

Remarks at a Campaign Reception in New York City

June 29, 2023

Thank you. Thanks. Thank you very much. I'm not the essential man, but I represent the essential company—country.

You know, remember Madeleine Albright talked about America being the essential country, the—America having to lead the world? I spent a lot of my time in foreign policy as a Senator and then as Vice President. And she was more right than I thought she was—that, you know, when I walk into a room, it's not Joe Biden walking into a room. It's the United States of America walking into a room.

And it has—no, I mean this sincerely. It surprised me how the rest of the world, in particular our allies—and not even our allies—look at the United States. They look at it like: We're in the house.

By the way, I've got to tell you, I had lunch with Barack the other day. And I was kidding him; I said, "Every time I hear"—he's helping out a lot—I said, "Every time I hear 'Hail to the Chief,' I turn around and look for you, wondering where the hell you are." *[Laughter]* No, you think I'm kidding. I'm not. Secret Service looks at me sometimes like: "That's you. Come on out." *[Laughter]*

But, folks, there's—there's so much at stake. And I want to start by saying—it's not hyperbole—you're the reason why I've been able to get anything done on climate. Not a joke. Not a joke. You've held the country together in ways that we were ready to walk—

The first thing I did when I got elected was rejoin the Paris accord. First act we've—we took. And the impact it had on other nations was like, "Whoa." Not "Joe Biden is back." "America's back in the deal."

But you all have invested so much of your fortune, so much of your—of this—of the foundation you have in making sure that everybody understands this is the existential threat to humanity. It is the existential threat. Not a joke. 1.5 degrees Celsius, 19—205. We're in trouble if we get it—I mean, we're in real trouble. It's not going to turn this—for example, I was telling a couple of you earlier in the rope line—I'm sorry I spent so much time talking in the rope line, holding people up.

But you know, I was talking about how 2 years now—it'll be 3 years this Christmas—I was in Geneva trying to work out something with Putin, before he invaded Ukraine, on space-based weapons and trying to get a new negotiation going.

And he said—and I said: "There's a lot we can work on. We can work on climate." He said, "We don't have a problem with"—he essentially said, "We don't have a problem with climate in Russia." I said: "You've got eight time zones. The permafrost along the—along the Arctic Circle is melting. More methane is coming out of there than anywhere in the world. And guess what? It's not going to refreeze. You've got a real problem."

The point is that just getting people to realize that—what is at stake. And you've done it.

And you've done it—the reason I'm standing here is in large part because of you all. Not a joke. I'm not being solicitous. I got a lot of help. I got a lot of help to get elected—a lot of people. But no group of people have been more engaged with me in terms of providing me the means and the judgment and the insight, like we were talking about what you're about to do.

I mean, it—there's just enormous possibilities, and I'm optimistic. I'm genuinely optimistic.

I just want to tick off a few things, and then I'll go to questions, because I don't want to take too much time talking about things you may not be interested in.

You know, first of all, you know, I—when I said—when I ran, I said I wanted to—I was running for three reasons. One, to restore the soul of this country. By that, I mean the value system we had, the decency, honor. I mean, think of the way we talk about—to each other now. I mean, it's embarrassing, in front of our children and our grandchildren. Not "we"—the public dialogue. The things that are said. I mean, the language used. It's just—it just—it's degrading. And the rest of the world looks at us and goes, "Whoa, what's going on?"

The first meeting I had after I became—elected President, I went to—the G-7 was meeting in—outside of London, along the coast. And I sat down. And with the press here, I'm not going to say who the people were. But I sat down with the other major leaders of NATO and Europe. And when—I said, "America is back." And one of the leading—CEO—not CEOs—Presidents of a country looked at me, and he said: "For how long? For how long?" Not a joke.

And I looked at him. And before I could answer, another leader from one of the major four countries in the world looked to me and said: "Mr. President, what would you say if tomorrow we picked up the London Times and you've read that there was a circumstance where a thousand people broke down the doors of the House of Commons, killed two bobbies, and went in and tried to stop the election of a Prime Minister? What would you think?" And it made me realize how profound what's happening here in the United States is to the rest of the world, how the—and what—what would we think? What the hell would we think?

And so one of the things that I was able to—I don't want to say "I"—we were able to do was up the ante on climate across the board from all these—with all these countries and increase the number of countries participating.

Matter of fact, I have a—I don't want to get her in trouble—but a granddaughter working on this full time—working for one of the major institutions, traveling the world dealing with the G-7—these meetings on climate.

And there is an awakening. Let me put it this way: Since I got elected President, I've been in more helicopter rides with Governors from around the country—from Arizona, New Mexico, up to Washington State, to Idaho, all the way into Montana and down into—and more—more timber has burned to the ground because of climate change, because of the—of the winds and the storms knocking down high-tension wires and many other things, than makes up the entire square feet of the State of Maryland. That's how much has burned to the ground—to the ground.

And so, you know, all of a sudden, when you look out here and you can barely see a building across the lake—you know, sometimes it's going to—people are beginning to—there's no longer a debate, "Is there global warming?" "Is there global warming?"

There's a selfishness saying, "I don't—notwithstanding global warming, we still want to pollute."

I mean, take a look at Texas. Texas has the highest percentage—I think it still does—of wind and solar. I think it may—I won't—I won't—I don't want to misstate, but a significant percentage of their energy is produced by wind and solar. But guess what? The Governor is trying to cut it back because the oil industry doesn't like it.

I mean—anyway. So I want to just quickly list the things we've been working on and then talk about whatever you want to talk about.

First of all, when I ran, I said we can—you know, we can get bipartisan things done. The press understandably said: "You used to be able to do that, Joe. You were known for that."

George Mitchell's friend is here. And George may—he gave me an award when I was a Senator, saying I got more done because I could have relations across the aisle with people and get things done. But they were the good old days. That's gone.

Yet we were able to get some bipartisan things done. Not with a big number, but just enough Republicans to join us. Some, we had to do it all ourselves.

But as I said, in addition to rejoining the Paris climate treaty, we passed the Inflation Reform [Reduction; White House correction] Act, the largest investment in the history of the world: \$369 billion for climate—\$369 billion. And remember they got mad I didn't get \$500 billion?

Well, it cuts pollution by 1 billion tons, cuts emissions by 50 percent by 2030, and—and tax credits for EVs, solar, wind, and batteries, heat pumps, hydrogen. A lot of new—and there's a lot of research going on. A lot of you are funding the research. There are so many possibilities we have.

We passed the infrastructure law with 500,000 EV chargers. And they're going to—500,000. They can—and guess what? It's going to create a—we're capping 100,000 wells in the United States—100,000.

Remember all the heat about what was going on in West Virginia and—and south—west—Western Pennsylvania? Well, these same guys who dug those wells—guess what?—they're getting paid to cap them. And it's working.

And we're rebuilding. And we're putting a new environmental plant where that old steel plant used to be in—in Wharton, West Virginia.

Fuel economy rules. We cut emissions in half by 30—by 2032.

Brought unions—enviros—and enviros together. Did you ever think that would happen?

But I know some of you got worried about me after—when—about 2 months, when I hadn't announced my environmental stuff. You're calling, "Joe, what the hell is going on?" I said, "I'm meeting with the union guys." Because—no, I'm serious, because I was convinced that if they knew what was coming, their future lay with the environmental issues. That's how it—and by the way, the IBEW was the first one to stand up when I said: "Hey, look, what are you doing? You're—you're going to be out of work. You're not—you're going to have trouble."

But guess what? And we also—a couple of you were down on the South Lawn when I had all the automobile manufacturers together.

I remember the General Motors chairman had—was suing the State of California for having a higher standard than the Federal standards, saying that was unconstitutional and you couldn't have a higher standard. Well, guess what? A week and a half later, I got a call. She said: "I'm dropping the suit in California, and I'm going to go all electric. All electric."

And we started—and everybody started that route. And it worked. It's beginning to work. I mean, it's not finished yet by a long shot. But the point is, it's working. It's moving. And guess what? They all of a sudden figured out that's going to create all these jobs for them.

And by the way, these EV stations are going to be—these—you know, all across America. Electric vehicles—they're going to—they're going to put in 500,000 of these across the country. So you can get in your car, your electric vehicle, and go, just like an old gas station.

And that—and it's generating thousands of jobs. It will generate thousands more jobs in those communities. When you have a—when you—when they were building gas stations

originally, no one wanted one in their neighborhood because they had thousand-gallon tanks in—back in the twenties and thirties.

Guess what? What happens when you build a gas station? You end up building a drugstore. You end up building a hotdog stand. I mean, it generates economic growth. And a lot of—and a lot of communities have been left behind big time and—because of what—shipping jobs overseas and—anyway.

So the third thing is—the last thing is that solar panel manufacturing is up eight times. You—a lot of you funded it. Solar energy and wind energy is now—now cheaper—cheaper—cheaper than fossil fuels. Cheaper to—no—and by the way, no one is going to bid on a coal-fired plant again. You know why? It's not—it makes no sense. Economically makes no sense anymore.

The biggest problem we had—and I need your help on this continually—is when I went up in—I guess it was Rhode Island—closing down the largest coal-fired plant in the country. Because what we found out was—and with the help of a lot of my staff—and they are good staff and environmentally conscious and smart—is that we—when Barack and I came up with the economic plan on—on the environment and energy and electric and dealing with wind and solar, we thought we could transmit it on the high power lines.

Well, not in my neighborhood. Even people that lived in your neighborhood didn't like it, and whether it was in—out in the—sound or wherever it was, because—and Trump didn't like it because it killed—it "caused cancer."

[At this point, the President made the sign of the cross.]

[Laughter] But all kidding aside, think about it. Think about what has happened since then. We figured out that if you close down those plants, you don't take down high-tension wires, you put the wind—you connect the wind or the solar to that facility.

So—and now what you're—a lot of you are helping doing: If we put these wires underground, it makes a—it costs six times as much, but it also is environmentally a hell of a lot more sound. Costs more. We're trying to figure out how to fund that as well.

But the point is, we're making significant progress. And the—and the EV sales are three times—up three times. And we've conserved—I announced when I got elected—and I'll stop with this—that my goal was to conserve 30 percent of all the land and all the waters within the jurisdiction of the United States of America and to do that by 2035—excuse me—by 2030.

So far, we're on our way. Now, we've got more to do in Alaska, and I need your help there. But we've—25 million acres is now in conservation in Alaska. Spirit Mountain, 500,000 acres—500,000 acres. The Pacific Islands, I'm going to—we're going to make sure that 770,000 square miles around Hawaii, off limits. Cut back on drilling in many places.

But the generic point is: There's a lot going on, and a lot going on in hydrogen. A lot going on in other alternatives. And it's because of you guys. And I'm not being solicitous. It really genuinely is.

You think it—I know you don't like to think about this way, but think if you all dropped out. Where the hell would we be? Not a joke.

You're funding the private enterprises you do in terms of environment, as well as making sure that you not only elect somebody like me, who cares about the environment, but a Congress—a Congress—a Congress. I need the Congress. I need the Senate. And we're going to do it. We're going to win back the House with your help. And we're going to—it's going to be hard to keep it in the Senate, but we're going to do that as well.

So I'm going on too much. I apologize. But there's an enormous—enormous—enormous—and the one reason why I am so optimistic is because of the people between the ages of 17 and 30. They get it. They understand. They are the impetus—the political impetus: the kids, the young people, the young voters.

I go into a grade school or high school; what do they want to talk about? The environment. They get it. They get it.

So there's a lot—a lot—we can do, and I'm optimistic we're going to continue to do it with your help.

I'm going to hush up, as my mother would say, and take any questions you have.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:30 p.m. at the residence of Elizabeth "Lise" Strickler and Mark T. Gallogly. In his remarks, he referred to former Presidents Barack Obama and President Donald J. Trump; President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia; Gov. Gregory W. Abbott of Texas; former Sen. George J. Mitchell; and Mary T. Barra, chairman and chief executive officer, General Motors Co. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

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