

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023

Remarks at a Campaign Reception in Chicago, Illinois

November 9, 2023

Hello, hello, hello. Please, take a seat if you have one. *[Laughter]*

Glen, thanks for that introduction. And, Ben, thanks for welcoming us into your business. Ben gave me a beautiful piece of glass that he had molded in—for my wife, and I'm going home a hero.

Folks—Governor Pritzker, you're still here, aren't you, pal? My buddy. The Governor is as responsible for my being behind this podium as anybody. He's helped me so much. I didn't even realize how much he helped until about a year after I got elected. But thank you, Gov. Appreciate it.

And look—Kamala and I are incredibly grateful to everyone who's here. And we're really looking forward to the convention here in Chicago next year. We really are.

Just a few days ago, despite all the predictions, except ours, Democrats had an incredible night once again, thanks to—the help of Governor Pritzker, who inspired a lot of support across the country.

And in Kentucky, a Democratic Governor was reelected after telling me on the phone and running on all the programs that were the Biden initiatives in the White House. And he's a good friend.

In Ohio, the right to choose became protected in the Ohio State Constitution, as it should.

In Virginia, the Republican Governor tried to control the State legislature, and he lost control of both the House and the Senate. Well, he got trounced, actually. *[Laughter]*

Look, on top of all that, the big wins in Pennsylvania for the—in—with the first Black woman elected mayor of Philadelphia.

By the way, I know the Bears are playing tonight. But I've got to tell you, I'm an Eagles fan, and for a simple—*[laughter]*—no, no—wait, wait—I married a Philly girl. *[Laughter]* And they are tough fans. If I didn't support the Eagles, I'd be sleeping alone. So I just want you to know. *[Laughter]*

But we also had a big win in Pennsylvania in the State Supreme Court. In Rhode Island, a young man, Gabe Amo, who worked in my administration, became the first Black Member of Congress from the State of Rhode Island.

And of course, at the start of the week, everyone was telling me that Governor Andy Beshear lost and the Republicans were going to win in Virginia, and the Constitution—the right to choose was going to go down the drain, and so on.

And by the way, I put on your seats—the—press have been talking about two polls about what great difficulty I'm in and—right now. If you take a look at that—and on your seats—and there were—at the same time, there are 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 other polls. In every one, we're winning, except for two we're tied.

The point is that the CNN and New York Times poll is the only thing you heard about. So your money is not wasted yet. *[Laughter]* I can still screw up, but we're not there yet. *[Laughter]*

Look, here's what's funny: Beshear won. Republicans in Virginia lost the House and the Senate. Ohio enshrined its constitutional right to choose. This sounds like a pretty good day to me.

But remember, they said the same thing when we said we were going to do well in the off-year election of 2022. Best of any—out—best any President has done in an off-year election. And we did very well.

But you turn on your TV coverage—the coverage is only of two polls. You don't see that over that same period of time were the eight polls that we're winning. And that's not just interesting, but it's, I think, accurate.

The truth is, what happened on Tuesday is not unusual. It's a continuation of what we saw, as I said, in 2020 and in 2022. The same pundits said the same thing. And the American people voted to protect our fundamental freedoms like the right to choose. They voted to protect our democracy. They voted against extremism of our opponents. And they voted for progress we've been making. They supported it.

And all—even the other two polls that they keep quoting with the bad numbers show that they overwhelmingly support the programs we've initiated—overwhelmingly support it.

And if you just listened to Governor Beshear the other night talking about the massive investments we're making in infrastructure, in the Brent Spence Bridge, the EV battery factories coming to Kentucky and other red States.

Democrats up and down the ticket ran on lower prescription drug costs, which I've been fighting for for 30 years, taking on Big Pharma to allow Medicare to negotiate drug prices. And finally, it got done. Seniors on Medicare who paid as much as 400 bucks a month for insulin for diabetes are now paying \$35 a month.

And we're also capping total out-of-cost [out-of-pocket; White House correction] drugs for seniors on Medicare at \$2,000 a year, no matter how expensive their drugs are for the year. They can cost—cancer drugs can cost up to \$14,000 a year, but the most they're going to have to pay is \$2,000 a year, because you can't afford anything beyond that.

Semiconductor factories are coming back to America—billions of dollars being invested in making chips in America again. You know, the—this—the record job creation.

We invented the chip, by the way. Remember when you start—everybody started understanding what "supply chain" meant, when, during the pandemic, you had factories closing in the Nation, and you couldn't get the factories—what we needed? Well, now we don't have to worry about that.

And by the way, that over—there's billions of dollars being invested by private sector in these factories. And they're building what they call these "fabs." They're like—look like great big football fields. Do you know what the average salary of those—in those fabs are? \$114,000 a year. And you don't need a college degree to have that job.

There's historically low unemployment.

Folks, this time—it's—this time, the Biden-Harris agenda has taken hold. And it's not only popular, people are voting on it. And people are winning elections on it over and over and over again.

And the press and pundits keep being surprised. They can be surprised as much as they want. But since I came off the sidelines to go toe to toe with Donald Trump, we haven't stopped winning and he hasn't stopped losing.

You remember when Trump told us he was going to win so much we'd get tired of winning? [Laughter] We just got tired of him, not winning. [Laughter] Let me tell you. The truth is, this guy can't get tired of losing.

Look, folks, the—when a Supreme Court majority that he appointed overturned *Roe v. Wade*, they—he—they practically dared the women in America to be heard. Remember what they said? And the—but—the women, if they want to change this in the States, they can. Well, the majority—a real quote, "Women are not without electoral—or political power." And I said at the time: They don't have a clue about the power of women in America. Not a clue.

And I said, "They're about to find out." And they did in Kansas midterms, in Ohio—the midterms in Ohio, and all across the country.

The only reason abortion bans in America is because of Donald Trump. He's the only reason teenagers in Ohio are being forced to travel out of State to get their health care because they—because of Donald Trump—where they've been raped or—by a family member or by anyone else.

The only person—the only persons out there whose—the reason fundamental rights have been stripped away because in America—be—of the American people is—for the first time in history is because of Donald Trump. And look, just as all his friends have found out about the power of women in America, he's about to find out, too, in a big way.

Folks, I just visited an auto plant down the road in Belvidere that's going to stay open and create jobs thanks to the historic agreements between the UAW and the Big Three automakers. And they're going to be investing several billion dollars, creating thousands of jobs in Belvidere, where there's a plant that had been closed.

Trump was one of only two Presidents in American history who lost jobs in the Presidency—one of only two. That's why every now and then, remember him as Donald "Hoover" Trump. [Laughter] No, but seriously. He lost jobs.

We have a very different record. We've created 14 million jobs since I took office. We've created more jobs in 2 years than any President has created in a 4-year term.

Folks, the list of what we've gotten done goes on. But my friend, Senator Dick Durbin, who really has been incredible helping get judges through—we have now gotten 150 judges confirmed to the court, two-thirds of whom are women and two-thirds of whom are people of color.

We put the first Black woman on the Supreme Court and appointed more Black women to the Federal Circuit Courts of Appeal than every other President in American history combined.

And, folks, look, it's about a simple proposition—a simple proposition. I promised my administration was going to look like America—look like America. And that's exactly what the case is. Because it's important we are—we are a multicultural country. It's one of the reasons for our strengths. And we should brag about it, not run away from it.

We passed the biggest investment in the history of the world to combat climate change—you know, in the entire world, over billions of dollars, because it's the only existential threat to humanity. And it really is one. We need to protect the progress we made. Most important of all, we need to protect our democracy.

Folks, look, in 2020, after—it was not long after my son had died, because of Iraq—being there. You're sleeping in a hooch that was only about 400 yards from the burn pits. I wasn't going to run. And—but then you remember what happened in Charlottesville, Virginia? There was people coming out of—literally, not figuratively—coming out of fields, carrying torches—torches in their hands with Nazi swastikas and singing the same antisemitic bile and chants that sang in Germany in the thirties.

And a young woman was killed. I talked to her mom. She was a bystander. And the President was asked at the time, what did he think—what did he think about all that? And he looked into the cameras, and he said, "Well, there's some very good people on both sides." That's when I decided I couldn't remain silent any longer. That's for real—for real. Because I really did think our democracy was at stake and everything we stood for was up for grabs.

And so what happened was, we—I—but—I thought, "No, it's going to be too ugly for my kids and my grandkids." I knew what it was going to be like. We went through this before. And so, I wasn't going to run.

I've got a—we have a tradition in the Biden family—not a joke—only invoked, in my recollection, 9 times—10—this was the 10th time. And it was during my dad's life, we started it. Any kid in the family can ask for a family meeting. I'm being literal now—a family meeting if they want to talk about something important.

Well, I got a phone call after that invasion by those White supremacists back in Charlottesville and—from my eldest daughter [granddaughter; White House correction], who is a lawyer with one of—was then a senior at Columbia Law School. And so she and my daughter—I had two daughters [granddaughters; White House correction] at the University of Pennsylvania at the time, and—my two—two kids—my deceased son's children were also then still in high school.

And they said, "We want a family meeting, Pop." It was on a Thursday. So they came down on Saturday. We sat in the library in my home with my wife, and they said, "Pop, you've got to run," making the case. And I said, "Well, you know, it's going to be tough."

And my youngest, who's now in high school, about to graduate, his name is Hunter, named after his—anyway—and he said to me—he said, "We know it's going to be bad." And he took out his cell phone. And he showed me a—a picture on the cell phone of me walking out of the Catholic Church where Beau was—the memorial mass for Beau and a military coffin draped with a flag escorted by the military, because he had won the Bronze Star, the Conspicuous Service Medal, and other honors.

And I was holding onto little Hunter, his son, and I had him under the chin. I used to hold Beau—when we were in church, I'd put my arm around him, and I'd cup his chin in my hand. And that's how I had Hunter. And we were walking—I had my hand on the casket, it was being wheeled out, and little Hunt on my right. And the caption said, "Biden molests another child."

And he looked at me and he said, "Pop, we know it's going to be ugly, but you've got to do it." You know, that's why I ran, at the time.

And I got in trouble with my campaign because I said I was running for three reasons—all seemed improbable. One was to restore the soul of this country, some decency and honor to the White House.

The second one was to begin to build the economy from the middle out and the bottom up, not the top down. When that occurs, everybody does well.

And thirdly was to unite the country. And although I had a reputation when I was a Senator of being a uniter, the press legitimately said—and the press is here—that Biden doesn't understand the Senate's changed, the Congress changed; you can't unite the country.

Well, my notion is, if you can't unite the country, how do you keep a participatory democracy going if you can't get consensus? How does that work?

Well, you know, I reminded people: Every other nation is founded on some principle, whether it's ethnicity, whether it's religion, whatever it is. We're the only nation in the world founded based on an idea—an idea that Trump and the MAGA Republicans walked away from.

We've never fully lived up to it, but we've never walked away from it. It says: "We hold these truths to be self-evident. All men and women are created equal, endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights." That's the idea we—that's what we—everything in our Constitution is based upon. Well, guess what? It's still my goal to make sure people understand that.

I'm running again because we made progress, but our democracy is still at stake.

I'm very proud of our record, all the things that we got passed. That's true. And Presidential historians are giving us really high marks for the things we've done. But we still haven't united the country.

If you come into my office in the White House and you're invited to see the Oval Office, there used to be only one photograph—one—not photograph—one painting above the fireplace. It was George Washington.

I sat under that painting for 6 years—8 years as Vice President, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee before that many, many times.

So, when I asked my brother, I said—and I found out you have to, when you lose—when you leave, not lose, the Presidency, you have to be out of that office on January 20 by 10 o'clock, and the incoming President can't come in until, I think, it's 3 or 4 o'clock.

The reason is, it gives you a chance to change everything from the rug to the paintings to whatever you wanted to do. So I asked my brother Jimmy to do that for me. And he called an acquaintance, Jon Meacham, a Presidential historian, to help.

So I walked in when it was time to take office—by the way, the other guy—first time in American history he never showed up at all. *[Laughter]* Seriously. I mean—anyway—*[laughter]*. I shouldn't get started. I'll get in trouble. *[Laughter]*

But—and I just walked in, and there's this—now there's this massive painting—portrait of Franklin Roosevelt. And I looked and said, "I admire Franklin Roosevelt, but why Roosevelt?"

And Jon Meacham spoke up and said, "It's unlikely any President since Roosevelt has inherited a country in the world in such disarray financially." I said, "That's wonderful." *[Laughter]* And then there's four other portraits—small ones, the size of the—George Washington. And they had—anyway—but the one on the bottom left was Abraham Lincoln, a Republican. And I said, "Why—why Lincoln?" He said, "Because the country has never been so divided since the Civil War."

Well, you know, there's some truth to that. But it's unnecessary, and it's really, really damaging. You know, because—folks, the same man who said we should terminate the rules and regulations and articles of the Constitution—these are things he said—is now running on a plan to end democracy as we know it.

He's not even hiding the ball. In recent weeks, the New York Times and Washington Post ran stories how he intends to use the Presidency, quote, for "revenge" and "retribution." And on more than one occasion in recent weeks, he's made a joke about the assaults on Speaker Pelosi's husband who was smacked in the head with a hammer.

Now, there are a lot of reasons that Donald Trump shouldn't be President, but that one may demonstrate the best reason of all. If you can make a joke about that, you really have no business being anywhere near the Presidency.

And, folks, we're asking the entire nation to join us in sending the strongest, clearest, most powerful message that political violence in America is never, never, never, ever justified or acceptable. Never. Never.

And by the way, this is not your father's Republican Party. Donald Trump and the MAGA Republicans are determined to destroy democracy as we know it.

Folks, democracy is on the ballot again, and Kamala and I need you. Indeed, we need every American who loves democracy to join together in 2024. If we do that, we'll have done something few generations get to do; we'll have saved democracy.

After I became Vice—after I was Vice President, we stepped down after we—the 8 years was up, what happened was I became a professor at the University of Pennsylvania and taught—they set up a school of foreign policy in my name. And I taught the Constitution as well.

Think about it. Think about what we mean when we say we are democrats with a—small "d," that we support the Constitution.

Look, I know it sounds like a low bar, but it's a bar that we have to get over. We've got to make sure we put—we finally put away this notion of the extreme MAGA Republican. It's—again, it's not your father's Republican Party.

The vast majority of Republicans are decent, honorable people—people I dealt with and worked with my whole career. People I have strong disagreements with, like Bob Dole and others—Howard Baker—but good, good men and women.

We've got to bring that back. Because I'll tell you one other thing: You know, every time I hear—when I'm been induced, I hear "Hail to the Chief," I turn around and wonder where the hell is she? Where is he?" [Laughter] It's hard to get used to. For real.

But here's the deal. You know, we're in a situation here where the rest of the world looks to us. Madeleine Albright was right; we are the essential nation. I walk into a room with any head of State and—I'm serious—everything stops. Not because of me; because I'm President of the United States of America. The rest of the world—no, I mean it.

The rest of the world looks to us. They look to us. When I first got elected, I went to the first meeting of the G-7 I attended—the leading—the heads of state of the European countries in NATO. And I sat down and I said, "America is back." And Macron looked at me, and he said, "For how long?" Not a joke.

And Scholz looked and said: "What would you think, Mr. President, if you picked up the paper tomorrow, in the London Times, and it said 1,000 people had marched to the Parliament, walked and broke down the doors of the House of Commons to protest the certification of the Speaker. What would you think?"

I started thinking about it. What would we think if we read that? This the United States of America. And again, we have enormous opportunities at this moment in history. But we cannot—we cannot fail to speak to our principles.

The choice facing us is not to be—[inaudible]. When Donald Trump gives his Inaugural Address, he chose to speak about American carnage. That's what we—remember the Inaugural Address, talking about "American carnage," America is weak, in disarray?

He wanted to get out of NATO. He wanted to move "America first." Et cetera. When I gave my America—when I gave my Inaugural Address, I spoke about American possibilities.

When Donald Trump looks at America, he sees a failing nation. When I look at America, I see the strongest economy in the world with—leading the world again, the ability to set the world standards.

When Donald Trump talks about what he will do if he returns to the Presidency, he promised to bring revenge and retribution. If you return me to the Presidency, I promise you, we'll lift everyone in this country. Everyone. Everyone.

Maybe Donald Trump sees an angry, dark, dismal, divided future for America, but I don't.

Folks, I'm taking too much your time.

And, folks, look, I've never been more optimistic about our country's future, and I mean that. Never been more optimistic.

We just have to remember who in hell we are. We're the United States of America. And there's nothing—nothing—beyond our capacity when we set our mind to it.

Unless you think I'm exaggerating, think of any crisis we've gone through where we come out the other side, we haven't been stronger than we went into it. I'm not joking. Think of one. This the United States of America. We got to remember who we are. And with your help, I'll do all my—everything in my power to make you proud of what we're doing.

And in the meantime, God bless you all, and may God protect our troops. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:02 p.m. at the Ignite Glass Studios. In his remarks, he referred to Glen E. Tullman, chairman and chief executive officer, Transcarent Inc., and his son Ben Tullman, in his capacity as founder, creative director, and studio manager of Ignite Glass Studios; Vice President Kamala D. Harris; Gov. Andrew G. Beshear of Kentucky; Gov. Glenn Youngkin of Virginia; Mayor-elect Cherelle L. Parker of Philadelphia, PA; Supreme Court Associate Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson; Susan Bro, mother of Heather D. Heyer, who was killed during the vehicular attack in Charlottesville, VA, on August 12, 2017; Jon Meacham, canon historian, Washington National Cathedral; Paul F. Pelosi, Sr., husband of Rep. Nancy Pelosi; President Emmanuel Macron of France; and Chancellor Olaf Scholz of Germany. He also referred to his grandchildren Naomi K. Biden Neal and Finnegan, Maisy, Natalie, and R. Hunter Biden and brother James B. Biden. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 13. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Campaign reception in Chicago, IL.

Locations: Chicago, IL.

Names: Amo, Gabriel; Beshear, Andrew G.; Biden Neal, Naomi K.; Biden, Finnegan J.; Biden, James B.; Biden, Jill T.; Biden, Natalie P.; Biden, R. Hunter, II; Biden, Roberta M. "Maisy"; Bro, Susan; Durbin, Richard J.; Harris, Kamala D.; Jackson, Ketanji Brown; Macron, Emmanuel; Meacham, Jon; Parker, Cherelle L.; Pelosi, Nancy; Pelosi, Paul F., Sr.; Pritzker, Jay R. "J.B."; Scholz, Olaf; Trump, Donald J.; Tullman, Ben; Tullman, Glen E.; Youngkin, Glenn.

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