

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023

Remarks at a Campaign Reception in Pacific Palisades, California
December 9, 2023

I'm Jill's husband, Joe. *[Laughter]*

You know, like a lot of you, I'm really fortunate. I want to thank Jill because she's my partner, she is my political adviser, she's my confidant. And she's doing a fantastic job as First Lady.

And I want to thank your great friend and friend of mine, Senator Padilla. Alex, you've been a—I don't know where Alex—I can't see Alex. There you are. Thank you, Alex, for all you've done and your loyalty and your friendship. I appreciate it very much.

And while she's back in Washington, there's another Californian that I want to thank: Kamala Harris. Kamala has been a great—*[applause]*—Vice President.

To our hosts, José and Kwanza, thank you for welcoming me to your incredible home. Whoa. I hope you won't be offended if we don't leave. *[Laughter]* This is a magnificent home. When I walked in, I saw that Christmas tree, and it looked like walking into the White House. *[Laughter]* Oh, y'all think I'm kidding. I'm not. *[Laughter]*

Well, thank you for your support, all of you. And I really mean it. And thank—other California native in our White House, and now my campaign manager, Julie Rodriguez, granddaughter—*[applause]*—granddaughter of the great César Chávez.

And by the way, I told her before, I have a bust of him in my office, because Nixon won my State when I ran the first time as a U.S. Senator. I was 29 years old running. And he got—I think Nixon got 64, 65 percent of the vote. I won by 3,100 votes. And it's all Chávez's problem. You know why? I supported him when he was trying to organize the farmworkers in Delaware. It cost me big, and I was really proud. *[Laughter]*

You've heard me say this before, kiddo. If my father—he'd say, "Kid, you've got good blood." *[Laughter]* "You've got good blood."

Let me begin by thanking all of you.

In 2020, you are the reason why we got 81 million votes, more votes than any candidate for President has ever gotten in history. And the reason why Donald Trump is not only a former President but a defeated former President—*[laughter]*—is the reason—you're the reason. You're the reason why we're going to do it again in 2024, God willing.

Look, when we started with the pandemic raging and the economy reeling, because of you, look at what we've achieved. Job creation is at record economic growth, historic low unemployment for Black and Latinos, historic—in all of American history, it's never been this low.

Latino entrepreneurs are starting new businesses—new—at the fastest rate in over a decade.

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

That's okay, man. In my house—*[laughter]*. He's ready to start his own business. *[Laughter]* And don't worry about it, kid—in our house, kids rule. *[Laughter]*

Black business ownership is growing at the fastest rate it has in 30 years, the lowest inflation rate of any major economy on Earth, and we've rebuilt our alliances around the world.

Because of the great help of Senator Durkin of Illinois—excuse me, Durbin of Illinois and—the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, we've confirmed Federal judges at a historic pace. Two-thirds are people of color, most diverse slate ever in American history.

They include the first—[*applause*]*—they include the first Black woman ever appointed to the Supreme Court, and she's smarter than all the rest. More Black women on the Federal circuit courts than all previous Presidents combined in American history.*

And we kept our promise to having an administration that looks like America. We have the most diverse administration in American history.

Trump and the MAGA Republicans want to get rid of the Affordable Care Act, for example. On our watch, the Affordable Care Act is even stronger. Black and Latino Americans have now more access to affordable health care than any time in history.

We've made the biggest investment—[*applause*]*—we've made the biggest investment in the history of the world in climate change. That includes historic investments in frontline and fenceline communities.*

I grew up in a place called Claymont, Delaware, after we moved from Scranton. It's right there on the Pennsylvania border where all the major refineries are.

I grew up in a neighborhood that later became public housing. But at the time, it was—it was private housing and an apartment complex. And it was amazing. I look back on it, and almost all my friends, including me, had asthma. All the—everything blew southeast.

And so, folks, look, I promise that of all the—we save, in terms of dealing with the fenceline communities, 80 percent of it's going to go back into those communities most affected by it. And they're minority communities and poor communities.

We're going to replace every single solitary lead pipe in this country so every family can turn on the faucet and drink clean water and not have to worry about any impact on their kids.

I signed the first gun safety law in nearly 30 years. The largest investment in HBCUs and Hispanic-serving institutions. Despite actions from the Supreme Court and the MAGA Republicans, I relieved the debt of 3.6 million students—3.6 million.

When the Supreme Court turned down my right to forgive all student debt, they—we were still able to find a way to do 3.6 million.

Look, and that—it's changing people's lives. They're able to buy a home, they're able to invest in a business, they're able to begin to live their lives. And some of them have been paying these debts until—for 20, 25 years.

We're making historic commitments to rebuild America. Just yesterday I announced the first historic step forward: a high-speed rail through the Central Valley. Guess what? Y'all are going to be able to move through Central Valley of California at 220 miles an hour. Oh, you—not—not a joke.

And we also just announced we're going to build a high-speed rail averaging 190 miles an hour from L.A. to Las Vegas. Why you want to go to Las Vegas, I'm not sure. [*Laughter*] Except maybe to make a lot of money. I don't know. [*Laughter*]

But look, for all we've done, the real heroes of the story are the American people. That's not a joke. Thousands of towns across America, thousands of stories of revival and renewal, hope and optimism.

For the longest time, my friends on the other team talked about finding the cheapest job—the cheapest employers in the—employees in the world, sent jobs overseas, and imported products.

Not anymore. We are exporting product made by Americans here in the United States of America.

And it's creating—we've created 800,000 new manufacturing jobs. And pride is returning—pride is returning—to communities all over the country.

Nothing like—you know, how many times have you heard: "You know, my dad worked at that factory for 25 years or 30 years. It closed, and now I can't stay where I want to stay. There's no place to work." Well, they're coming back.

Pride in your work, in your family, in your town. Pride in this Nation.

And you know, there's no more to—there's much more to do in terms of childcare and eldercare, making sure the wealthy and big corporations begin to start paying their fair share.

By the way, we did all what I just said and more and still cut the Federal deficit by \$7 billion—\$7 billion.

And you know why we did that? You may remember my ragging about the fact that there were 50 American corporations—the Fortune 500 companies—50 of them who made \$40 billion—\$40 billion in profit and didn't pay a single penny in taxes.

Well, I was able to get at least a 15-percent tax on them—and that's less than you all pay—15 percent, and it paid for every—all of these programs.

And we know all that progress is at stake next election. But tonight I want to talk about what's most at stake in this next election. I'm not going to keep you a long time.

I truly believe the future of American democracy is at stake. Not a joke.

Let me be clear—let me be clear. Donald Trump poses many threats to this country: from the right to choose, to civil rights, to voting rights, to America's standing in the world.

I've been dealing with world leaders my entire career because of my nature of my job as a Foreign Relations chairman and as Vice President under Barack.

But the greatest threat of all that Trump—that Trump poses is to our democracy. Because if you lose that, we lose everything.

You know, when I first ran for President, I said democracy—democracy—was at stake in America, and a lot of people thought it was—I was exaggerating. A lot of people thought it was not accurate. Some of the press thought, "What's he talking about?"

You may remember, on January the 6th, Trump sitting in his private dining room off the Oval Office for hours watching it all unfold on TV—of a mob attacking the Capitol Police, killing a couple, desecrating the Capitol.

The mob threatened the life of his own Vice President because the Vice President refused to violate his oath of office and not certify the election.

That same mob went looking for Nancy Pelosi and—spun up by the same lies that inspired the assault on Paul Pelosi with a hammer to his head. Ladies and gentlemen, months later—months later, that happened, but it's despicable.

Trump became the first losing Presidential candidate in history to refuse to accept the will of the people. It never happened before in American history.

He didn't show up for my Inauguration. I can't say I was disappointed. *[Laughter]* My guess is, he won't show up for the next Inauguration, either. *[Laughter]*

Folks, look—but you know, this guy means what he's saying. Listen to his words today. He says he's running not to serve the American people but, quote, to get "revenge" and "retribution." That's not me; these are his words. That's what he's saying repeatedly.

The other day, he said to a very conservative commentator from Fox News that he was going to be a dictator only on "day one." Well, thank God for that.

[The President made the sign of the cross.]

Only—*[laughter]*—just 1 day.

He called those who oppose him "vermin," language that echoes the—out heard in the fields in Germany in the thirties. He talks about, quote, the "blood of our country" being poisoned. He's talking about—you know what he's talking about. And he's threatened to use the American military to—on the streets of America to go after political opponents, the Insurrection Act.

He embraces political violence instead of rejection [rejecting it; White House correction]. We can't let that happen. No President has done that since the Civil War.

All of us have to understand what freedom means. We know what it means. It means to tell the truth. It means to have courage. It means to hold a mirror up to ourselves and our Nation and say: "Is this who we are? Can we do better?"

Unlike Trump, we don't believe America is dark and negative and driven by anger, fear, and revenge. Trump spoke at his Inaugural, and guess what he—do you remember what he spoke up about? He spoke about the carnage of America—the carnage in America.

In my Inaugural Address, I spoke about American possibilities—American possibilities. We believe we're a hopeful and optimistic people, driven by a simple proposition that everybody—everybody deserves a shot—everyone.

We're the only nation in the world built on something other than race, ethnicity, religion, or geography. We're the only country built on an idea—literally, the only country in the world—the idea that we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men and women are created equal.

We've never fully lived up to it, but we've never walked away from it. We've never walked away from it. But Trump wants us to. We're not going to walk away now. Not if I have anything to do with it.

So let me close with this. In 3 years, we're going to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence—in 3 years. It will be a moment not only about our past, but celebrating all we've done. It will also be about the future and all we can do.

I do not believe we—will not believe that after all this Nation has been through, that we can't do whatever we need to do—from independence to the Civil War to the World Wars. We're blessed with leaders like Washington and Lincoln and Roosevelt and Dr. King.

After having stood as a beacon of freedom and equality for the entire world, I don't believe the 250th anniversary of this Nation will turn to Donald Trump.

Folks, imagine that moment and ask: "What do we want to be? What do we want to be as a nation?" If we do our job in 2024, we'll have something few generations can say they've done. We'll be able to say we saved American democracy. Not a—that's not hyperbole. A fact.

I know we can do this. I've never been more optimistic about our country's future than I am today. I give you my word to that, as a Biden. I give you my word. I'm optimistic.

We just have to remember who in the hell we are. We're the United States of America. There's nothing—nothing—has been beyond our capacity ever in our history. We're the only nation in the world that's come out of every crisis stronger than we went in, if we work together.

So all we have to do is stand up again—stand up again—and make our voices heard, because the American people are ready for a change, a change that makes permanent what we've begun. So much to do.

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

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:47 p.m. at the residence of José E. Feliciano and Kwanza Jones. In his remarks, he referred to Supreme Court Associate Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson; former President Barack Obama; former Vice President Michael R. Pence; Rep. Nancy Pelosi, in her former capacity as Speaker of the House of Representatives, and her husband Paul; and Sean P. Hannity, host, Fox News's "Hannity" program. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 10. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Campaign reception in Pacific Palisades, CA.

Locations: Pacific Palisades, CA.

Names: Biden, Jill T.; Durbin, Richard J.; Feliciano, José E.; Hannity, Sean P.; Harris, Kamala D.; Jackson, Ketanji Brown; Jones, Kwanza; Obama, Barack; Padilla, Alejandro; Pelosi, Nancy; Pelosi, Paul F., Sr.; Pence, Michael R.; Rodriguez, Julie Chávez; Trump, Donald J.

Subjects: 2021 civil unrest and violence at U.S. Capitol; 2024 Presidential election; California, Democratic Party event; California, President's visit; Childcare, access and affordability; Climate change; Corporate tax rates; Economic improvement; Eldercare and home health services; Environmental justice; Federal court nominations and confirmations; Federal deficit and debt; Federal student loans, partial forgiveness; Gun violence, prevention efforts; High-speed rail infrastructure, improvement efforts; Hispanic-serving institutions; Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs); Inflation; Job creation and growth; Lead service lines, replacement efforts; Manufacturing industry, domestic investment; Supreme Court Associate Justice; Unemployment rate; Vice President.

DCPD Number: DCPD202301101.