

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023

Remarks at a Campaign Reception in Los Angeles, California
December 8, 2023

Folks, I don't know who the hell they're talking about. *[Laughter]*

I'm Jill Biden's husband. *[Laughter]* And thank you, Jilly. Jill is my partner, my political adviser, my confidant. And you're doing a fantastic job as First Lady. You really are.

And I work for Nancy Pelosi. *[Laughter]* Thank you, Nancy. I've said this for a long time when I was a Senator, and I say it as Vice President and as President: Nancy, historically, is the finest Speaker of the House we've ever had. That's a fact. And the country owes you, Nancy.

And while she's back in Washington, thank you for another great Californian, who I couldn't do this job without, Kamala Harris.

My good friend Karen Bass—thank you, Karen. Karen—I told Karen the worst sentence in the English language is, "I'm at the airport." *[Laughter]* She was there today. Thank you, Karen.

And Gavin Newsom also is a hell of a fighter and a great friend. Where's Gavin? He's somewhere around here somewhere. There you are, Gav. Thank you, buddy. You're always there.

And our hosts, James and Michael—thank you for welcoming us to your home and for your friendship. And also, to tonight's chairs and cohosts, to all of you, thank you all for your support. This is an incredibly successful night.

I'm not going to talk long for a couple of reasons: One, I know that I'm the only thing standing between you and Lenny Kravitz. *[Laughter]* That's number one.

Let me begin by thanking all of you. In 2020, the reason we got 81 million votes—more votes than any Presidential candidate has ever gotten—is because of all of you. You're the reason why Donald Trump is a former President. Or as he hates to hear me say, a defeated President. *[Laughter]*

Look, we—you know, he—anyhow, I shouldn't get into that. *[Laughter]*

You're the reason why we're going to win, God willing, in 2024.

Because you—because of you, we've gotten a lot done. And—from where we started, from the pandemic raging and the economy reeling, look at where we are today.

The pandemic is behind us, thank God. Record job creation, record economic growth, the lowest inflation rate of any major economy on Earth. And we've rebuilt our alliances around the world, which were in more—tougher shape than I thought they were until I became President.

Because of the great help of Senator Dick Durbin of Illinois, the chairman of Judiciary Committee, we've confirmed Federal judges at a historic pace: 160 Federal judges. The first Black woman on the Supreme Court and more Black women appointed to the Federal Circuit Courts than every other President combined. That's Dick Durbin.

And on our watch, we made the Affordable Care Act stronger. We made the biggest investment in history in the—to combat climate. And so many of you have been major, major, major players in helping me in the climate crisis.

Signed the first new gun safety law in 30 years, but we have a hell of a lot more to do on guns.

We're making a historic commitment to build America with American products and American labor. And today, because of Nancy's leadership, I've announced a historic step forward in high-speed rail in the Central Valley, where you go 220 miles an hour.

Oh, I'm not joking. I've been pushing this for over 40 years. Finally, finally, finally.

I was in Las Vegas earlier today to announce the rail project that will get you to Los Angeles—to Vegas in 2 hours, instead of a 7-hour car drive.

Look, we've all done—what you've all done—the real story here is, there's an awful lot of American people that just stood up and took a chance.

In thousands of towns all across America, we see thousands of stories of revival and renewal, hope and optimism and pride: pride in your work, in your family, in your town; pride in this Nation.

My dad used to have an expression. He'd say, "You know, Joey, a job is a lot more than a paycheck." Seriously, this is what he would say. "A lot more than a paycheck. It's about your dignity. It's about pride. It's about being able to look your kid in the eye and say, 'Honey, it's going to be okay.'"

We know there's a hell of a lot more to do, from childcare to eldercare to making sure the—that corporations finally start paying their fair share. And we know all this progress is at stake in the next election.

But tonight I want to talk very briefly what most this at—what's most at stake in this election, in my view. Literally, I believe, the future of American democracy is at stake. Literally, it all is at stake.

Let me be clear. Donald Trump poses many threats to the country, from the right to choose to civil rights to voting rights to America's standing in the world. But the greatest threat Trump poses is to our democracy, because if we lose that, we lose everything.

When I first ran for President, some of you may remember, I said that democracy was at stake in America. I think a lot of people thought I was exaggerating, but I don't think they think that anymore.

You remember January 6, Trump sitting in the private dining room down from the Oval Office, just one hallway down—small hallway down, watching it all unfold on TV, as the mob attacked the Capitol, Capitol Police; desecrated the Capitol.

The mob threatened the life of his own—that threatened the life of his own Vice President because the Vice President refused to violate his constitutional oath. The same mob looking for Nancy that inspired the same assailant to attack Paul months later. It's despicable. Simply despicable.

Trump became the first losing Presidential candidate in history who refused to accept the will of the people. He didn't even show up at my Inauguration. I can't say I was disappointed. *[Laughter]* And my guess is, he won't show up at the next Inauguration. *[Laughter]*

But listen—but on a very serious note, listen to the words he's saying. He says he's running for President, not to serve the American people, but, quote, to get "revenge" and "retribution." A President of the United States of America, they're words coming out of his mouth.

The other day he said that he'd be a dictator only on the first day. Thank God, only 1 day. *[Laughter]*

He called those who oppose him "vermin," language that echoes the hatred of Germany in the thirties. He's threatened to use American military on the streets of America, with the Sedition

Act, to go after political opponents. He embraces political violence instead of rejecting it. We can't let this happen. We literally can't let this happen.

All of you here understand what freedom means. It's about truth. It's about courage. It's about holding a mirror up to ourselves and asking ourselves: "Is this who we are? Who are we, and can we get better?"

Unlike Trump, we don't believe America is a dark and negative nation, driven by, as he says, anger, fear, and revenge. When Trump at his Inauguration spoke of American carnage, I spoke at our Inauguration about American possibilities.

I believe we have a hopeful, optimistic nation—[*applause*—I really do—driven by a simple proposition that everybody deserves a shot. We're the only nation in the world not built on race, ethnicity, religion, or geography. We're the only country in the world built on an idea—literally, an idea—that all people are created equal.

We never fully lived up to it, but we've never walked away from it before—never walked away from it before. We've never—as I said, we're not going to walk away from it now.

Folks, let me close with this. You know, in this greatest city of the greatest storytellers in the world, we mourn the losses—and you mentioned Norman Lear.

You know, his cast of characters painted a fuller picture of America—of our hopes and our hardships, our fears, our resilience—and changed the way we look at ourselves.

In explaining his approach to getting the laugh—to get us to laugh and think, Norman Lear said, and I quote, "You stand a better chance if you can get them caring first"—"if you can get them caring first."

Folks, at our best, we're a nation that cares. We care about each other; we care about the Nation. And in 3 years, we're going to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Three years.

Norman brought an original—bought an original copy of that. And he shared it with schools and museums so people could feel the patriocry that comes from being moved by its words.

The 250th anniversary will be a moment not only about our past and celebrating all we've done, but also about the future and all we can be.

I don't believe and I will not believe that after this Nation, all it's been through—from independence to the Civil War to the World Wars; being blessed with leaders like Washington, Lincoln, Roosevelt, King; after having stood as a beacon of freedom and equality for the world more than—for more than two centuries—and, by the way, Madeleine Albright was right. We are the essential nation.

I know every major world leader. I've known most of them for the last 20 years. They look to us. They look to us, the United States. And I don't believe, in our 250th year, this Nation is going to turn to Donald Trump.

Folks, imagine that moment and ask, "What do we want to be?" If we do our job in 2024, we show how much we care, how we've done something for generations—and generations have not—unable to say up to now, that we will have been one of those generations that say we have saved democracy.

I know we can do this. And I know people think I'm too optimistic. But I've never been more optimistic about our country's future than I am today. We just have to remember who the hell we are. We're the United States of America. There is nothing beyond our capacity, nothing when we act together, literally nothing.

We're the only nation in the world that's come out of every crisis stronger than we went in. And that's my intention, to make sure we do it again.

God bless you all. And thanks for the help.

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:56 p.m. at the residence of former U.S. Ambassador to Spain James Costos and his husband Michael S. Smith. In his remarks, he referred to Rep. Nancy Pelosi and her husband Paul F. Pelosi, Sr.; Mayor Karen R. Bass of Los Angeles; Gov. Gavin C. Newsom of California; musician Lenny Kravitz; Supreme Court Associate Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson; former Vice President Michael R. Pence; David DePape, who was convicted of assault and attempted kidnapping in the attack on Mr. Pelosi in his San Francisco, CA, residence on October 28, 2022; and screenwriter and producer Norman M. Lear, who died on December 6. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 9. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Campaign reception in Los Angeles, CA.

Locations: Los Angeles, CA.

Names: Bass, Karen R.; Biden, Jill T.; Costos, James; DePape, David; Durbin, Richard J.; Harris, Kamala D.; Jackson, Ketanji Brown; Kravitz, Lenny; Lear, Norma M.; Newsom, Gavin C.; Pelosi, Nancy; Pelosi, Paul F., Sr.; Pence, Michael R.; Smith, Michael S.; Trump, Donald J.

Subjects: 2021 civil unrest and violence at U.S. Capitol; 2024 Presidential election; California, Democratic Party event; California, Governor; California, President's visit; Childcare, access and affordability; Climate change; Corporate tax rates; COVID-19 pandemic; Deaths, Norman M. Lear; Economic improvement; Eldercare and home health services; Federal court nominations and confirmations; Health insurance, access and availability; High-speed rail infrastructure, improvement efforts; Inflation; Job creation and growth; Supreme Court Associate Justice; U.S. diplomatic efforts, expansion; Vice President.

DCPD Number: DCPD202301100.