrastructure projects just in North Carolina—\$5 billion dollars just in North Carolina—including roads, and bridges, and public transit, clean water, high-speed internet. And, folks, it's working.

After I had this idea, we—some on the other team didn't like, but they came along, at least a minority of them did—with a thing called the CHIPS and Science Act. We used to invest 2 percent of our gross domestic product in research and development. We got down to .7 percent. China leading the world, not us.

So we put together this—the whole program called—that related to investing in science to bring key parts of our supply chain back to the United States, like semiconductors.

You know, there's 300 semiconductors that go in an automobile. Well, guess what? When they—when we had a problem with the pandemic in Asia—those places shut down—we had to stop making cars. And the price of cars—used cars went up, skyrocketed, and—and the biggest reason for inflation.

Now, chip companies are investing billions—billions of dollars—over \$30 billion—including over in Chatham County, where Wolfspeed invested \$5 billion in a semiconductor manufacturing plant. It's going to create 1,800 new jobs that pay an average salary of \$77,000 a year.

And these jobs, and the jobs they need at the plant—setting up electric vehicle system, operating machinery, running the facility—are exactly the kind of jobs you're being trained for here at this community college.

Then we passed—which was—didn't get much help from the other team—the Inflation Reduction Act, the most significant climate legislation ever in the history of not just America, but the whole world. Over \$368 billion for energy.

And here's what happened: Companies are seizing the opportunity. For example, Toyota is investing \$6 billion in a new plant over in Liberty, building lithium batteries for electric and hybrid vehicles, creating 2,100 new jobs, good-paying jobs.

All told—[*applause*]. All told, we've attracted 470 billion—almost a half a trillion dollars—in private investment all across the country, including \$16 billion right here in North Carolina. Private investment, not the Government. Private investment.

And here are the results: We've created nearly 400,000 jobs in North Carolina. Remember, Gov, when we were first starting together, we were losing jobs. We were hemorrhaging jobs here. We've created 400,000 jobs in North Carolina.

And here—and by the way, we've now, in 2½ years, created 13.4 million new jobs. More jobs in 2 years than any President has created in 4 years. Nearly 800,000 manufacturing jobs, brandnew. Eight hundred thousand.

Manufacturing is back. We want to make sure these jobs—these jobs—that give workers free and fair choice, by the way, to join a union if they wish to do that. And I want to make sure—I want to make sure the skilled workers are ready to fit these jobs.

Look, you can't have advanced manufacturing without a highly trained workforce. They don't go together. That's where you all come in.

Here at this college, you're learning every aspect of advanced manufacturing, machining, and robotics, so you can make everything from cell phones to rocket ships, literally, not figuratively. Electric systems so you can build everything from electric vehicle parts to the assembly lines they're carried on. Automated packaging to ship goods and quickly and safely all around the world.

Ninety-five percent of the students who study advanced manufacturing at this college get jobs right after graduation. And you know, like Jill said, community colleges are the best kept secret in America. For the longest time, no one wanted to talk about it. Every time I'd raise it for the last 12, 14 years, they'd say, "Ehh, you know, ehh"—well, here at Nash, you can see why it's important. And now—now—we want to build on all that, what you're doing here, all across America.

We've invested a half a billion dollars in what we call the Good Jobs Challenge. Now, that's the goal to create good training jobs all across the country in the industries of the future like clean energy.

Here in North Carolina, you accepted that challenge. Led by the Governor, with a group called the North Carolina Business Committee for Education and North Carolina A&T, which graduates more Black engineers than any other institution in America, by the way. And we provided billions of dollars for HBCUs as well, which is another story.

But we've created a coalition of community colleges, partners, including the IBEW—more than 40 employers—different employers. These employers committed to hire at least—at least—3,000 trainees to build solar panels, electric batteries, and clean energy technology.

And, folks, the benefit of that is, you're not only getting a good-paying job, you're going to be doing something to help save your country. Not—no kidding.

Anybody—you know, I have a lot of folks I came to work with in the—when I was President who thinks there's no such thing as global warming. Anybody doubt it? *[Laughter]*

I have literally, as President of the United States, flown over more territory where woods have been—forests have been burned to the ground, from New Mexico all the way up to Washington State and Montana, that equals the size of the entire State of Maryland. That's how much has been burned to the ground.

And we're building more—more partnerships like—in places like Phoenix, Arizona; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. We're investing in America Workforce Hubs all across America. Look, Jill launched one just a few weeks ago.

Folks, I guess what I'm trying to say is, I think that it's important when you have a job that not only your work conditions and your salary and your benefits reflect how you're treated with dignity, but where you really feel like you're doing something that matters. What you're doing is going to matter to people; it's going to matter to your country.

If we don't deal with global warming—it's the only existential threat that exists for humanity. All of the data shows that if we don't stay between 1.5 degrees Celsius by the year 20—anyway, we're going to be in trouble.

Here's the bottom line: A manufacturing and innovation boom is happening all across America, not just in North Carolina. But the support of people like Roy Cooper and Don Davis, with the leadership of community colleges like yours.

Back in 1964, President Johnson—Lyndon Baines Johnson came to Rocky Mountain *[Mount; White House correction]* and spoke, and here's what he said. He said, "The time has

come for us to see that every American gets a decent break and a fair chance to make good." That's exactly what we're working to achieve. That's what this is about.

I'm so sick and tired of my whole career of what they used to call trickle-down economics: If the folks at the top do well, everybody does well.

My dad was a hard-working guy who busted his neck. We lived—we weren't poor. We lived a middle class life: four kids in a three-bedroom home with a grandpop living with us. And—but the point was—it was in a decent, fair neighborhood, and we were just like everybody else—but I never saw any of that economic benefit trickle down on my dad's kitchen table.

So I decided—not a joke—and you're—you're going make me a prophet—and that is that we're going to build this economy from the middle out and the bottom up. When that happens, everybody does well. The wealthy still do very well.

I'm a capitalist. If you can go out and make a billion dollars, have at it, man. Just pay your fair share of taxes.

*Audience member.* Yeah, pay your taxes.

*The President.* So, look, we've made a lot of progress. Now we've got to keep it going. We just have to remember who we are. For God's sake, we're the United States of America.

This is not hyperbole: There's never been a thing we've set our mind to as a country—never been a single major initiative we've set our mind to as a country and we've worked together, we haven't accomplished it. It's time to remember who we are: We're the United States of America.

So, look, let's get together and move this. And I promise you, you're going to—you're not going to remember who the hell said this to you, but 15 years from now when this State is in even better shape than it is now and continuing to grow, and we're the epicenter of economic growth in the world, you're going to say, "I think I heard somebody say that." But it's because of you, when it happens. It really is.

There's nothing, nothing, nothing beyond our capacity. And there's nothing beyond your capacity. You just have to believe and be given half a chance.

I'm so damn proud to be with you all. So thank you very much.

And, Gov, thank you for what you put together in this State. I think you're the best Governor in the country, but thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 1:25 p.m. in the Gene Haas Center for Advanced Manufacturing at Nash Community College. In his remarks, he referred to America Alonso Gomez, preapprentice in EV manufacturing and maintenance, Nash Community College; Ryan, Justin, and Kyler Davis, sons of Rep. Donald G. Davis; and former President Barack Obama. He also referred to his brothers James B. and Francis W. Biden and sister Valerie Biden Owens. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady and Ms. Gomez.

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