

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023

Remarks in Northfield, Minnesota

November 1, 2023

The President. Hello, hello, hello! Well, folks, please take a seat if you have one. *[Laughter]* I said that some time ago—"take a seat"—and there weren't any seats in the room. And they said: "See? That Biden, he doesn't even know there's no seats." *[Laughter]*

Situations in Gaza and Israel/U.S. Diplomatic Efforts

At any rate, before I start today, I would like to say a few words about the latest developments in the Gaza Strip in Israel.

Today, thanks to concerted American leadership, we're in a situation where safe passage for wounded Palestinians and foreign nationals to exit Gaza has started. American citizens were able to exit today as part of the first group of probably over a thousand. We'll see more of this process going on in the coming days.

We're working nonstop to get Americans out of Gaza as soon and as safely as possible. This is the result of intense and urgent American diplomacy with our partners in the region. I personally spent a lot of time speaking with the Prime Minister, Netanyahu, of Israel and President Sisi of Egypt and others to make sure that we could open this access for people to get out.

I want to thank our partners in the region and particularly Qatar, who have worked so closely with us to support negotiations to facilitate the departure of these citizens.

At the same time, we're continuing working to significantly step up the flow of critical humanitarian assistance into Gaza. The number of trucks entering Gaza continues to increase significantly, but we still have a long way to go.

The United States is going to continue to drive humanitarian support for innocent people in Gaza who need help. And they do need help.

We're going to continue to affirm that Israel has the right to and responsibility to defend its citizens from terror, and it needs to do so in a manner, though, that's consistent with international and humanitarian law that prioritizes the protection of citizens.

We've all seen the devastating images from Gaza: Palestinian children crying out for lost parents, parents reasoning and writing their children's names on their hands and legs to be identified if the worst happens.

[At this point, a child in the audience cried out.]

It's okay. Kids are allowed to do that with me. *[Laughter]* Don't worry about it. All right? I don't blame her. Is it a him or her?

Audience member. Her!

The President. I don't blame her. *[Laughter]*

Look, the loss of every innocent life is a tragedy.

We grieve for those deaths and continue to grieve for the Israeli children and mothers who were brutally slaughtered by Hamas terrorists and also continue to hold in our hearts the hundreds of families and loved ones, including small children and elderly grandparents, including American citizens, being held hostage.

My administration continues to work around the clock to reunite those families. We're not going to give up. Period. *[Applause]* We're not going to give up. And I am optimistic. But then, I am an optimist.

National Economy

Folks, now I want to thank Brad for that introduction. And Brad said he wasn't sure what a good speaker was. He can speak a hell of a lot better than I can farm.

And I'm glad to be accompanied by—I want to talk about my administration and its investment in rural America. But I also want to thank Governor Vilsack—former Governor Vilsack, now the Secretary of Agriculture.

Look, creating opportunities for family farmers and the Tribal communities across the country is what we're trying to do here.

And, Tim—and, Governor Walz—Governor, it's a great—thank you for the great work and the partnership and what you're doing here in Minnesota.

And Mayor Pownell—Rhonda? Where's Rhonda, the mayor? There you are, Mayor. Thank you for being here as well. I appreciate it. And thank you for the passport into the city. *[Laughter]* I don't get many passports these days. *[Laughter]*

Over the past 40 years or so, we've had a practice in America—an economic practice called trickle-down economics, and it hit rural America especially hard. It hollowed out Main Street, telling farmers the only path to success was to get big or get out. Tax cuts for big corporations encouraged companies to grow bigger and bigger, move jobs and production overseas for cheaper labor, and undercut local small businesses.

Meat-producing companies and the retail grocery chains consolidated, leaving farmers with [and; White House correction] ranchers with few choices about where to sell their products, reducing their bargaining power. Corporations that sell seed, fertilizer, and even farm equipment used their outsized market power to change farmers and charge them and ranchers unfair prices.

You know, in part because of these conditions, over the past four decades, we lost over 400,000 farms in America—400,000—over 141 [140; White House correction] million acres of farmland. And that's an area roughly equal to the size of Minnesota, North and South Dakota combined—the three.

Facing higher costs and earning less, family farms have struggled to make it work—to make the math work, and the promise of keeping the farm in the family is slipping out of reach for so many across America. And when family farms go by the wayside, small businesses, hospitals, schools that support them, they suffer as well in the community.

And, as a result, farmers and ranchers and rural business owners, including scores of young people, have to leave home in search of good-paying jobs and a chance at the American Dream.

All over rural America, young people are saying to their parents: "Can I live here anymore? I can't do it because I can't find a job. You gave me an education, but there's nothing for me here. I've got to leave." I came to office determined to change that.

And, by the way, parenthetically, I come from a State that people think is all either manufacturing, DuPont—all the—all like those kind—but it's also a \$4 billion industry in agriculture in the Delmarva Peninsula, almost all chickens and soybeans. But I watched what happened in my community. I watched what happened in—all across America.

Now, we're growing an economy from the middle out and bottom up, instead of the top down. And, folks, there's a practical reason for that. When the middle class does well, the poor have a way up, and the wealthy still do very well. It's—everybody does better.

When rural America does well, when Indian Country does well, we all do well.

And folks in the press have been calling my plan "Bidenomics." Well, it's about investing in all of America—all of America—including rural America. It's about making things in rural America again.

And that's exactly what the historic legislation we passed has done: creating new and better markets and new income streams so that generations of rural Americans can begin to thrive again.

For example, through our clean energy initiatives contained in the Inflation Reduction Act, we're investing nearly \$20 billion—\$20 billion; the money is there—to help farmers and ranchers tackle climate crisis through climate-smart agriculture and cover crops, nutrient management, prescribed—[inaudible]—and sorting carbon in the soil—storing in the soil, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, while improving overall health of the soil and the water.

And instead of doing what they have to do now, depending on one income stream and being at the mercy of the commodity markets and the big corporations, under our plan, farmers can diversify and earn additional income just selling into the local markets. You know, it's—it matters.

Let me give you an example. When a farmer sells his commodities normally, you have to go through the grocery store, and the farmers gets about 18 cents for every Federal dollar—or, excuse me, every dollar they have. Sometimes, you get less than that.

Some—but when a farmer sells locally, the farmers can get anything from 50 to 75 cents for their same exact product, in addition to producing renewable energy and taking advantage of the bioeconomy.

The result of family farms that were barely making ends meet used these funds we've provided to improve their bottom line after being squeezed by big corporations for so long.

Look, we're also promoting competition in agricultural markets.

For too long, farmers like Brad and his brother and his dad and mom have had to sell their hogs—not just a handful of meat processors—there was only a handful that existed—outsized control over the industry, and they set the prices as well.

Well, let me put this in—this perspective to you. Just four big corporations control more than half the market in beef, pork, and poultry. And because so few companies control so much of the market, if one of those processing plants goes off line, it can cause massive supply chain disruptions, slowing production, and cost farmers big.

It happened to Brad when processing plants shut down during the pandemic, and he had to rely on social media to sell his hogs.

Folks, look, there's something wrong when just 7 percent of the American farms get nearly 90 percent—7 percent get 90 percent of the farm income, and most farmers rely on jobs off the farm to be able to make ends meet on the farm.

When I took office, I decided to invest a billion dollars through the American Rescue Plan in small and medium-sized independent meat processors to expand their capacity.

And to folks who don't understand that like the people here do, that's—what happens is, it improves competition. More people are competing for the products, so farmers get to price—a fair price for their product. It's about basic fairness.

Right now the farmers and ranchers who actually grow the food, only to see a small percentage of the profit when the food is sold. So when—so we're strengthening local food systems so rural communities have better access to affordable, locally grown food, so the farmers who provide the food actually benefit from it.

Through the bipartisan infrastructure law—it's a fancy name, but it's about rebuilding America's bridges, roads, highways, et cetera—we're making the most substantial investment since President Eisenhower's rural American—since—in rural America since Eisenhower's highway plan—roads, bridges, inland waterways, ports, regional airports, clean water, high-speed internet.

We're building affordable high-speed internet for every household. Over 230,000 Minnesotans' households are already saving \$30 or more per month on their internet bills through the Affordable Connectivity Program.

But I'm going to need your help. That program is running out of funds. I sent Congress a request for more funding, and they should act now—act on it now.

We're also investing—[applause]. We're also investing over \$50 million to bring high-speed internet to Tribal communities here in Minnesota alone.

We're also making the largest investment in rural electrification since FDR, providing grants and loans to rural electric co-ops to supply rural communities with affordable, reliable clean energy as well.

Today I'm proud to announce new funding that will go directly to rural communities: \$1 billion to fix aging critical rural infrastructure, like electric water—like electricity, water—waste water systems that haven't been replaced in decades.

We're investing millions in building new bioeconomy and—with homegrown biofuels, which will contribute nearly \$3 billion to Minnesota's economy over—every year as it saves a—as an important market for family farms to be able to do this.

And, folks, this is just a start. Today I'm announcing we're investing nearly \$2 billion to help more farmers adopt practices to fight climate change and earn new income. We're investing \$145 million for farmers and rural communities to install clean energy technologies, like solar panels, and lowering electric bills; an additional \$274 million will expand rural high-speed internet even further.

Two billion to support communities in our Rural Partners Network, which puts Federal employees on the ground to help rural communities take advantage of the Federal resources—let them know what they are and where they are.

We're also making rural America—we're also making sure rural America can compete with clean energy manufacturing jobs of the future. Earlier this year, I was in Minnesota, where, over a century, Cummins built diesel engines in heavy-duty trucks and power generators. But now, thanks to the legislation I signed, the tax credit for clean energy, Cummins is converting its facility to make essential components for producing clean hydrogen used for cleaner production of everything from cars to trucks to steel to cement to manufacturing. And it's going to create thousands of jobs.

And in places like Ohio and outside of Syracuse, New York, and all over the country—including in rural America—semiconductor companies are investing hundreds of billions of dollars—not a joke—hundreds of billions of dollars to bring chip production back home.

You know those—those little computer chips about the size of the tip of your little finger? We invented them in America. We made them more sophisticated. And we lost the ability to make them because we only had, now, 10 percent of the production.

I went to South Korea to meet with Samsung and other groups. And I said, "Hey, look, why don't you come and invest in America?" And guess what? The South Korean company came along, and they're going to invest \$200 million. We have over—or excuse me, \$20 billion. We're going to invest over \$350 billion in building these chips.

And everything in our lives from cell phones to automobiles, refrigerators, the most sophisticated weapons systems rely on these.

I might add, the factory being used to produce these chips—they call them "fabs"—employ thousands of people. You know what the average salary in those factories is going to be? Over \$100,000 a year, and you don't need a college degree. That's a—that's the truth. All that means good jobs—good jobs—in rural America.

The bottom line is this: Instead of exporting jobs overseas for cheaper labor, now we're creating jobs here and expanding American products and selling them overseas. Folks, we're not only transforming rural communities, we're transforming our economy.

A year ago, experts said a recession was almost guaranteed. Remember—[inaudible]—"A recession is coming, a recession is coming." Well, guess what? Just last week, we learned the economy grew by nearly 5 percent the last quarter, proving the experts wrong.

Since I took office, we've created 13.9 million jobs since I was elected. We created more jobs in 2 years than any President has done in a 4-year term. And nearly 200,000 of those new jobs are right here in Minnesota—200,000.

Remember we were told we'd no longer be the manufacturing capital of the world? Well, guess what? We've created 815,000 manufacturing jobs, twice as many as the previous administration. Where does it say we can't be the manufacturing capital of the world? Where is that written?

The unemployment rate has stayed below 4 percent for 20 months in a row, the longest stretch in 50 years.

And inflation is coming down at the same time. It's down from 60 percent—it's down 60 percent since last summer. Core inflation is the lowest level in 2 years, and we have the lowest inflation of any major economy in the world.

Folks, all of this is no accident. It's Bidenomics.

And by the way, we've got more to do. We've got more to do.

We're creating good jobs in communities across rural America, including in places where [for; White House correction] decades factories that were open, that families worked at, got shut down. Towns were hollowed out; jobs moved overseas. Over the past few decades, these communities lost more than jobs. They lost their sense of dignity, opportunity, pride.

My plan is about investing in rural America. It's about something else as well. It's about restoring pride in the rural—to rural communities that have been left behind for far too long. No, you really have. It's not hyperbole.

For decades, families like Brad's sat around the kitchen table with their kids and grandkids worrying, wondering, "How can we keep the farm in the family?" Because of these investments we're making, family farms like this one will stay in the family, and children and grandchildren like Brad won't have to leave home to make a living.

And when Brad sits around the kitchen table with his 4-year-old son and 20-month-old daughter—she'll understand at all, right away—[laughter]—who are here today, he doesn't have to worry about if the farm is going to stay in the family if they want it to.

Folks, Bidenomics is just another way of saying "the American Dream."

Forty years ago, trickle-down economics limited the dream to those at the top. But I believe every American willing to work hard should be able to get a job, no matter where they live—in the heartland, in small towns—to raise their kids on a good paycheck and keep their roots where they grew up.

You know, my dad used to an expression. For real, he'd say—he said: "Joey"—I mean it sincerely—"a job's more than about a paycheck. It's about your dignity. It's about pride. It's about respect. It's about being able to look your kid in the eye and say, 'Honey, it's going to be okay,' and mean it." That's the American Dream. That's Bidenomics.

It's rooted in what's always worked best for the country: investing in America—investing in America—and investing in Americans, no matter where they live: in rural communities, Tribal communities, suburbs, or cities. Because I believe a President is supposed to represent all American people, not just some Americans.

Folks, here's the deal. It's never been a good bet to bet against the American people—never, never, never. I can honestly say I've never been more optimistic about America's future than I am today. We just have to remember who in God's name we are. We're the United States of America.

And think about this: We've always come out of every conflict we've gotten into—we've always—every problem we've had, stronger than when we went in. There is nothing beyond our capacity. Think about it. Anything we've ever set our mind to as a nation, we've never failed to succeed. Not a joke. Never failed to succeed.

Nothing is beyond our capacity when we do it together. So let's unite this country. Let's do it together.

Let's make sure that those who want to stay on the farm can stay as long as they want because they make a good, decent living.

God bless you all, and may God protect our troops.

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:09 p.m. at Dutch Creek Farms. In his remarks, he referred to Dutch Creek Farms owners Brad Kluver, his brother Rob, and their father Rusty and mother Nancy. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 2.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Northfield, MN.

Locations: Northfield, MN.

Names: Elsis, Abdelfattah Said; Kluver, Brad; Kluver, Nancy; Kluver, Rob; Kluver, Robert "Rusty"; Netanyahu, Benjamin; Pownell, Ronda; Vilsack, Thomas J.; Walz, Timothy J.

Subjects: Agricultural production, strengthening efforts; Agriculture, role in climate mitigation and carbon sequestration; Broadband and wireless technologies; Business competition and pricing, improvement efforts; Climate change; Critical infrastructure, strengthening efforts; Economic improvement; Egypt, President; Ethanol and biofuels; Food markets and prices; Gaza, conflict with Israel; Gaza, humanitarian situation; Gaza, safe passage for foreign nationals; Gaza, U.S. and Israeli hostages; Inflation; Infrastructure improvements; Israel, attacks by Hamas; Israel, Prime Minister; Job creation and growth; Manufacturing industry, domestic investment; Meat-

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