

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023

Remarks Honoring the 2023 Stanley Cup Champion Vegas Golden Knights
November 13, 2023

The President. You've got—Nevada is here. How's going?

Please have a seat. Please have a seat. And welcome to the White House—the 2023 Stanley Cup Champion Vegas Golden Knights.

President Harris is here to make sure we do this the right way.

And while he couldn't be here, I want to thank former Cabinet member of mine——

[At this point, the President briefly imitated a Boston accent.]

Marty Walsh, from Boston.

Who—I think he'd rather be standing up there than being the Commissioner. *[Laughter]* But thank you all very much. And I—now—he's now President of NHL Players' Union.

And a special thanks to the Commissioner, who is here, who is on—congrats on 30 years—30 years of running and growing a league. Thirty years.

Team owner Bill Foley and the entire organization you built on a ice rink in the middle of the desert. *[Laughter]* Who says you can't get anything done? A team—and a team of all time—for a team of all time.

Look, Bruce, the entire staff, congratulations on the incredible coaching job.

To the devoted fans, many of whom—*[applause]*. We've got two future players right here. Look at them. They're ready.

Many are here today, including the Members of the Congress as well. And the family of one of my dear friends, the late Senator Harry Reid. Where's the Reid family? There you are. Good to see you, man. And you couldn't deny it, even if you wanted to: You look like Harry. *[Laughter]* Harry Reid was one of my great, great friends.

And most off all, congrats to those incredible players, led by captain Mark Stone. Now, Mark's my kind of guy. I didn't play ice hockey, but I did play football. And this is a guy like some of the guys I played with.

Two back surgeries—two back surgeries in a year. Missing the second half of the season. Returns for game one of the playoffs and scores a hat trick in game five to win the Stanley Cup.

I had a coach, used to always say—Tubby Raymond. He said, "You get knocked down, just get up. Get up." This guy gets up and goes, man. *[Laughter]*

Look, just 6 years ago, the idea of a championship team playing on the ice in the Vega desert—Vegas desert—I mean, think about this. *[Laughter]* Who would've—who would have thunk of it, as they say? It seemed like a pipe dream, but the team ownership had faith, predicting a playoff run in 3 years and a Stanley Cup in 6.

I—I've got to talk to them because the polling data—I'm not paying much attention to it. *[Laughter]*

Ever since, this team has proved that in Vegas, you can beat the odds: a trip to the finals in your first year—very first year, 5 total trips to the playoffs, 4 conference finals, 267 total wins in 6 years, one of the best win records in hockey.

And when you came up short in the playoffs, you never gave up. This year, led by a hell of a defense and a powerful offense, you dominated the regular season. Then, in the playoffs, defeating all-star teams like the Jets, the Oilers, the Stars without ever facing elimination. And in the Stanley Cup Finals, you beat the Panthers to become the champions.

Led by these incredible players: Jack, leading the league with 26 points in postseason; Jon, the first true undrafted player in the history off of the draft to win the final—win that final MVP trophy. Look—[*applause*]. And above all, your work as a team with a winning culture built through hard work and determination.

You make folks cheer. And by the way, you make folks laugh. I heard that tradition of giving the—each game's MVP the Elvis wig and glasses. [*Laughter*] Only in Vegas. [*Laughter*] Only in Vegas.

And together you're building a legacy in a great American sports city. In fact, Kamala hosted the Las Vegas Aces back in September when they had just won a back-to-back WNBA title.

Just one promise: Don't get the Philadelphia Eagles to leave and go—[*laughter*]—because I'll get divorced if that happens. [*Laughter*] I married a Philly girl, and—and it's a long story. [*Laughter*]

Look, you guys got to keep it up.

Let me close with this. You're proving Vegas sports is one of the best shows in town. But you're also proving something else about sports.

Like all great franchises, you give back—you give back to the community: sponsoring after-school activities for kids and programs for disabled—the disabled community; honoring servicemembers, veterans, and military families at games and hockey clinics; and hosting food drives and providing grants to help fight homelessness and hunger throughout the Southern—throughout Southern Nevada.

And in your case, you're also holding an entire city together. You know, we've seen it ever since that very first season just after 1 October—mass shooting in 2017—showing up for victims' families, survivors, first responders. In fact, your championship rings honor them. The diamonds on your ring is from a—form a star, the same star on the banner that you raised that honored 58 people who were lost on that day.

You guys are something else. When you raised that banner, this organization said, quote, "Their light continues to shine bright," in no small part because of all of you.

For Vegas, for Nevada, for all of us, thank you for shining and sharing that light.

You're Vegas born; you're Vegas strong. Congratulations again.

And I'm going to turn this over to Mark to say a few words.

Right wing Mark Stone. All right. I'm going to be a little quicker. [*Laughter*]

First off, it's an incredible honor to be here at the White House. As kids, we grew up dreaming of winning the Stanley Cup. But even over the last 5 months—I think it's 5 months to the day that we raised the Stanley Cup—I think it's definitely exceeded all my expectations and everything that has gone along with it.

We all come here in awe of this beautiful place and have such respect for you and the office that you hold. Whew. It's an honor—[*laughter*]. Sorry. It's a lot easier playing hockey in front of 20,000 than this. [*Laughter*] Can confirm that.

It's an honor to speak on behalf of not only my teammates, but the entire organization and the city of Las Vegas. It is, of course, an amazing city. It's the entertainment capital of the world. I say that with all due respect to Delaware, Mr. President. *[Laughter]*

Again, thank you so much. This is a—you know, not—for some of us, once in a lifetime opportunity. Fortunately, some guys have done this more than once. We're looking forward to trying to get back here next November.

This has exceeded all expectations that I've had for—for this visit. Mr. President, I'll be joined now with the president of our hockey club, George McPhee. We'd like to present you with a jersey and, in true Vegas Golden fashion, a Golden hockey stick engraved with everything for yourself. *[Laughter]*

And last thing: Go, Knights, go!

[The President was presented with a team jersey.]

The President. Thank you, man. Thank you.

[The President was presented with a hockey stick.]

Well, I'll tell you what, this thing weighs about 800 pounds. *[Laughter]* This is a great, great honor. This is really something else. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

I'm going to turn it this way so I don't hit you in the head. Wow. What a great, great gift. Thank you very much. You're going to make me hit it with all my grandkids. *[Laughter]* You all think I'm kidding. I'm not.

And by the way, if you can play with this stick, I don't want you—*[inaudible]*. Anyway, thank you, thank you, thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:24 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Vice President Kamala D. Harris; former Secretary of Labor Martin J. Walsh, in his capacity as executive director of the National Hockey League Players' Association; Gary B. Bettman, commissioner, National Hockey League; Bruce Cassidy, head coach, Jack Eichel, center, and Jonathan Marchessault, right wing, Vegas Golden Knights; Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto; and Reps. Suzanne K. Lee and Steven A. Horsford. Mr. Stone referred to George McPhee, president of hockey operations, Vegas Golden Knights.

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Names: Bettman, Gary B.; Cassidy, Bruce; Cortez Masto, Catherine; Eichel, Jack; Foley, William P., II; Harris, Kamala D.; Horsford, Steven A.; Lee, Suzanne K.; Marchessault, Jonathan; Stone, Mark; Walsh, Martin J.

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