

**Remarks at a Campaign Reception in Atherton, California**

*June 19, 2023*

*The President.* Steve, thank you. I used to dream of being charismatic. [Laughter] Anyway. All kidding—thank you. Thank you, thank you.

By the way, there's the real reason we're gathered here: We have two recent college graduates in the front row here. Stand up, guys. No, you got to stand up. I'm going to embarrass you. Stanford and Cal. That's the only reason I came out. I want to get to know who's going to be running the country later.

So I—look, I want to thank Anna for allowing me to—a passport into the district. Thank you, Anna. We've been working together a long, long time.

And the fact of the matter is that, you know, Anita is here somewhere. I don't know where — there you are, Anita. Well, I tell you what: You're the only reason I came out. [Laughter] Thank you. No—no, you've been—you've been wonderful.

And I want to thank everyone here because, quite frankly, I wouldn't be standing here talking to you were it not for most of the people in this room. A lot of you have been helping me for a long, long time. I go back 217 years, to Joe Cotchett. [Laughter] Joe—Joe and I go back a long way. But I'm serious—looking around the room, some of you've been with me a long time, and I truly appreciate it.

You know—you know, a lot of world leaders I've—the only thing that comes with serving a long time in office is you get to know a lot of people. And I've had an opportunity to meet virtually every world leader in the past 35 years or more. And one of the things that I get asked—well, let me put it this way: I was—when Barack was President and I was Vice President, it was clear that President Hu—and that was his name at the time, the President of China—and his Vice President, Xi—where Xi was going to be the successor, Vice President to become President in the near term.

And it wasn't appropriate for Barack to be able to spend a lot of time getting to know him, so it was an assignment I was given. And I traveled 17,000 miles with him, usually one on one. I—we—I'd have a simultaneous interpreter, and he had one too. And we got to know each other fairly well.

And one of the things—we were in the Tibetan Plateau, and he asked me one day, and he said—one of our meetings—he said, "Can you define America for me?" And this is the God's truth. I said, "Yes, in one word." He said, "What's that?" I said, "Possibilities."

In America, we are the "ugly Americans" because we believe anything is possible when we work together. I'm being deadly earnest now. Think about it. When has there ever been a problem that we've decided to take on we thought we couldn't solve? As hard as it would be, when—when did that ever happen? And it hadn't happened.

There's never been a time when we had—until—of late, until the last time around, when we decided we're going to go it alone, "America first." We found ourselves in the position where there wasn't much coordination, and we stopped talking to one another.

You know, I told this story before: When—I learned early on that—after 8 years of sitting in the Oval Office every single morning at 9 o'clock with Barack, there were two questions he'd ask.

We'd start off with kidding each other. He said, "What do you think the temperature is in Hawaii?" And I said, "78." [Laughter] That was a—you think I'm kidding. I'm not.

And then I'd say to him—and I'd say, "Remember, Barack,"—I just called him Mr. President. "Remember, Mr. President, all politics is personal," both international and national. You get to—got to know the other team. You've got to know the other person, what's motivating that person and what's not motivating that person.

And so we spent a lot of time trying to figure out where this relationship was going to go, not only with China, but with Russia. You may remember, when I became President, I checked with the intelligence community to see if I could—without any—hurting any one individual, to let—the world know that for the first time since World War II, 135,000 people were going to invade another country.

And I said and I predicted—and I told—at the time, it was cleared. And I told the Ukrainians that they were going to be invaded. They didn't believe it either. But for the first time, we had—ever—no one contemplated the notion that there would be a Russian army that would invade another country with a hundred—it ended up being 185,000 people.

The point I'm trying to make is this: You know, there's a—my colleagues in the Senate used to always kid me because I was always quoting Irish poets. They thought I quoted Irish poets because I'm Irish. That's not the reason; they just happen to be the best poets in the world. [Laughter]

But Seamus Heaney, a poet—and his wife I got to know very well after he passed away—he wrote a poem called "The Cure at Troy," and he said: "All's changed, changed utterly. A terrible beauty has been born."

All has changed, has changed utterly, both good and bad. It's a different world.

When I was deciding whether or not to run in nineteen—turned around—decided to run in 2020, I wasn't sure what to do, whether I was going to run or not. Because then I was—I started to write a book on what—American inflection points, the things that—those are things that occur within a relatively short span of time, less than a decade, that change the world for the next three, four, or five decades. It's happened about eight times in modern history. And we're at one of those junctures, in my view.

And then what happened was, along came what happened in Charlottesville. And that young woman that I met—the mom of the young woman who was killed. And the President was asked—and those folks—remember, they came walking out of the—out of the woods, the fields, carrying torches, singing the same anti-Semitic bile that was sung in—in Germany in the thirties and accompanied by White supremacists in the Ku Klux Klan. And my predecessor was asked, "Well, what—what do you think?" He said there were very good people on both sides.

That's when I knew things had—had begun to change in a way that was—if we didn't move, it would be irreversible over a period of time.

And the reason I bother to say those things to you is, I think there's enormous prospects that we have as a consequence of the changes that you helped allow us to begin. Begin, not end. Begin. And many of those changes relate to—think about it: You know, we're told—I said I was running for three reasons, and a lot of you helped me last run.

I said I was running for three reasons. One, to restore the soul of this country. And that was to restore a sense of decency and honor and be able to talk with one another, be able to communicate back and forth with one another. The second reason was to—to build the economy from the middle out and the bottom up, because when that happens, you all do very well, the wealthy do very well, and the middle class has a shot. And the disaffection of the middle class

was growing, growing deeply. The percentage of the working class, high-school-educated population that voted Democrat was overwhelming. But they began to be left behind, not intentionally but it was the effect—that was a fact.

And think what we inherited when we came to office: an economy in disarray, a circumstance where we were the "America first" crowd. We weren't—we were just—we were disregarded, quite frankly, by the vast majority of our allies around the world.

And if you think I'm exaggerating, I'm not. The first meeting I attended as a U.S.—as the United States President was in England, in the southeast of France—southeast of England, for the G-7 meeting, all the—the seven largest economies. And I sat down. We were seven of us at a round table. And I sat down, and I said, "America is back." And the French President looked at me and he said: "For how long? For how long?"

And then the Chancellor of Germany looked at me—new to the job himself—looked at me, and he said—he said: "What would you think, Mr. President, if tomorrow you woke up and in the London Times the headline was, 'A thousand people broke into the Parliament, broke down the doors of the House of Commons, two bobbies were killed, and in the process, they tried to stop the transfer of power'? What would you think?"

And I hadn't thought of it that way before, and I don't know that any of you have. Imagine the impact it's had on the rest of the world. The United States, all of a sudden, January 6—I'm not trying to make a legal case, I'm just talking about the course of history. Imagine—imagine how we'd feel if that was the case.

And so I had two jobs you elected me to do. First was to reestablish American leadership in the world, not so we could beat our chests—because if we don't do it, no one gets it done. No one has the influence, the power, the consequence, or the history to get it done. Nobody. It doesn't mean we're better than anybody else. It means—but we are more unique than anybody—than another country.

You know, there's a—every other country in the world is based on their—their country, as a consequence of ethnicity, religion, geography—or something other than—other than geography. And we're the only country in the world that we're united based on an idea. That's what—and that's not hyperbole, that's a fact. Think about it. The only country organized based on an idea: that we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men and women are created equal, endowed by their Creator with certain rights, et cetera, et cetera.

We've never lived up to it, but we never walked away from it completely. And we've been the—we've been the linchpin that most democracies around the world look to to keep things moving. Madeleine Albright was right when she said we're the essential nation.

And so the point I'm trying to make here is that we had an obligation to try to reunite the world. I have spent, because of your help—I haven't been able—I've spent over now, they tell me, about 180 hours with European heads of state and allies, including the Japanese as well, who have come along—come along a big way. And in terms of pulling these countries together.

If you notice, Putin was certain when he—virtually certain when he invaded that he was going to split NATO, that NATO would never stay together. NATO is more united than it's ever been in an entire history of NATO, because we've worked together. And it's critically important, and that was the job that I had.

I'm going to say something outrageous. I think I know as much about American foreign policy as anybody living, including Dr. Kissinger. That's what I've done my whole life—for the last 270 years. *[Laughter]*

But the second point—the second thing was, we had to figure out how to unite the country. And the press, understandably—it's not a—I'm not criticizing the press when I say this—the press sort of made light of my saying we've got to unite America. How can a democracy function without the—without the consent of the Government, without cooperation? How does that work? I don't know any place that ever worked.

And so we spent a lot of time working on that. And when I said, Joe, that we're going to have bipartisanship, people looked at me like I was crazy. Because remember, they said: "Well, Biden was a real bipartisan leader when he was a Senator. And he was known for being able to—[inaudible]. But this is different." Well, guess what? We came up with a trillion-200-billion-dollar bipartisan infrastructure bill. It's going to change—[applause].

How in God's name—how in God's name—can we lead the world when we rank number—I think it's 16 in quality of infrastructure? How does that happen? It doesn't happen.

And we used to invest a significant amount of our—out of our entire GBT—GDP, we invested on average 2 percent of our GDP on research and development. I'm in the middle of Silicon Valley; you guys have forgotten more about this than most people around the world know. No, I'm not being—I'm not being solicitous. I'm being deadly earnest.

But we stopped doing it; 0.7 percent was the max we, in fact, invested in research and development in America. The United States of America. So that's why I came up with this legislation relating to how we're going to deal with the whole notion of dealing with investments.

And, for example, when we did the—when I put together a legislation—or proposed the legislation relating to dealing with computer chips, sources of—you know, we talked about—you all understood, but a vast majority of people in America don't understand what talking about source of product is. And we never talked about source before.

But, all of a sudden, we found ourselves—and we invented the computer chip. We used to have—25 years ago, we produced 40 percent of the chips, which are needed for virtually everything now, as you—I need not tell any of you. Well, guess what? We were down to 10 percent. How can that—how could that have happened?

So we changed the law. We invested significant amounts of money. We attracted \$450 billion—billion dollars in private sector investment in that. \$450 billion.

We're in a situation now where we have a—we have over—all the—look, \$300 billion just for building fabs, just—building chip factories now.

You know, there's a situation—[applause]—but the reason why I thought that was so important, beyond America's place in the world, was, you know, we kept losing those blue-collar workers.

You know, my dad used to say: "Joey a job is about a lot more than a paycheck. It's about your dignity. It's about being able to look your kid in the eye and say, 'Honey, it's going to be okay. We're going to make it.'"

We'll, they're stripped of their dignity. We started to decide to go where the labor was cheapest. We'd export jobs and import product. Well, there's a little law that existed since 1935. It says, "Buy America." Any money—any amount of money that Congress gives me, I can insist that it be purchased 100-percent American manufacturer. And consistent with the WTO. I can insist—but no one was willing to do it.

Well, guess what? You better be buying American and hiring Americans. And if you don't have the capacity, we make exceptions. We make exceptions.

But, folks, the point is that—guess what?—it's created thousands and thousands and thousands of jobs.

And, for example, the fab that Intel is building outside of Columbus, Ohio, that fab is employing 12,000 people: 5,000 people working in the fab when it's constructed and 7,000 people building it. Well, the 7,000 people are getting paid prevailing wage. And guess what? The 3,000—the 5,000 people that are going to work, they're going to have an average salary of an excess of \$120,000 a year. And you don't need a college degree.

All of a sudden, we're paying attention to blue-collar workers again. We're building the country from the middle out and the bottom up. And the wealthy are still doing very, very well.

We also did the same thing with regard to—we used to—you know, the VA can negotiate drug prices with pharmaceutical companies. Pharmaceutical companies aren't bad guys, just so they charge Americans more than anybody else. Not a joke.

The most significant medicine you need—prescription you need, you can go to Toronto, Canada; Paris, France; Madrid, Spain, and buy it cheaper from the same exact manufacturer as you buy it here.

So we said, because they can negotiate drug prices for veterans, we should be able to drug — negotiate drug prices for the—for Medicare. And guess what? It had the added advantage of reducing the debt by \$168 billion, just as it relates to one thing: insulin.

But here's my point: My point is, we did this—we created 13 million-plus jobs in the first 2 years, more than any President ever has in 4 years—in 4 years. We're now in a situation where—we're in a situation where we're able to do things that we couldn't do before.

And all—this entire period, all this spending—the "big-spending Biden"—guess what? We reduced the debt by \$1.7 trillion at the same time because of the ingenuity of the people in this room.

You know what I said when I was talking about that Intel project? S—is it SM? What—what—what's the outfit in South Korea?

*Audience member.* SMC.

*The President.* SMC. I met with the CEO of SMC in South Korea. And I said, "Why are you making this investment?"

And they're investing a significant amount of money—\$100 million they committed—in the "field of dreams," I call it, that thousand acres just off—just west of—of Columbus, Ohio.

And I said—you know, I asked him, "Why are you doing it?" And he said: "Because it's the safest investment we can make anywhere in the world, in the United States. And secondly, you have the best, finest workers."

Well, a lot of you probably are wondering why I'm so prounion. I'm pro- ——

*Audience member.* Woo-hoo!

*The President.* I'm—well, I'm prounion for a simple reason: what people underestimate—and I think—I've watched—I've met with the Business Roundtable. I've met with—and I—I asked them at the meeting we had with about 40 members of the Business Roundtable—I said, "You guys are wondering why I'm prounion." I said: "Let me ask you a question. When I was Vice President, I visit—I met with 352 of you out of the Fortune 500. And I asked you one thing: 'What do you need most?'"

You know what they said: an educated workforce. But you don't educate your workforce anymore. You don't invest the money in educating your workforce.

I come from the State of DuPont: Delaware. When I got elected 200 years ago, Delaware—DuPont was the eighth largest corporation in America. Every new enterprise they engaged in, they spent the money educating their own folks. Now the public gets to do it.

So why do you oppose my effort to invest more in education? And guess what? We've got support now, investing in education.

My generic point is the same. There's so much we can do. And we can do it without hurting anyone, just growing the economy.

And look, one of the things that happened—and I'll stop with this—one of the things that happened when the—let me back up so I say it this way. How many of you are not from this area?

*[At this point, a phone rang.]*

*[Laughter]* He's calling again, isn't he? He keeps calling me. I don't know why. *[Laughter]*

No, all kidding aside. How many you are not from Silicon Valley? And how many are you from smaller Midwestern towns or near? You know what happens when the factory closes. The soul of the community is lost. Not a joke. It's not only the loss of the jobs. It's the loss of their sense of self-worth—their sense of self-worth.

And so, one of the things we're doing now is we're—all these offices are investing throughout the Midwest, throughout the South—in the South.

Matter of fact, I'm going to show up for a major initiative and investment that's taking place in North Georgia, in the home of Marjorie Taylor Greene. *[Laughter]* It's a multibillion-dollar—it's a multi-multimillion-dollar project. Okay? But I'm going to be there with a spade to turn the dirt, because I said—and I mean it—I represent all Americans, whether they're Democrats or Republicans or whoever they are.

Because, look, we've got to unite the country. We've got to let people know what we're doing.

And so—any rate, there are a number of things—and one—one last thing I want to talk a little bit about, and then I'll hush up, because I was told that I'm not going to get to get questions from y'all.

A couple things. The environment: The existential threat to the United States and to humanity, not a joke, is environment—climate change, if we do nothing about it.

You know, it used to be a whole hell of a lot of people who thought that climate change was not an issue. Well, I have now flown over more burned-down forest in helicopters—a lot with your Governor, I might add—as a consequence of what's happened in—because of climate change than you can imagine. As much territory, since I've come into office, has burned to the ground that makes up the entire geography of the State of Maryland. That's how much has burned to the ground in the United States.

When I was out here about 3 years ago saying I worried about the Colorado River drying up, everybody looked at me like I was crazy. They looked at me like when I said I worried about Putin using tactical nuclear weapons.

It's real. But it's all doable. We can—we can do it. We can deal with it. We can make it happen. And we can create millions of good-paying jobs.

And what we can do when we do this—and, by the way, that—we're in a situation where, in terms of the—dealing with the environment, there is a broad political coalition that's beginning to form. The idea that I was able to, for example, get endorsements by every single major environmental group and, at the same time, every major union in America. I mean, seriously, if I had said that to you 2 years ago, what are the prospects of that?

But guess what? Everybody is kind of figuring it out. And by the way, the reason I push unions so much is they're not a bunch of thugs that are portrayed by many people. What they are is—they're blue-collar workers who have to go back to college, in effect, for 3 to 5 years in an apprenticeship, getting paid less in order to get the license to be able to be an electrician, get the license to be able to be—go down the list.

Anyway, I made a commitment. I made a commitment that my term as President of the United States, I was going to make sure that 30 percent of all of our lands and all of our waters under American jurisdiction would be conserved by the year 2030.

And we're on target to get it done. For example, in Cape Hale—Camp Hale in Colorado, 500—excuse me—50,000 acres. Boundary Waters in Minnesota, 225,000 acres. Spirit Mountain in Nevada, 5,000—500,000 acres. The Castner Range in Texas, over 608—600—excuse me—6,600 acres. Alaska, 25,000 acres I put in conservation: the Tongass Forest, Bristol Bay, the Atlantic—Arctic Ocean, and North Slope.

In addition to that, there are multiple, multiple miles around Hawaii that are off limits now to moving in terms of anything other than conservation. And so——

And, by the way, we're going to reduce emissions by 2030 in the world by—of the United States by 50 to 52 percent.

We put so much money into the power grid. How many of your fires out here have been because of those high-tension wires that have come down as a consequence of storms, tornadoes, et cetera?

The end result is the power grid—we're now getting—and your power companies and others around the world—around the country decided they're going to put it underground. It's five to six times more expensive, but, with our help, we're going to be able to get it done. It's going to save millions of acres of land.

We're in a situation where we also have—I was able to get, on the South Lawn—and this is not me just reminding people, but reminding what they really were about. I got everybody last—a year ago last summer on the South Lawn, all the auto companies in Detroit. And they agreed.

Mary Robinson [Barra; White House correction], the Chairman of the Board of General Motors, was saying that she was suing the State of California because you had a higher standard—emission standard than they did. And she said no State could have a standard lower than that of the United States Government.

Well, guess what? I got a phone call after that meeting with her and all these folks on the South Lawn, saying she dropped her suit and she committed to go all electric by 2035. Know what that means?

And this is why everybody was a little suspect, because I didn't announce my environmental plan immediately because I wanted to bring—be sure I was able to bring labor along, just because we needed to bring them along.

Guess what? The end result of that is the—for example, the Electrical Workers Union is going to be employ—building 500,000 EV stations throughout the country—500,000. And every bit of evidence shows that when you build the gas stations in the old days, back in the 1900s, and

the—guess what? You end up building the equivalent of a McDonald's. You end up building an equivalent of other—other vehicles—other stores. It builds economic growth.

And so—and by the way, the—we also have in my former—my original home State of Pennsylvania and northern West Virginia, in that part of the world, we have thousands of uncapped wells—gas and oil wells—that are just spewing methane.

Well, now we're paying the same people to dig them, to cap them. And it's going to have a profound impact on the environment in those areas.

And so I guess what I'm trying to say is, you know, a comprehensive tragedy—strategy here—and I'll end with this, on the environment—is that, in the real world, agriculture—60,000 farms now plant cover crops, which we were talking—I was talking to someone in here about Brazil—cover crops that absorb the pollution of the air, taking it into the ground—60,000.

We have, as I said, a circumstance where solar panel manufacturing has increased multifold. And what they want to get rid of—guess what?—you hear your neighbors who want—they get a tax credit for putting solar panels on the roof or buying certain electric material—excuse me—certain products that, in fact, are—don't generate as much energy intake—windows and doors, less air conditioning or heat escaping. It's having a profound impact on the consumption of energy.

We're also—heavy industry companies are investing billions of dollars in clean construction materials, like clean steel and clean cement. I thought I knew a fair amount about the environment, about so—I didn't realize until 8 years ago how much—how much is spewed into the air as a consequence of the production of cement and steel, how much goes into the air in terms of pollution.

Well, now we're making clean steel and clean cement. So it is having a profound impact.

I guess what I'm saying is that factories all over the country and Qcell solar factories are being built. And the end result of all of this is bipartisan budget deal with nearly a trillion dollars in deficit reduction on top of the \$1.7 trillion that I've already saved.

And we can do a lot more to lower costs. But, again, I'm beginning to bore myself.  
*[Laughter]*

But I guess what I'm trying to say is the—and I'll end with this—the gigantic issues of the day—what are the things that are going to be consequential to our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren? Whether they have clean air to breathe. Whether there's a world in which it's more likely that it's status quo ante, in terms of peace sustained, or there's war. Which is it? And I think we know the answer.

And I think we're on the trail to making sure that we can do both: have a safer world because of America's engagement in a way that it has in the past—in the distant past of now—as well as making sure that we have an economy that benefits everyone, because there's nothing worse than denying somebody who's busting their neck the dignity of their job.

At any rate, I'm going to hush up. Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:39 p.m. at the residence of Steve Westly and his wife Anita Yu. In his remarks, he referred to Christina and Matthew Westly, children of Mr. Westly and Ms. Yu; Rep. Anna G. Eshoo; Joseph W. Cotchett, founding partner, Cotchett, Pitre, and McCarthy, LLP; former Presidents Barack Obama and Donald J. Trump; former President Hu Jintao and President Xi Jinping of China; Marie Heaney, wife of Irish poet Seamus Heaney; Susan Bro, mother of Heather D. Heyer, who was killed during the vehicular attack in Charlottesville, VA, on August 12, 2017; President Emmanuel Macron of France; Chancellor Olaf Scholz of Germany; President



Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia; former Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger; Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene; and Gov. Gavin C. Newsom of California. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 20. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

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