

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023

Remarks on Broadband Infrastructure Improvement Efforts and an Exchange With Reporters

June 26, 2023

The President. Please. Thank you. Thank you. Please. Thank you.

Although I like the fact Joe Manchin is standing all this time. [*Laughter*] He's a friend. Hi, Joe Joe. How are you, pal?

Sen. Joseph A. Manchin III. Fine.

Situation in Russia/Ukraine

Before I begin, let me say a few words about the events in Russia. And excuse me, I'm a little—I have an allergy.

[*At this point, the President cleared his throat.*]

The situation began to develop as it did—I directed my national security team to monitor it closely and to report to me hour by hour. I instructed them to prepare for a range of scenarios.

I also convened our key allies on a Zoom call to make sure we were all on the same page. It's critical that we're in—coordinated in our response and coordinated in what—to anticipate. We agree—they agreed with me that we had to make sure we gave Putin no excuse—let me emphasize—we gave Putin no excuse to blame this on the West or to blame this on NATO.

We made clear that we were not involved. We had nothing to do with it. This was part of a struggle within the Russian system.

I also talked at length with President Zelenskyy of Ukraine. I'll be keeping in contact with him. I may be speaking with him later today or earlier tomorrow morning to make sure we continue to remain on the same page.

I told him that no matter what happened in Russia—let me say it again—no matter what happened in Russia, we, the United States, would continue to support Ukraine's defense and its sovereignty and its territorial integrity. He and I agreed to follow up and stay in constant contact.

I'm also in constant contact with our allies to maintain our coordination. I'll be speaking with a head of state right after this meeting today and making sure we're on the same page. I didn't get a chance to speak with one head of state yesterday.

We're going to keep assessing the fallout of this weekend's events and the implications for Russia and Ukraine, but it's still too early to reach a definitive conclusion about where this is going. The ultimate outcome of all this remains to be seen.

But no matter what comes next, I will keep making sure that our allies and our partners are closely aligned in how we are reading and responding to the situation. It's important we stay completely coordinated.

Broadband Infrastructure Improvement Efforts

And now I'd like to turn to today's announcement and begin by asking a question: Did you lay all that cable? [*Laughter*] She's a Wonder Woman. [*Laughter*] I was watching in the other room. But I didn't realize—I didn't bring along all the cable—I—you know, the empty spools. [*Laughter*] You're incredible. Thank you.

Look, I want to thank you, Jeff, for taking the time, and thank you for the introduction. There you are.

And I want to thank Kamala, who is there for every single important thing we do, and I'm not sure how we'd do it without her.

Two years ago, I asked her to lead an effort into high-speed internet, and she's been doing an incredible job since then.

So is Gina—Gina Raimondo, our Commerce Secretary. And Shalanda Young, who is a jack of all trades, sitting here with our Office of Management and Budget. She's played a major role along with Mitch Landrieu, in our—on our Infrastructure Coordinator.

And I want to thank—and I mean it sincerely—Joe Manchin of West Virginia, who is here with us today as well.

And thank you to the leaders of State and local governments, labor unions, Tribal organizations, and telecom companies.

Folks, we're talking today about a major investment that we're making in affordable, high-speed internet all across the country. As we started down, I turned to Jeff, and I said, "You know, this may be—I wonder if President Roosevelt felt a little like this as he talked about the electrification of our farmlands." I mean, think about it. This is—it's almost similar.

The—but to put in context, let's remember where we were 2½ years ago. The pandemic was raging. The economy was reeling. And the problems we were facing started a lot earlier than that.

For decades—for decades—and the middle class was hollowed out. Too many good-paying manufacturing jobs moved overseas. Public investment was slashed. Core sources of our economic strength, like infrastructure, manufacturing, and innovation, were also hollowed out.

All that is a result of a failed economic policy that I call trickle-down economics—it was called "trickle-down economics" as well—a belief that we should give tax cuts to the wealthy and big corporations and expect it to trickle down to everyone else, benefit across the board.

I ran for President with a fundamentally different vision: to build the economy from the middle out and the bottom up instead of the top down; to grow the economy by educating and empowering workers, by promoting competition to support small businesses, and investing in ourselves again for the first time in a long time. And that's what today's announcement is all about.

You know, what we're doing is, as I said, not unlike what Franklin Delano Roosevelt did when he brought electricity to nearly every American home and farm in our Nation. Today Kamala and I are making an equally historic investment to connect everyone in America—everyone in America to high-speed internet by—and affordable high-speed internet—by 2030.

It's the biggest investment in high-speed internet ever, because for today's economy to work for everyone, internet access is just as important as electricity was or water or other basic services. Think of the parents and students sitting outside of McDonald's or outside your office to be able to get on the internet, in a parking lot just so their child can go online to do their homework.

We just heard from Jeff who has to drive his kids all over town to find a good internet connection. But he's not alone in that; there are thousands of Americans doing the same thing. Or small-business owners who are not able to reach more customers; or seniors unable to talk to their doctor through telemedicine.

For around 24 million Americans across this country, there is no high-speed internet. And for millions more, their internet connection is limited or unreliable. High-speed internet isn't a luxury anymore, it's become an absolute necessity. That's why we acted as soon as we did—as soon as we came to office—with the American Rescue Plan.

It included \$25 billion—\$25 billion—for high-speed internet in places where it was out of reach, for schools and libraries to help students connect to the internet if they couldn't do it at home.

After that, we signed the bipartisan infrastructure law, a once-in-a-generation investment to rebuild roads, bridges, ports, airports, and deliver water and high-speed internet to every American. And again, Joe, thank you for your help on that.

To date, over 35,000 projects are either funded or already underway across the country thanks to that law. This includes hundreds of high-speed internet projects in rural and Tribal communities.

But—but, but, but—it's not enough to have access. You need affordability in addition to access. That's why we worked with internet service providers to bring down prices for Americans struggling with internet payments. It's called the Affordable Connectivity Program. It's helping 19 million families save around \$30 a month on their internet bills, and some save a lot more.

These savings matters in homes like the one I grew up in. That's money that can go for groceries, for the electric bill, for other things and other necessities.

Kamala has traveled across the country, working with State and local officials, to make sure people know about this program. And several groups and companies here today have helped millions of Americans sign up through the "Online For All" campaign. "Online For All" campaign.

Now, we're working with Congress to extend the—this bipartisan program.

For folks looking for an affordable internet plan—just go to getinternet.gov—getinternet.gov.

And today we're taking another big step toward internet for all. We're announcing over \$40 billion to be distributed to 50 States, Washington, DC, and territories to deliver high-speed internet in places where there's neither service or it's too slow.

And, folks, it includes rural communities like Appalachia, towns that Joe represents. It includes Tribal lands from Alaska to the Dakotas, coastal towns from Hawaii to the Pacific Northwest. It also includes suburban communities, even cities, neighborhoods, and—where there's a lot of people—you think it's automatic, but some still have to use dial-up connections to get online.

The funding for each State and Territory is based on their specific needs, how many of their residents currently lack internet access, and what it will cost to provide that access. With this funding, along with other Federal investments, we're going to be able to connect every person in America to reliable high-speed internet by 2030.

I promised to be a President for all Americans, whether or not they voted for me or whether or not they voted for these laws. These investments will help all Americans. We're not going to leave anyone behind.

Don't just take it from me. I've gotten letters and e-mails from across the country from people who are thrilled that after so many years for waiting, they're finally going to get high-speed internet.

A woman named Beth wrote me from Iowa. She lives in a valley that's a dead zone to cell—to cell reception. She's also gotten internet via satellite, which goes out when it rains or snows. She can't get emergency alerts. Even in good weather, it's spotty.

Then, last year, a local telecom company with just 13 employees sent Beth a postcard. They had received funding from the American Rescue Plan. Now they were installing fiber optic cable for homes like hers in the valley.

And here's what she wrote to me, and I quote, "You can imagine my joy." She called them right away. And the next day, they sent someone out to survey her yard. As Beth wrote, "This is the best thing that has happened to rural America since the Rural Electrification Act brought electricity to farms in the thirties and forties." End of quote.

Folks—plus, this investment means something else as well: good-paying jobs. Good-paying jobs. Just ask the folks at the IBEW or the Communication Workers or the Laborers Union. They're putting thousands of people to work laying fiber optic cable across America.

And the cable will be made in America. Let me say that again: The cable is going to be made in America. And that also means good-paying manufacturing jobs. It matters.

Folks, here's the bottom line. By investing in America, we are delivering results. More than 13 million jobs created since I took office. Nearly 800,000 manufacturing jobs. As all—a lot of folks are tired of hearing me say it: Where in God's name is it written that we can't be the leading manufacturer in the world again? Where is that written?

You know, since I've been in office, we've attracted \$490 billion—\$490 billion—in private investment in new manufacturing like semiconductors, electric vehicles, batteries, fiber optic cable and we're talking about—that we're talking about here today.

More people are starting small businesses than ever. And everyone who applies for a small-business line is a sign of hope.

All told, this is the strongest, fastest economic growth anywhere in the world—in the world. Jobs are back. Manufacturing is back.

And in many places that have been left behind, pride is coming back as well.

You know, a lot of us lived in communities where they had thriving manufacturing bases and, seeking cheaper jobs, moved overseas. Not only did you lose the jobs, but guess what happened? You lost pride in that neighborhood—that neighborhood—that you came from. Everybody knew they worked at the steel mill. They worked at their—they worked whatever it was. In my case, it was coal mines and then steel.

And, folks, let me close with this. Connecting everyone to America—in America to affordable, reliable high-speed internet is a bold goal, but we're a great nation. Especially one as vast and geographically diverse as ours, it's even bolder.

You know, we are all well on our way. We're just going to have to keep it going.

And, as it was mentioned earlier, just remember, it's never been a good idea to bet against America. And let's remember who we are. We're the United States of America. There is nothing beyond our capacity.

May God bless you all, and may God protect our troops. Thank you, thank you, thank you for coming.

R. Hunter Biden

Q. Mr. President, did you—did you lie about never speaking with Hunter about his business deals? Did you lie about never speaking with Hunter about his business deals, sir?

The President. No.

Q. Have you ever spoken with——

Q. Mr. President, had Putin been weakened?

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:13 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Vladimirovich Putin of Russia; Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni of Italy; Jeff Say, manager of community engagement, University of Virginia Health Culpeper Medical Center; Vice President Kamala D. Harris; and Director of Management and Budget Shalanda D. Young.

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