

Remarks at a Campaign Reception in Los Gatos, California

June 19, 2023

Well, Shannon and Kev, thank you very, very much. And I want to thank your family for all you've been willing to do and standing up and speaking out.

You know, it is true that—I remember when I ran the first time, I made a speech at Independence Hall with—one night, with a whole—I don't know how many people—five, six, seven hundred people. And I talked about that I thought democracy was at risk, and I defined what I thought democracy was.

And the press, understandably, was somewhat skeptical why the heck I was talking about democracy the way I did. It turns out, after that speech was over, for the next couple of weeks, it turned out, there were over 65 percent of the American people registered, saying that they were concerned as well.

You know, we're the most unique nation in the history of the world. We're uniquely a product of our political institutions, unlike any other nation. I mean, not that we're better or worse, just unique. We're in a situation where the vast majority of countries are formed based on ethnicity, on religion, on all things that don't relate to anything other than an idea.

We're based on an idea that we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men and women are created equal, et cetera. And we've never fully lived up to it, but we've never in the past—since, I guess, way back in the Civil War—walked away from it. We've never walked away from it.

And so I'll tell you a quick story. When I—when you got me elected, and you did—when you got me elected, I walked in—I didn't realize, even though I'd been in the Oval Office every day for 8 years in a row, 9 o'clock in the morning with Barack—I didn't realize there was a requirement that the outgoing President be out of the office by 10 o'clock on the 20th and the incoming President could come in—I think it was at 3 or 4 o'clock.

And so I asked my brother Jim, who has better taste than I do, to set up the office for me, from everything from picking the rug, to the desk, and that kind of thing. For real. And he brought along with him a Presidential historian named Jon Meacham. And Jon Meacham was helping out, and I was unaware of that at the time.

And so when I came in that day, the other guy didn't have to worry; he never showed up at all. But—[laughter].

But at any rate, what happened was that I looked over at the mantelpiece. And a couple of you have been to the Oval since then; you're all welcome, by the way. I mean that sincerely.

The—there's a picture—a big portrait of—painting—a big one—of Roosevelt. Well, I'm proud Roosevelt was a Democratic President, but I wondered why. And then there were four portraits that are much smaller: one, George Washington, which had always been over the mantel; and then one of Abraham Lincoln; and then one—and then—anyway, without going into all the detail, the bottom line was, I said, "Why?"

And Meacham spoke up and he said: "Well, not since Dwight"—not since—excuse me, not since Roosevelt has any President inherited—such a circumstance internationally, where there was so much at stake, in terms of the world economy as well.

And then I said, "Why Lincoln?" He said, "Well, the country has never been as divided since then." And I started thinking about it.

But I announced when I ran, the first time—I said I was running for three reasons, and I meant it: One was to restore the soul of the Nation. By that, I meant restore the sense of dignity and honor, be that we would once again be looked at as a nation that was one that led by example a little bit. Secondly was to rebuild the middle class, which had taken a real hit the previous number of years. And the third reason was to unite the country again.

And the press, understandably, was—and a lot of people who were supporting me thought: "Well, I'm not sure that makes any sense, especially the uniting part. No one can unite the country." But I'm convinced that the vast majority of the American people still understand who we are and what we're about.

And so what we did was, when we, in fact, put together this program, the initiatives we had, was I said that we were going to move in a bipartisan way.

Well, guess what? We inherited a circumstance where we had—the economy was in disarray; we were—we had an "American first" policy that was not doing very well around the world from our allies, from—anyway, not doing very well.

And in addition to that, we found ourselves in a circumstance where it was very difficult to convince the American people that we could get things done.

And so we worked very hard. And we ended up in the first almost, I guess, 20 months—22 months initially—now it's longer—creating more jobs than any President has in 4 years: over 13 million 500 thousand jobs.

We also put ourselves in the position where we found ourselves in—having to—a circumstance where we were once again beginning to be respected by the rest of the world.

I've spent, I figure—I think they—my staff figured it out: With other NATO and European and Far East leaders, but particularly heads of state in the—in Europe, I've spent over 180 hours with them, either together in a group, individually, or on Zoom. Because they really are looking to what we think is important, what we think—what we're willing to do.

When I first got to the first G-7 meeting—that's the seven largest economies—in London, in February, after I was elected, I sat down at a round—literally, a round table. It was a beautiful area we were sitting in, outside and—in southwest London—I mean, southwest England.

And I said, "Well, America is back." And Macron looked at me, and he said, "For how long?" [*Laughter*] For how long? He wasn't being a wise guy; he was—it was genuine questions.

And then I got a comment from a guy I'd become friends with, Scholz of Germany, the Chancellor. He said: "Mr. President, what would you think if tomorrow morning you picked up the paper here in the England, and the London Times had said, 'A thousand people broke down the doors of Parliament; killed several bobbies in order to overthrow the election'?" And I hadn't thought of it that way before.

But think how the rest of the world looked at what happened here, without making—blaming anybody, just what happened. What happened.

And so what we did—we worked very hard to try to bring our allies back together, which I think we have; unite the world. We have the idea of when I was told—and I was told, folks, I was going to try to get Japan engaged and change their attitude and budget—attitude toward Korea, their budget, in terms of their military budget and their engagement in Europe.

It's never happened before. Well, it's happened. They're engaged in a big way. In a big way. They've actually made an rapprochement with China—with the—with—excuse me, with South Korea after all these years since World War II. Things are moving.

Things are moving in terms of what's happening as well in Europe, in terms of the NATO cohesion, et cetera. We've got the Quad going.

My generic point is—I guess the reason why I'm so optimistic is, the rest of the world is like everybody else: They want to get something done. They want to get back to some sense of normality. And, for example, the idea that there is this cohesion in Europe still—and remember, everyone assumed, and it was not an irrational assumption, that Putin was convinced that he could wait and just see NATO break up over the issue of Ukraine.

So—and then, at home, similar things happened. The idea that in a 1-week span every major environmental group would endorse me, and then the very—the following week, I'd be endorsed by a group of people who—where you think would be—have trouble with environmental groups—the major labor unions, every major labor union in America for the first time this early. And this—coherently supported a candidate.

And then we—the same thing across—I guess what I'm trying to say is, I think there's a hunger for a unity based on rationality, not based on just unity for unity's sake, because people know that we've lost something when we lost that sort of center—how can I say it?—that glue that kind of held democracy—rock bottom, as to who we were.

And so I'm confident about this election because of the people I'm standing before. But I don't mean I'm that kind of confident. But I'm confident because I think that there is a sense of wanting to finish the job.

We've created, as I said, 1-point—excuse me, 13.4 million jobs, 800,000 manufacturing jobs. Inflation—unemployment is down to near historic low, at 3.7 percent. Black unemployment low, Hispanic unemployment is extremely low, relative to where we are. Inflation is down 11 months in a row. You are a lot of very—you're all very successful business women and men. You understand that everything is fragile.

But I think if we keep moving, we can get things done. And let me end by saying the things I want to get done.

I think it's critically important that we lock down the—how can I say it?—the sense—the idea that there are more children being killed in America by gunshots than by any other—*[inaudible]*—it just makes no sense. I own two shotguns. I'm not a big hunter, but I used to target shoot.

But the point I'm making is that the idea that you could drive your car up here, park your car, and if some 14-year-old kid—if you left the key in, it took the car and ran it off the road here and hurt somebody, you're—you're civilly liable.

Well, you should have to lock up your guns. What's the big damn deal about that? Look at all these—all these—all these kids who have blown people away, large numbers.

You know, we should be in a position where we have universal background checks. We should be in a position where the idea—look, AR-15s are weapons of war. And I think the reason why—and I think it's going to become clear pretty soon—the reason why: The only industry in America you can't sue is the gun manufacturers. Imagine if that were the law with regard to—with regard to tobacco. How many people would be dead today, that—are alive because we've been able to take on tobacco?

And so there are so many things we can do in that area.

We can also—it's about time that the ultimate—freedom—the right to choose should be a right left between a woman and her doctor. And so the idea is that now we're in a position where it's been ruled that it's not a constitutional guarantee, not guaranteed by the—no place in the Constitution that guarantees it for the first time in 50-some years. It's pulled away.

So there's nothing that you're going to—we're not going to be able to pass a constitutional amendment, but I'll tell you what we can do: We can pass a national law taking *Roe v. Wade* and codifying it in every State and making sure, if you have a majority of the States—and we're going to be in a position where that becomes the law of the land.

But my point is that—think of all the—all the horror stories you've heard, not just the normal ones, but you know, a young woman—people moving from one State to another.

You have a guy from—a former football coach from Alabama is holding up—I think it's—I'll ask my son—I think it's 57 flag appointments—military appointments for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on down the line. Because the military said if you are in the military, you're having a troubled pregnancy, and you're in a State where you're not allowed to see the doctor perform any—any remedial operation on you, then you can get paid—you can have leave to go to where you can do that.

Well, he said, unless that's changed, he's holding up all the—all these—we're in a—we're in a—I mean, it's—it's just bizarre. I don't remember it happening before. And I've been around. I know I don't look like I've been around—[laughter]—but I've been around. I've been around a long time.

But the point I'm making is, there are so many things that are of consequence that we can solve. And the vast majority of people, all the data shows, support the positions we're generically taking. It's not like these are wacko ideas that we've come up with.

And so I think it's really important we sort of reestablish a sense of, I don't know—a sense of confidence in the Constitution, even though people don't think of it in exactly those terms.

But I'm basically—now I'm talking too much. And the view is incredible. [Laughter] My view is—I see you and the—and the environment—you have a bad view. You only see me. [Laughter]

But all kidding aside, why—what am I supposed to—am I going to take—Boss, come on up here, man.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:55 p.m. at the residence of Shannon Hunt-Scott and Kevin Scott. In his remarks, he referred to former Presidents Barack Obama and Donald J. Trump; Jon Meacham, canon historian, Washington National Cathedral; President Emmanuel Macron of France; President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia; and Sen. Thomas H. Tuberville. He also referred to his brother James B. Biden. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Campaign reception in Los Gatos, CA.

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Names: Biden, James B.; Biden, R. Hunter; Hunt-Scott, Shannon; Macron, Emmanuel; Meacham, Jon; Milley, Mark A.; Obama, Barack; Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich; Scholz, Olaf; Scott, Kevin; Trump, Donald J.; Tuberville, Thomas H.

Subjects: 2024 Presidential election; Abortion; California, Democratic Party event; California, President's visit; Criminal background check procedures, strengthening efforts; France, President; Germany, Chancellor; Group of Seven (G-7) nations; Gun control efforts; Gun violence,

prevention efforts; Inflation; Japan, relations with South Korea; Job creation and growth; Joint Chiefs of Staff; Labor movement and organized labor; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Quadrilateral Security Dialogue; Russia, conflict in Ukraine; Russia, President; South Korea, relations with Japan; U.S. Supreme Court opinion overturning 1973 decision in Roe v. Wade; Ukraine, Russian invasion and airstrikes; Unemployment rate.

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