

Remarks at a Campaign Fundraiser in Greenwich, Connecticut
June 16, 2023

The President. Please, have a seat. First of all, Stephen, sir, thank you very, very much for the hospitality. Just what you all need to do in early June, with graduations going on: show up, have to get dressed on a Friday, then maybe even Saturday. Who knows. *[Laughter]* Anyway—and I want to thank all my colleagues from the Senate and the House, and the Governor.

I think you have—and I mean this sincerely—I think you have the most consequential delegation in the United States Congress. I really mean it. And you've got a Governor who is really first rate. They know it, and they know what they do. They know how to get things done. And they've been great, great allies.

And, folks, everyone here—we wouldn't be—I wouldn't be here, standing here as President of the United States, without a lot of you in this room. You've—I never raised a lot of money when I was running before, whether I was Vice President or whether I was a Senator or—you know, I was—I did all right.

But this last time out, many of you—I raised more money than I think anybody has ever raised in small contributions as well—I mean, literally millions of dollars. And it allowed me to be able to say what I thought, do what I thought was the right thing to do, and be straightforward about it.

So thank you. It makes a gigantic difference.

[At this point, the President checked the hand-held microphone.]

Is this thing working or should I put it down?

Audience member. It's working.

The President. It's working.

Well, look, so far, so good, in terms of the—just a few facts and then maybe we can just mingle, and you can ask me whatever you want, talk about anything you want to talk about.

You know, I've met with a lot of world leaders. My background going into this job, I guess, was mostly constitutional issues and foreign policy. And I've met the vast majority of the heads of state in the past. And when I was Vice President, that was my job. When I was Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman, it's what I spent most of my time doing.

And there were two objectives I had. You may recall when I announced for President last time—when you were helping me, many of you—I indicated that I thought there were three things that had to be done.

One, we had to restore the soul of this Nation—the sense of decency, honor; some sense of constitutional, institutional structure—again. We had sort of—we had, I think, devolved to a point where we hadn't been in a long, long, long time.

And so—and I said, "So I want to restore the soul of the country, number one." Number two, I wanted to build the economy from the middle up, the bottom up. Because when that happens, the wealthy do very well and everybody has a shot. And in the trickle-down economy, not a lot trickled down to my pop's—my dad's kitchen table. But—and, number three, I said I wanted—and I got legitimately and understandably criticized—I said I wanted to unite the country.

Because in a democracy, we can't function if we can't unite. We need consensus in order to run this great country by the very nature of our institutions and our structure.

And so that's what we set out to do. With your help, we've—I think we've gotten a lot of it done.

For example, with regard to restoring the sense of decency and honor, people are—it's not—not gotten—it's not as vitriolic—with notable exceptions—as it has been. I think things are moving a little. I think people thought when we—when we took on the very hard-right members of the House of Representatives dealing with the debt ceiling, I think people were surprised—surprised that we were able to pull together enough people on both sides to come up with a rational and a serious budget proposal.

My first 2 years, I reduced the debt—my administration reduced the—the debt by \$1.7 trillion—more than any President has in American history—in the first 2 years. We've created over 13 million 400 thousand—I think it's 13-450 million jobs—more than any President has in the first 4 years of any administration. And it's not about—it's about giving people a shot—giving people an even shot.

We also put ourselves in a position where we have done more on the environment, I think, than—I think it's fair to say—than any President ever has. And the reason I say that is because we're in a situation where, if you're—I'm—again, I was warned not to make a—20-minute speech here, so I'm not going to do that. But I want to just give you a few, as they used to say, factoids.

Number one, we were able to pass and maintain—keep in play, no matter what the other team tried to take away—\$369 billion in environmental money for the environment.

Of that, we've reduced by the year 2030, we're going to reduce 50 to 52 percent of all emissions—all emissions. We're in a situation where the—we're in a situation where we're going to move in a direction that, by 2030, we're going to have 75 percent of all the energy we produce renewable energy. By the year thirty—2035, the United States is on path to do 100-percent renewable energy.

We're—conservation—we've conserved more land and water than any administration has in American history. We've conserved the most—for example, in Alaska alone, we've been able to preserve and make sure the 9—excuse me, 9 million acres. In Minnesota, the Boundary Waters, 250 million—thousand acres.

The—you know—anyway, I won't go through it all, but we've done a great deal. We—for example, one of the things I tried very hard to do—and everybody was saying we couldn't do anything in a bipartisan way—is not just the partisan side, but the traditional—how can I—not enemies, but adversaries.

One—a lot of people thought in the very beginning, when I didn't announce my green plan, that somehow I was backing off of what I had said before. Well, what I was doing was meeting with the auto industry and the autoworkers and the laborers to convince them that it's overwhelmingly in their interest to support these environmental changes.

Well, to make a quick analogy—point, this—tomorrow, I'm going up to Philadelphia to have every major labor union in the country endorse me—every one. And yesterday every major environmental group endorsed me—every single one.

Because we figured out it's in the mutual interest. The jobs lie in the future. The jobs—not on all the—that doesn't mean we're not going to need some oil and gas and—for a while. But it does mean that we're going to—make a fundamental shift.

And—for example, when I go to these COP meetings—these—these meetings relating to international efforts to deal with the environment worldwide, whether it was in Cairo or the—wherever it is. And guess what? We're now on a path that we're going to be able to take out—we got agreement last time out with all the major countries—over 100 countries—that they will deal with what—they're referred to as those really terrible—terrible, terrible—how can I say it?—just everything from methane to all the worst of all chemicals going into the air.

Well, you know, we've got a—I proposed at one of those meetings with the—the six—there are seven major nations in the world economies—that we all agree to get rid of methane by the year 20—well, we're moving that way. Methane is four, five, six times more damaging to the environment than, for example, just greenhouse gases. And we talk about it all the time.

We are—you know, we're in a position where we have 50 factories now in America making electric batteries and increasing the production. We're not where China is now, but we're making significant progress.

We have—we're going to have twice as many charging stations as when I began. And by the year—by the time we finish the transition to electric vehicles, we're building 500 thousand—500,000 charging stations nationwide so you can go across the country like you could—every gas station you needed was available to you. Well, same thing here.

And one of the things that I think—and I'm going to end here—is that I've tried to bring together traditional adversaries because I think the world has changed.

There's a famous poet named—and I was quoting Irish poets, and my colleagues would always kid me because they say I'm doing it because I'm Irish. That's not the reason. I do it because they're the best poets in the world. *[Laughter]*

But Seamus Heaney, who's—I mean, he's passed away, but I'm friends with his wife—he wrote a poem called "The Cure of Troy." And there was a sentence, and he says, "All is changed"—"All is changed, changed utterly. A terrible beauty has been born."

Well, a terrible beauty has been born. We have an opportunity to make significant progress off of it. The idea that finally—I don't hear—if I were here in this living room with your friends 3 years ago, you would have had a lot of friends who would say they doubted whether there was a real environmental crisis, that there really was a serious problem.

Do you know many people saying that these days? They may say "In my interest, I don't want to do that." But do you know anybody who says there's not an environmental crisis?

There was an article in the New York Times three Mondays ago; there was one again, I think, 4 days ago—pointing out where the State of Texas—State of Texas has more solar and wind energy. I think it's 70 percent of all their energy produced by solar and wind because it is significantly cheaper. Cheaper. Cheaper. Not just because it is—it is environmentally more—more friendly, but it's cheaper.

And guess what they're doing? The legislature is trying to get rid of it because they want to do the bidding of the oil companies. We're going to need oil for a while. We're going to need gas. We're going to—but nothing like we consume now. Nothing.

But it's working, and that's bothered some people that it's working.

But the other point I want to make is that it's the same way in bringing together the world. And I'll end with this.

I get both credit and blame for keeping NATO united. The fact is that when I—we supported Ukraine, and all my colleagues in here did as well. We supported Ukraine. The concern was because we—Putin was certain—and I've known him for 28 years, almost 30 years, only having

met with him—last time I met with him for any period of time was 2 years ago in Geneva. But I know him.

And he was confident—confident—that he could break the West; we would not stay together because NATO had never been—had—was having some serious rifts internally about what to do in Europe. Well, guess what? Ask any NATO leader. NATO is more united today than it has been any time in the history of NATO—in the history of NATO. That's good for America.

And by the way, when I went and told people that we're—I was going to bring Japan along—when's the last time Japan would have an interest in seeing what peace in Europe and supply—[*laughter*]*—no, I'm serious. Think about it. Well, guess what? Became close friend—I used to always kid Barack, as the Governor knows. And we'd—I met with him every morning at 9 o'clock for 8 years when I was Vice President. And I'd start off and say—he'd start talking, and I would say, "All politics is personal, Barack."*

It's personal with heads of state. It's personal with—with dealing with colleagues. It's personal. And you have to build trust.

Well, now you have—you have Japan significantly increasing their defense budget; Japan supporting Ukraine in Europe because he knows that there's no such thing as a major war in Europe that will not affect all the world.

You have him finally making—which no one believed, but when I talked to him at length about why he had to get together with South Korea and settle a 50-year difference they had about women—the way they were treating women—well, they've worked it out. They're now dealing with one another.

The point is that these moments of change, I think we have opportunities to not only change the direction but to change the order of things in ways that are better for the moment.

I'll end with this. The—how can I say? Before I decided to run in 2020—and I had decided not to run initially, until we saw what happened down in Charlottesville, Virginia. And that young woman was killed. And the former President was asked, "What do you think?" Said there were good people on both sides.

Well, you know, not figuratively, literally, my grandchildren asked for me—we have a tradition in my family, for real—it's only been exercised about 10 times since I've been alive—where any child can ask for a family meeting. And it's taken seriously. Not a joke. And you can have a family meeting to discuss what's—and if the family wants, they—[*inaudible*].

And so I got a call from my daughter—was in her last year at Columbia Law School—my granddaughter. And I got a call from my number two granddaughter, who was a senior at Penn at that time. And then I had one who was a junior. Anyway. I have four granddaughters and a grandson.

And they all came to me. That was—got the call on Thursday; we met on Saturday. And they said—because they knew I was thinking of running, but I knew it was going to be an ugly campaign. And I didn't—wonder whether I wanted to put the family through that again.

And they said, "Pop"—they started at age; the oldest one spoke first. And now we said, "Pop"—named after my deceased daughter—I said—said: "Pop, you know Dad wants you to run. Will you—you've got to run. You've got to do it." And they all went down their reasons.

And I got to my grandson. My wife doesn't like me telling this part, but I think it's important. My little grandson, who was then a sophomore—in eighth grade, almost going into ninth, and he took out—he said, "We know it's going to be tough, Pop."

And the reason—you know, I mean, think about it: Their entire life, their grandfather is either Senator, Vice President and/or—well, Senator at that time or Vice President, and their dad had been attorney general. And so their whole life, they—they understood the politics, just like if you're—I—never knew what the hell a mortgage was. If my dad were a banker, I would have known was a mortgage was when I was 9 years old. *[Laughter]*

So he took out his cell phone. He said, "We know it's going to be ugly, Pop." And there was a photograph online. There was a picture that was online put out by someone—who did it, I didn't even look—of me walking out of the church with a military cord on, carrying my dead son with the American flag on it and my hand on the flag, and then my hand on my little grandson around his chin. And the headline—the chyron at the bottom said, "Biden molests another child." Said, "We know it's going to be ugly, Pop."

Well, the truth is, I think the American people are a lot better than we give them credit for. I think they're focusing. I think they're looking hard. I think they're deciding what they have to do.

And I think that's going to cross—across the board. We hear these numbers about so many people are not going to move. I think people are—are looking for it. I think they sense there's real opportunity. But they don't know exactly what it is yet.

And that's my responsibility. Everything we passed—we've done polling on since it's passed—it's overwhelmingly popular. It's overwhelmingly. The CHIPS and Science Act, which created literally \$300 billion in direct investment, creating tens of thousands of jobs.

We're in a situation where there's a trillion two hundred billion dollars in—money for new environmental, not—excuse me, not just environment, in—industrial capacity. How can—how can you be the most powerful and successful nation in the world with a second rate infrastructure?

We used to be number 1 in the world; we're now number 14 in the world. There's things—and this creates jobs, and it changes the environment and changes people's attitudes.

And so there's a lot we've done. And I think we just got to let many people know we've done it and be straight with people. Just be as straight as we can about what we've done and what we haven't done.

And one of the things I decided to do was—this time out, when I ran last time—was to say what I thought was on my mind, because there wasn't anything worth anymore to—just to keep the job.

No, I—I mean, it sincerely. There's nothing noble about it. I've just been doing this so damn long, I'm not going to—*[laughter]*—but for real.

And I think that's how your delegation is, by the way. I think when push comes to shove, they'd rather say—rather than move on something they don't believe, to say "no" and take the risk of losing. Because I think we underestimate that people reward political courage. They reward courage.

And so I think that one of—you know, and we have four or five major issues in this campaign, from what's happening to freedom, women's right to choose, what we're doing in freedom in education, freedom—I mean, did you ever think you'd go through a time when the number-two contender on another team was banning books?

I mean, you know—anyway. I'm talking too much now. *[Laughter]*

So, anyway, I can't tell you how much I appreciate your help. Any questions you have for me, anything you want to talk about, I'm happy to do it. I'll give it to you straight.

And—but I really am optimistic about America's prospects, not because of me, and I mean that sincerely, but because we have a new generation of young people—young people who are the best educated, the most decent, the most engaged, the most involved generation in American history. That's why I'm optimistic, for real.

And think of the periods of time and these inflection points where the decisions made in a 4-, 5-, 6-, 7-year period set the—set the stage for what the next four or five decades are going to look like.

Well, the post-war period is over. We're in a different world. And we have gigantic opportunities, and we just have to have the courage and remember: This is the United States of America. There is nothing, nothing, nothing beyond our capacity when we decide to work together. I mean it. I believe that with every fiber of my being.

I can't think of a single thing we've ever set our mind to do as a nation that we haven't been able to accomplish eventually.

So there's a lot I'm hopeful for that 2-year-old. I'm hopeful for that 2-year-old, that long before they're 30. Okay? And I'm 34 years old. *[Laughter]*

Anyway, I'm going to hush up. Thank you for listening, and I'm happy to talk.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:08 p.m. at the residence of Sue and Stephen F. Mandel. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Edward M. "Ned" Lamont, Jr., of Connecticut; Marie Heaney, wife of the late Irish poet Seamus Heaney; President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia; former Presidents Barack Obama and Donald J. Trump; Prime Minister Fumio Kishida of Japan; and Gov. Ronald D. DeSantis of Florida. He also referred to his grandchildren Naomi K. Biden Neal and R. Hunter, Natalie, Finnegan, and Roberta "Maisy" Biden. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Campaign fundraiser in Greenwich, CT.

Locations: Greenwich, CT.

Names: Biden Neal, Naomi K.; Biden, Finnegan J.; Biden, Natalie; Biden, R. Hunter, II; Biden, Roberta M. "Maisy"; Heaney, Marie; Kishida, Fumio; Lamont, Edward M. "Ned"; Mandel, Stephen F.; Obama, Barack; Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich; Trump, Donald J.

Subjects: Bipartisanship; Carbon emissions, reduction efforts; Climate change; Connecticut, Democratic Party event; Connecticut, Governor; Connecticut, President's visit; Electric vehicle charging infrastructure, improvement efforts; Federal deficit and debt; Japan, Prime Minister; Job creation and growth; Land and maritime conservation efforts; Methane emissions, reduction efforts; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Public debt limit; Renewable energy sources and technologies; Russia, conflict in Ukraine; Russia, President; Semiconductor manufacturing; Solar and wind energy, promotion efforts; Ukraine, Russian invasion and airstrikes; United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; Virginia, 2017 political unrest and violence in Charlottesville.

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