

**Remarks at a Campaign Reception**

*December 6, 2023*

Thank you. Please have a—take a seat, if you have one.

I want to thank you. Thank you very much, Annette. And you know, this means a lot to me. Not a joke. I'm being deadly earnest.

You know, when I first got here in the United States Senate 370 years ago—[*laughter*]*—but, you know, we owe you so much. We owe the Indian Nations so much. I'm not just saying that. Think of what you preserved for the Nation.*

You were here. You're the ones that did it. You're the ones that deserve credit for all the things that remain. And I really mean it from the bottom of my heart.

And I want to thank you all for your support. I really do. And I sincerely mean it.

You know, the reason we won in eight—in 2020 with 81 million votes—more than any other Presidential candidate has ever gotten in history—is Native American voters played a critical role, especially in States like Arizona and Wisconsin. And I mean it.

You know, and you're the reason why Donald Trump is not the only former President, but he's a defeated President. [*Laughter*] Forgive me, I'm—I shouldn't get started.

But look, you're the reason we're going to win again in 2024, and I'm not just saying that.

Earlier today I spoke at the White House Tribal Nations Summit, which many of you attended. And I was proud to relaunch this annual summit after years of neglect and—and just—it's even more than neglect, it's just as if you weren't there, as if the Indian Nations did not exist—after years of neglect by my predecessor.

And not just one, but there's just not been much attention. And it matters to me. You know, it shows—you—shows a commitment and to respect Tribal sovereignty and self-determination.

And at the summit you heard me talk about ushering in a new era in our nation-to-nation relationship, because you heard me say a thousand times, that's what Danny Inouye taught me 50 years ago: It's nation to nation. That was the commitment.

And while she's disappointed she can't be here today, I'm so fortunate to have Deb Haaland. She's done a hell of a job. Hasn't she—[*applause*]*—no, I'm—it is not merely she's the first Native American in the Cabinet, but she's done one heck of a job. She's really good at what she does. And—you know, and scores of Native Americans in key roles across my administration—she helped make that happen.*

And look, we made important progress with record investments in Tribal Nations, investments like the American Rescue Plan, the largest investment in Tribal Nations ever, to help vaccinate Tribal communities and get our economy going again. Not a single one of my opponents on the other team voted for it. Not one single one.

The bipartisan infrastructure law, the single biggest investment in roads, bridges, water, high-speed internet, electricity, irrigation, environmental cleanup, and so much more. And the Indian Nations are going to be—have significant benefit from it.

The Inflation Reduction Act, the biggest investment in fighting climate ever in the history of the world. That's not hyperbole; that's a fact.

And helping Tribal communities lead in the transition to clean energy, ease the impact of droughts and wildfires—so many wildfires the Nations have put up with in the last, just, 10 years, especially the last 3 or 4—rising sea levels that threaten Native lives and precious homelands.

And you know, there's so much at stake. But again, not a single one of my opponents voted for it, which I don't quite get. And I really mean it, because I don't think they're anti-Indian Nation; I just don't think it's on the radar. I don't think they just don't—they don't think about it.

And now they're trying to repeal parts of that. It's—I can understand when there's a fundamental disagreement on an issue and it's up in the air as to what the impacts of it are, but I don't understand this.

We're also protecting national treasures and sacred ancestral sites. I was saying to one person when I was out in the valley, in the Grand Canyon, and I put a fair amount of land aside, in addition to being there. And they said, "Why?" I said: "Why not? What would you do?"

And they talked about sacred lands. I said, "What would you say—how many times have"—and they said—I won't mention the particular faith that came to me, but asked me to help protect cemeteries—old cemeteries. I said, "What the hell is the difference between that Christian cemetery you want me to protect and what's been around for a couple thousand years?"

You know, in just my first year in office together, we protected—you and me—we protected more lands and water than any President since John Kennedy—nationwide, across the board.

And we restored protections gutted by predecessor at three national monuments: Bears Ears, the Grand Staircase in Utah—Utah, Northeast Canyons and Seamounts in New England. And we used my authority under the Antiquities Act to designate new national monuments and—as well as including Camp Hale in Colorado, Spirit Mountain in Nevada, Castner Range in Texas, and the Ancestral Footprints of the Grand Canyon in Arizona.

What I don't get is—I mean this sincerely now. I don't get why everybody doesn't think that's a good idea, not just Indian Nations. Why is that not a good idea? I don't get it.

And after the previous administration undermined the Indian Health Services, my administration, last year, secured the first-ever advanced funding for Indian Health Services: 51.1—I mean \$5.1—\$5.1 billion locked in before the budget negotiations so hospitals could plan ahead, order supplies, hire doctors knowing the money would be there ahead of time.

And we're going to keep fighting to make sure it's a mandatory part of the Federal budget, so Tribes can count on it year to year, so they don't have to have this fight every single year.

We're also keeping our sacred obligation to our veterans in the PACT Act.

What I keep reminding people—you realize; I know you do—but I want to remind you, because you don't talk enough about it: A higher percentage of Native Americans have signed up for the United States military, volunteered, than any other group of individuals in the entire Nation. Let me say that again: a higher percentage than any other group, any other identifiable group of Americans—Indian Nations.

One of the most significant laws ever signed was to help veterans exposed to toxic materials and compensate their families. My son was one of those exposed to those toxic materials in Iraq. They sit there for a year in a burn pit that's about couple hundred yards away. And you all fought like hell to make sure we got that done.

Three hundred and thirty thousand veterans are Native Americans today—today—330,000.

And, folks, while there's more work to do on the economy, health care, and so much more, there are transformational investments that help Tribes and all Americans. Because another thing

I keep telling people who criticize me of this: When you help a Tribe, you're helping all of America. How in God's name is it not helping all of America?

And the Executive order I just signed today is going to cut the redtape so you can better deliver those historic resources to your communities in ways that you should, because you know best what's needed in your communities.

How can we talk about how local communities in a—[inaudible]—area know best for the communities and you don't know best for yours? I don't get the reasoning. I don't get that.

I always hear about, "Well, you know, this county council or this local legislative body, this—they know best." What the—I don't get it. What—why do you not know best for your communities? You do. You know better than anybody.

But all of it is at stake in this election. And so it's something that—something else is at stake: the future of American democracy. Not a joke.

Let me be real clear. I'm going to say it straight up, and I'm—some suggest I shouldn't say it straight up, but I'm going to: Donald Trump poses many threats to this country, but the greatest threat of all he poses to the country is the remainder and the continuation of our democracy. Because if we lose that, we lose everything.

When I first ran for President, you may recall, I said at the Independence Hall up in Philadelphia that I thought democracy was at stake. And I think a lot of people thought I was exaggerating. But I don't think anybody thinks that anymore. I really don't.

We all know what happened on January the 6th. Trump sat in the private dining room off of the Oval Office for hours, watching it all unfold on television as a mob attacked the Capitol Police and desecrated the Capitol, as the mob threatened the life of his own Vice President, because the Vice President refused to violate the Constitution and do what he wanted done.

We all know what became of that first losing Presidential candidate in history who refused to accept the will of the people. He didn't even show up for my Inauguration. I can't say it disappointed me. [Laughter]

But think about it: Only two other Presidents in all of American history, in the middle of wars—wars North and South—didn't show up for the Inauguration of the next President. My guess is, he's not going to show up on my next Inauguration either. [Laughter]

And hear his words today. He says he's running not to serve the people of America, but to get "revenge" and "retribution." God bless me. [Laughter] He said it's time—and I quote, "the termination of all rules, regulations, and articles, even those found in the Constitution."

He's not—I'm not making these words up. You hear it. That's what he's saying.

What do you think that means when it comes to upholding—upholding Federal trust and treaty obligations to Tribal Nations? I'm serious.

He called those who oppose him "vermin," language that echoes what we heard in Nazi Germany in the thirties. It has a—how many times have you heard any political person refer to another opponent as "vermin," other than when you read your history on the—during the Nazi era?

He threatened to use the American military—the American military—on the streets of America to go after his political opponents—the Insurrection Act.

He called, again, to get the Affordable Care Act, which supports Indian Health Services, eliminated. This will be the 51st time they tried it. No, I'm serious. I know that sounds bizarre.

Folks, what kind of respect do you think he'd have for Tribal communities, of what we—what you've done? You—you've given me credit for getting things done. You've come to me and told me what you need most in Indian Nations, and I believed you. I've seen it. I look.

All of you understand what freedom means. Freedom is basically—you can't have much freedom if you don't tell the truth, if you don't have courage, you never—unwilling to hold up a mirror to yourself and to the country and ask yourself: "Is this who we are? Can we do better?" That's what freedom is about.

Let me close with this. I'm taking too long, and I apologize. It's not easy to hear and—what's been done in the past and to heal the wrongs of the past, to change the course and move forward. But the work we're doing together is carrying us into a new era of Tribal sovereignty and self-determination. And that's not hyperbole. They're not words; it's real.

And we're now grounded in dignity and respect that recognizes Tribes' fundamental right to govern and grow on your own terms. That's what this election is about.

And by the way, you're not asking for anything that's inconsistent with the United States Constitution. You're not asking for anything that's inconsistent. That's why we need you.

We need every Democrat, Republican, and Independent who believes in democracy and our nation-to-nation relationship to join us in 2024—and I mean this sincerely; I give you my word as a Biden—not because I am running, but this is one of the most important elections in modern history.

You know, you're always hearing me talk about inflection points, where this—things that happen in a short period of time and determine what's going to happen in the next four or five decades. We're at one of those points. I—but I've never been more optimistic than I am today.

We're proving that there's nothing beyond our capacity when we work together. And I mean it. Think about it. When have we, in this country, ever worked together and not been able to solve the problems in front of us? There's not a single issue that we've gone into that's caused us problems we haven't come out stronger than we went in.

And I think, with your added strength—and I really mean it, I really mean it—you have a moral force behind what you've been doing. And it carries with the American people. It sounds corny, but I really mean it. Think about it. Think about it.

Think about if you're going to sit down and talk to any young person in 8th, 9th, 10th grade, and you start talking about the history. Who among them says, "No, no, we're doing too much for Indian Nations"? It's just not there. People know it if we talk about it.

That's why I'm so opposed to these book bannings and all this other stuff that, you know, tries to keep the history from being talked about. The way to get rid of the bad history is talk about it so we get a new history.

Well, I'm going to get off too much on what I really get talking about. *[Laughter]*

But all kidding aside, thank you for your support, and it means a lot to me. I mean, really, I—and some of you know me—this means a lot. It really matters that you would do this for me.

And it's—I don't want to exaggerate it, but there's an emotional component to it. You do what you say. You can be counted on.

And by the way, like I said, we're going to have an all-Indian lacrosse team in the Olympics. You all think I'm kidding?

Like I said, you know, I was not a bad athlete. I was a runner-up at State scoring championship in football in the State of Delaware, a small State, but I still was a pretty—I was proud of it. I was a pretty good baseball player.

But the real athletes in my family are the women. My daughter was a great—she's faster than I was, I think; played lacrosse. And my niece played lacrosse all-State, first team All-American in high school, All-Ivy. I mean, you know, the real power in my family is the women.

But somehow, I suspect it may be in yours as well. *[Laughter]* Anyway, thank you all so very much. Really, thank you. Thank you, thank you, thank you. It means a lot.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:46 p.m. at the St. Regis Washington, D.C., hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Annette M. Bryan, council member, Puyallup Tribe of Indians; and former Vice President Michael R. Pence. He also referred to his niece Alana Biden; and Executive Order 14112. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 7. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

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