

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023

Remarks at a Campaign Rally With Union Members in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
June 17, 2023

The President. Hello, Philadelphia! Hello, organized labor, union labor! There's labor, and there's union labor.

Folks, it feels good to be home. I'm Joe Biden. I'm Jill Biden's husband and damn proud of it. A Philly girl, a card-carrying member of her union.

And, David, thank you for that introduction. And I want to thank Liz—President Liz Shuler, who's been a friend of mine for a long, long time and all of you.

Folks, if I can go off script for a second here, I want to say something: You know, I've been doing this a long time, but I've never felt the sense of camaraderie and pride that I feel today in this year. I really mean it.

Audience member. We love you!

The President. No, no, no, no. I'm not saying—I'm not saying——

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Let me—let me just say one thing very seriously: You know, I think this is the first time—and I've been around, as I said, a while—in history where, last week, every single environmental organization endorsed me.

No, no, no. And this week, for the first time I'm aware of, the AFL–CIO endorsed this early, and every union as well. Because we're coming together.

I look out in this crowd, and I see a lot of old friends, a lot of folks—as they say in Claymont, Delaware—who brung me to the dance. I told you when I ran for President I'd have your back. And I have. But you've had my back as well.

And I'm more—excuse me for getting a little emotional—I'm more honored by your endorsement than you can imagine. Coming this early, it's going to make a gigantic difference in this campaign.

You know, there are a lot of politicians in this country who can't say the word "union." Because you know I'm not one of them. I'm proud to say the word. I'm proud to be the most pro-union President in American history. I promised you I would be. But what I'm really proud about—what I'm really proud about—is being reelected the most pro-union President in history.

Look, I want to thank Kamala for all she's doing to fight for working families.

Look, folks, I've said many times: Wall Street didn't build America, you did. You did. Not a joke. I've been saying this for a long time, long before I ran for President. The middle class built this country, and you built the middle class.

Electricians, carpenters, ironworkers, steelworkers, laborers, bricklayers, plumbers, pipe fitters, police officers, firefighters, educators, nurses, painters, airline workers, custodians, transit workers, steel- and metalworkers, grocery store workers, hotel workers, so many others.

Audience member. Millwrights!

The President. And let me tell you something—millwrights as well. *[Laughter]*

If the investment—the investment bankers in this country—think about it—I mean, this is not a criticism of them, but if the investment bankers in this country went on strike tomorrow, no one would much notice in this room. [Laughter] No, think about this in a literal sense. But if this room didn't show up for work tomorrow or next Monday, the whole country would come to a grinding halt. So tell me—tell me—who matters more in America?

Folks, I'm looking forward to this campaign. I want you to know why: because you've got a story to tell. We've got a story to tell. We've got a record to run on. And most importantly, we're not only changing this country, we're transforming it.

Just think back: Remember what it was like when I came to office—we came into office. Remember the mess we inherited. The pandemic was raging. Think—I want you to really think about this. I mean this sincerely. It's not a campaign speech; it's a speech about the future of this country.

The economy was reeling. Barely 3 million people had been fully vaccinated. Supply chains were broken. Businesses were shutting down. Schools were closed.

You had cars—remember cars—not just old jalopies, cars—modern cars, new cars—lined up for miles and miles just to get a box of food put in the back of their car for their families.

Our allies in Europe and around the world heard the last President saying our foreign policy was "America first." And for the first time since the Second World War, our friends began to wonder whether they could—the United States could be relied on.

Now, look at where we are today. We've united NATO once more in a way it has never been united before. It's a wonder we're—[applause].

We've created 13 million new jobs since I became President. That's more jobs in little over 2 years than any President has created in one 4-year term. The unemployment rate is down to nearly a 50-year low at 3.7 percent. I've seen record lows for Black unemployment and Hispanic unemployment as well.

We've created 800,000 manufacturing jobs. And as you heard me say before: Where in God's name is it written that America can't lead the world again in manufacturing?

Inflation has come down 11 months in a row and—going to continue to come down. Today, it's less than half of what it was 1 year ago.

Folks, this didn't just happen. We made it happen. I came to office——

Audience member. You did it!

The President. No, you guys. No, I being—I'm being sincere. You guys did.

I came to office with a theory and a plan. The theory was this——

Audience members. You did it!

The President. No, please listen. I mean it. I want you to listen to this one. [Laughter]

It was time to end the trickle-down economics theory: You know, the wealthy do well, we all do well.

Forty years of handing out excessive tax cuts to the wealthy and big corporations had been a bust. Democrats as well as Republicans did it. All of it had done—all it had done was hollow out the middle class; blow up the deficit; ship jobs overseas; strip the dignity and pride and hope out of a community, one after another, all across America as the factories shut down.

I'm pretty sure you saw in your home what I saw in mine. Not a lot trickled down from my parents' kitchen table when I was growing up.

So we're changing. We decided to replace this theory with what the press has now called "Bidenomics." I don't know what the hell that is. *[Laughter]* But it's working.

Let me tell you what it's about. It's about building an economy—literally, not figuratively—from the bottom up and the middle out, not the top down. Because when the middle class does well, everybody does well. *[Applause]* No—the poor have a way up, and the wealthy don't—do—they just do just fine.

But like I said, I didn't just come into office with a theory; I came with a plan. And it started with passing the American Rescue Plan, a plan to vaccinate the Nation and get our economy going again.

And that's exactly what it did. It put money in people's pockets, provided a lifetime—lifeline for businesses to stay afloat. And one study concluded that it kept 7 million people in their homes—not losing their homes.

Oh, it did one more thing that matters a lot to you: It included the Butch Lewis Act to protect the pensions of millions of workers. And that was a big deal. That was a big deal.

I committed to you, and we worked together. You—you—got that passed for me. It's one of the most significant achievements to union workers and retirees in over 50 years, and that's a God-natural fact. But not a single Republican in Congress voted for it, but we still got it done because of you—*[applause]*—because of you.

Next—next—we passed the bipartisan infrastructure law because of you.

We can't have the strongest economy in the world without the best infrastructure in the world. How can that be? Can you believe we used to be the best infrastructure—had the best infrastructure in the world, rated number one? But today, we rate number 13—13. Twelve other nations have better—and by the way, how in the hell can you grow an economy without an infrastructure? Not—not a joke.

Under my predecessor, "Infrastructure Week" became a punchline. On my watch, we're making "Infrastructure Decade" a headline. And that's what this law is all about. It's about investing in America, in our roads, bridges, ports, airports, clean water, high-speed internet, and so much more.

We've already stated—started some 32,000 projects all across America. As Mayor Kenney knows, none of them are more consequential than right here at I-95 in Philly. In fact, if you go to invest.gov, you'll see a map that's going to show every single project in this country.

And by the way, it creates tens of thousands of good-paying jobs with prevailing wage. And you don't need a college degree to make a decent income.

You've heard me say before many times, but it sticks in my mind. My dad used to have an expression—and I swear to God this is what he would say, not a joke. He'd say: "Joey, remember, a job is about a lot more than a paycheck. It's about your dignity. It's about respect. It's about being able look at your child in the eye and say, 'Honey, it's going to be okay. We're going to make it.'"

That's what this is about. He was right, and I'm determined to make it a reality for every family in this country.

But look, if I needed any reminder about how important infrastructure was in the country, I got a reminder just a few days ago right here in Philly. I visited the damaged section of I-95.

We're working closely with Governor Shapiro and Senator Casey and Fetterman and Congressman Boyle and Mayor Kenney to rebuild it.

I've instructed my team to prove that the old saw is wrong. I'm instructing my team to move heaven and earth to get it done. And thanks to some smart thinking and some innovative design and using materials right here in Pennsylvania, we're going to get it done in record time because it's so important to the economy not only of Philly, but the entire Northeast Corridor and every community.

Third, we passed the CHIPS and Science Act. I kept saying for a long while here: We used to be on the cutting edge of science and technology. We used to invest 2 percent of our entire GDP in research and development. You know what it is now? Got down to .7 percent. And you wonder why the hell the rest of the world is catching up and, in some places, it was moving ahead.

Well, America got a wakeup call with the pandemic. We didn't think much about supply chains. People wonder what the hell you talk about 5 years ago—talking about supply chains. They know now.

Well, guess what? We know we can never again be so vulnerable.

One key component is semiconductors—those little, tiny, small computer chips, smaller than the fingerprint—fingertip, I should say—that affect nearly everything in our lives from cell phones, automobiles, refrigerators, the most sophisticated weapons systems the United States military has.

America invented these chips. But, over time, from—we went from producing 40 percent of the world's chips to then producing less than 10 percent. But we're turning that around.

Now, the private sector—because I decided we're going to get this done—the private sector is investing a record \$470 billion in advanced manufacturing right here in the United States for—as well as clean energy in America, again, creating good-paying jobs, a prevailing wage, changing people's lives.

And fourth, we passed the Inflation Reduction Act. It gave Medicare the power to negotiate lower prescription drug prices—[*applause*—just like the VA has been able to do.

You know, folks, the same drug company making the same prescription, if they—if you go to buy it in Paris, it's cheaper than the United States. Go to buy it in any major country in the world, it's cheaper than the United States. How in the hell can that happen?

Well, guess what? I and many others have been trying to get this done for decades, but by the time they tried—they tried and tried, but Big Pharma always was able to stop them.

Not this time. This time, we took on Big Pharma, and we won. Now, seniors on Medicare, instead of paying 400 bucks a month for insulin, they're paying \$35 a month. It's life-changing.

And it's not just good for people who need lifesaving prescriptions, it's not—it's good for the nation's budget as well. Guess what? The first round of cuts in prices that we've been able to negotiate saves the taxpayer \$160 billion. Hear me? [*Applause*]

No, no, we're not spending money. We're saving money, because we don't have to pay out an additional \$160 billion for the same drug coverage. That's pretty nice, I think. Doing more for people and costing taxpayers less money to do it—that's a good objective.

And this bill includes the biggest investment ever not only in America, but anywhere in the world when dealing with climate change: \$369 billion. And the investment isn't only going to

help us save the planet, it's going to create jobs—lots of jobs, tens of thousands of good-paying union jobs.

Now, let me tell you—[*applause*]. Now, let me tell you what one of the core principles is throughout everything I've done: Make it in America. We're beginning to make things again with American workers, American products, manufacturing in American plants. For too long, we exported jobs for cheaper labor costs abroad and imported more expensive products that weren't of a quality we needed.

We're not going to do that anymore. Under my plan, under Bidenomics, we're creating jobs at home and exporting products abroad. Union jobs.

And here's the thing: We're doing all this by cutting the deficit. The budget agreement I just negotiated cuts the deficit by \$1 trillion, and we didn't give up anything of consequence.

That's on top of my first 2 years as—my first 2 years as President, I've cut the deficit by more than any President has in American history: \$1.7 trillion cut from the deficit while doing these things. And I've been able to cut the deficit while protecting all the critical investments I just talked about, as well as protecting Social Security and Medicare from being cut.

You may remember, when I did the State of the Union, they started—I said did any of these guys want to cut Social Security and Medicare. And they said, "Liar, liar!" And so I stopped. I hadn't planned on it. I stopped, and I said, "Oh, how many of you want to cut Social Security?"

Audience member. No one!

The President. And—no—no, I'm not—no, I asked them. I asked the Republicans. [*Applause*] No—here, listen to this. Remember, I said, "How many of you want it cut?"

And all of the sudden, the ones calling me liars was completely silent. And I said—I said: "The spotlight is on you all now. How many of you promise not to cut Social Security?" And they all said, "We won't cut it." Guess what? It's not cut. I'd never negotiated at a State of the Union before.

Audience member. You called them out, Joe!

The President. Yes, that's a fact. [*Laughter*]

One thing didn't get done in that budget agreement was dealing with the Tax Code. I think we all know: Nobody, including those who would do very well, but aren't super, superwealthy—nobody thinks the Tax Code is fair.

No, I'm serious. It's just simply not fair. [*Laughter*] How could it be fair when 55 of the largest corporations in America paid zero in Federal income tax on \$40 billion in profit?

Audience members. Boo!

The President. No—well, guess what? We need to get rid of some of these ridiculous special interest tax loopholes, like the one for Big Oil. Big Oil made \$200 billion in profit last year, and they got a \$30 billion tax break on top of it.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Some of the hedge fund managers and crypto traders—these things are going to change, I promise you, if I have anything to do with it. And the idea—we used to have about 750 billionaires in America. Now, they tell me it's about a thousand, because of the last administration.

Well, guess what? You know what—you know what percentage they pay in taxes? Eight percent. E-i-g-h-t.

Audience member. What do you pay, Joe?

The President. I pay a hell of a lot more than that, man. *[Laughter]* So do you.

And by the way, they pay at a lower tax rate than schoolteachers, than firefighters, probably anyone in this room.

Audience members. Joe! Joe! Joe!

The President. It's time they paid a minimum tax. I don't mind them being billionaires. Just pay your fair share, man.

The bottom line is this: It's time that big corporations and the very wealthy start paying their fair share. I made a promise—and I'll keep it for next 4 years if I'm elected—that no one making under \$400,000 will see a penny of their Federal taxes go up. And they haven't. I kept that promise, and I will keep it.

But it's about time the superwealthy start paying their fair share. So in this time—this campaign, I'm going to go to the country and ask them if they give—if they agree with me, it's time for everyone to start paying their fair share.

Folks, look, let me close with this. I truly believe this country is about to take off. I really believe it. Not—my word. The investment we've made in these past 3 years have the power to transform this country in the—for the next five decades.

And guess who's going to be at the center of the transformation? You. You. Union. *[Applause]* No—working people in this country.

In 10 years, America is going to look around and say: "My God, look what we did. Look at the nation's roads, bridges, airports, at all the—all the investments." And—who do you think they're going to give credit for? You, because you were the——

Audience member. Yeah!

The President. No, because you were the ones that will have done it. You're—you're going to lead the world in manufacturing of semiconductor chips. Who's going to build those fabs? Who's going to work—who's going to work in them? Union members are going to do that.

A huge—*[applause]*. A huge number of jobs we're creating won't require a college degree, but they'll pay above \$100,000 a year. Who's going to get these jobs? Working folks.

We're doing something right now no one has thought possible. We're on the edge of a manufacturing boom in America. For the longest time, we've been told to give up on American manufacturing. I was told you can't do it here anymore. Well, I never believed it. And this Nation used to lead the world in manufacturing, and we're going to do it again.

Audience member. Thanks, Joe! *[Applause]*

The President. No, I promise you.

People studying this right now are astonished at what's going on, a boom they never saw coming. Well, we're going to show them. Who do you think is going to get stamping these products "Made in America"? You are. You are.

But the Republicans don't like this anymore. Most of them opposed everything I've done and most want to get rid of it all. So we've got a fight on our hands.

And my question to you is simple: Are you with me in this fight?

Let me tell you something——

Audience members. Let's go, Joe! Let's go, Joe! Let's go, Joe!

The President. Because let me tell you something: If Republicans come after what I've done, when they come back to try to get rid of all these clean energy investments and they try to stop the plan on infrastructure, when they try to do these things, guess what? They're coming for your jobs. They're coming for your jobs.

They're coming for your future. They're coming for the future we're building for your kids and your grandkids. And when they come back, as they did just this past week, with their trickle-down economic plan to cut taxes for the rich, who don't think—who do you think they're carrying the water for?

They're trying—they've introduced a bill again to reinstate the \$2 trillion tax cut of the—80 percent of which goes to the top 1 percent.

Who do you think is going to start carrying the burden?

Audience member. We are.

The President. You are. No, you are. That's the God's truth. Working people in this country.

Look, we've got a better answer. It's time for everyone—I mean everyone, no matter how rich or powerful they are—to start paying their fair share. You've carried the country on your back. You've carried long enough.

It's time for millionaires and billionaires and big corporations to pay their fair share. I can get that done, but I need you badly. So are you with me?

Look, I've been at this a long time. I've been at this a long time. I can honestly say I've never been more optimistic about America's future.

I know a lot of people—it's hard to believe, but not for me, because I know the people of this country. We just have to remember who we are. We're the United States of America. There's nothing—nothing, nothing—beyond our capacity. Nothing beyond our capacity when we do it together.

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. God bless you all. May God protect our troops. Keep the faith.

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:46 p.m. at the Pennsylvania Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to David Harris, AFSCME union member and employee, Philadelphia Water Department; Elizabeth H. Shuler, president, AFL–CIO; Vice President Kamala D. Harris; and former President Donald J. Trump.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Union members, campaign rally in Philadelphia, PA.

Locations: Philadelphia, PA.

Names: Biden, Jill T.; Boyle, Brendan F.; Casey, Robert P., Jr.; Fetterman, John K.; Harris, David; Harris, Kamala D.; Kenney, James F.; Shapiro, Joshua D.; Shuler, Elizabeth H.; Trump, Donald J.

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address; Inflation; Infrastructure improvements; Insulin cost controls; Interstate 95 overpass collapse; Job creation and growth; Labor movement and organized labor; Manufacturing industry, domestic investment; Medicare and Medicaid programs; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Oil companies, Federal subsidies; Pennsylvania, Democratic Party event; Pennsylvania, Governor; Pennsylvania, President's visit; Prescription drug costs, reduction efforts; Research and development; Semiconductor manufacturing; Social Security program; Tax Code reform; Unemployment rate; Vice President.

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