

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023

Remarks at a Campaign Reception in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
December 11, 2023

The President. Hello, hello, hello. We recorded that so I can hear it replayed on the way home. *[Laughter]*

Thank you, Gov. You're the best.

Governor Joshua D. Shapiro of Pennsylvania. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. You really are. You're the best.

Gov. Shapiro. Thank you.

The President. Thank you, thank you, thank you. Governor Shapiro, you're doing a fantastic job. You're one of the stars among Governors these days. And I think whatever you want to do, you're going to be able to get done.

I want to thank you all. Look, my friend Tom Wolf, who has been a friend for a long time, and Eddie Rendell—I keep calling him Eddie, and maybe—I hope you don't mind, Ed. I think he's around here somewhere—Rendell.

And a big thanks to my friend Chris Coons. It's—it's good to be almost home. *[Laughter]*

You know, the truth of the matter is—the truth of the matter is—you guys in Philadelphia have been the backbone of every one of my campaigns since I started—not because I was a Scranton boy and not because I lived down the road in Claymont, Delaware, but because you—you just stepped up. You helped.

Back when I first started, you know, Delaware had—there was no television station that Delaware had. It was all Philly. And it was expensive to get on Philly from little old Delaware. But you all stepped up for me from the very beginning—from the time I was a 29-year-old United States Senator.

And to all the Members of Congress—you know, Madeleine Dean has become a really good friend, Chris Deluzio, Dwight Evans has been around with me for a while, Chrissy Houlahan, and Mary Kay [Gay; White House correction] Scanlon—you know, I want to thank you for their partnerships—and I mean their partnerships. They've stepped up in the House when it mattered. They've stepped up in the House.

She couldn't be here today, but congratulations to Mayor-elect Parker, who was the first Black woman elected mayor of Philadelphia. That victory is part of an incredible night for Democrats. It's a big win in Pennsylvania's Supreme Court as well.

You know, I've been told—we were told in 2020 that Democrats weren't going to do well. We were told again in 2022 that we were going to go the way of every other incumbent President because you lose off-year elections big time. We were going to lose 30 seats, et cetera.

We were told in the off-year election of 2023 that we were going to do poorly. But guess what? Every single, solitary time we did well.

Let me start today by thanking you, because everything we've done, you've made possible these victories. And that's not hyperbole. You're not only contributing your dollars, but your thoughts, your minds. You're some of the best minds in the country dealing with politics these days.

In 2020, you were the reason I got 81 million votes, more votes than any Presidential candidate has in American history. You're the reason why. And by the way, I'm not joking. This is real.

You're the reason why Donald Trump not only is a former President, he's a defeated former President. And you're the reason why we're going to win again in 2024.

When we started, this pandemic was raging, the economy was reeling, and because of—look—look at what we've achieved because of y'all: record job creation, historic economic growth, among the lowest inflation rates of any major economy in the world. We rebuilt our alliances around the world.

Because of a great help with Senator Dick Durbin of Illinois and the chairman of Judiciary Committee, we've confirmed over 60—I think it's 62, 63—Federal judges. We have more judges who are African Americans in the Federal court than every other—we've appointed more than every other President in American history combined. Two-thirds are people of color. The most diverse State—slate ever.

The first Black woman appointed to the United States Supreme Court—and by the way, she's smarter than the rest. She is really—she is really good.

So the point is, we're making progress because of a lot of help from a lot of different people.

Trump and the MAGA Republicans want to get rid of the Affordable Care Act. This will be their 51st attempt. No, seriously, 51 time. They've—well—and on my watch, we were able to make it more affordable for hard-working people.

You know, we get rid of the Affordable Care Act, preexisting conditions are going to deny a—people—they're going—millions of people are going to get kicked out of health care. Millions of them.

We made the biggest investment in the history of the world to combat climate change. I signed the first new gun safety law in 30 years. Despite actions of the Supreme Court and MAGA Republicans, I was able to relieve the student debt of 3.6 million Americans who now are able to buy homes, get jobs, and move on.

You know, we're making a historic commitment to rebuild America. Here in Pennsylvania, we've already announced over \$13 billion, including for 330 specific projects.

There's no better example of how to rebuild America and do big things than right here in Philly, where union labor and a great team effort on I-95, which was already mentioned by the Governor. Did you any—think it'd done in 12 days?

Audience members. No.

The President. Did a pretty good—damn good—darn good job. *[Laughter]*

And just last week, we announced funding to improve all rail service, including rail service from Harrisburg to Pittsburgh.

We also told you—start—we're finally going to get—and I realize I'm a Scranton boy. I get it. But my dad used to always talk about how the train line from Scranton to New York was a—it's coming back. We got the funding for it.

But for all we've done, the real heroes of this story are the American people. Thousands of towns all across America are seeing thousands of stories of revival, renewal, hope, and optimism and pride.

Pride. We underestimate how important that is. All those small factories all through the Midwest that were closed down. And they used to say: "Dad worked there; Grandpop worked there. But, Mom, I've got to move because there's no jobs here anymore."

Pride. Pride in your work and your family and your town. Pride in the Nation.

And we do—there's more—we've got a lot more to do. We've got to bring back the childcare. You know, when we had that childcare legislation passed, it reduced child poverty more than anything else in American history for child poverty and eldercare.

Making sure the—and the big corporations start finally paying their fair share.

And by the way, we did all this and we still cut the Federal deficit by \$7 billion—\$7 billion [\$1 trillion; White House correction].

And we know all that progress is at stake in this next election.

But today I want to talk briefly—I don't want to keep you very long—about what's most important in this next election. The future of American democracy is literally at stake. It's literally at stake.

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. You ought to come to me at these international meetings with other heads of state—who I've known for a long time—listen to what their concerns are about this election.

But the greatest threat he poses is to our democracy, because if we lose that, we lose everything.

When I first ran for President, I said at—at Independence Hall, I made a speech. I said democracy is at stake in America. And the press—understandably, because it was—they hadn't heard that before—thought, "Well, that's a little bit of an exaggeration." Everybody but the press saw it. The American people understood it. But they didn't think it—they don't think that anymore—the press.

Remember January 6? Trump sitting in the—the small dining room off my—off of the Oval Office for hours and hours watching it all unfold on television: a mob attacked the Capitol, desecrated the Capitol, killed some people. The mob threaten the life of his own Vice President because he would not violate the Constitution to make a fake election.

The same mob that went looking for Nancy Pelosi in the Capitol, spun up by the lies, inspired by assaults—and inspired assaults on her husband with a hammer to his head months later. It's just despicable.

Did you ever think you would see that in our—in any generation sitting before me here?

Trump became the first losing Presidential candidate in history who refused to accept the will of the people. He didn't show up at my Inauguration. Can't say I was disappointed. [Laughter] I guess he won't show up for the second Inauguration either, but—[laughter].

But, folks, I really think it's important—because you're a very sophisticated audience—to listen to his words. He says he's not running to serve the people of America. He says he's running to get, quote, "revenge" and "retribution." Revenge and retribution.

The other day, he said he wants to be a dictator only 1 day to wipe out the civil service and a whole range of other little things like that.

He called those who oppose him "vermin," language that echoes the language in Germany in the thirties. He talked about, quote, "The blood of our country is being poisoned," end of quote.

And he's threatened to use the American military in the streets of America to go after his political opponents.

He's just saying this out loud. He's saying it out loud. He embraces political violence instead of rejecting it. We can't let that happen.

All of you here understand that freedom means to tell the truth, to have the courage to hold up a mirror to the country and say: "Is this who we are? Can we be better? What are we going to do? How do we make it better?"

Unlike Trump, we don't believe America is dark and negative, a nation driven by anger and fear and revenge. When Trump spoke at his Inauguration, he spoke about American carnage. That's what he spoke about, if you recall.

At my Inauguration, I spoke about American possibilities. We believe we are hopeful, an optimistic nation driven by a simple proposition that everyone deserves a fair shot.

We're the only nation in the world—we're unique in this regard—not built on ethnicity, religion, or geography. We're the only nation that has—*[inaudible]*—in the world built on an idea—an idea. And the idea was we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men and women are created equal and deserve to be treated equally throughout their lives.

We've never fully lived up to it, but we've never fully walked away from it, as Trump wants to do now. You know, we're not going to walk away now.

Let me close with this. In 3 years, we'll celebrate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence in this incredible town. It was—it will be a moment not only about our past and celebrating all we've done. It will also be about the future and what we can be.

Because that's what this is always about in America. What's next? What's the future?

I don't believe and I will not believe that after all this nation has been through—from independence, to the Civil War, to world wars; after being blessed with leaders like Washington, Lincoln, Roosevelt, Dr. King; after having been a beacon of freedom and equality for the rest of the world—I don't believe that, on our 250th anniversary, this Nation will turn to Donald Trump.

Folks, imagine—imagine—that moment and ask: "What do we want to be? What do we want to be on our 250th anniversary?"

If we do our job in 2024, we'll have done something few generations can say they've done. We'll be able to say, literally, we saved democracy. We saved democracy.

And, folks, I know we can do it. I know I'm considered a congenital optimist. But, folks, I've never been more optimistic. I mean it from the—I give you my word as a Biden, I've never been more optimistic about our country than I am today.

We're in a—we're in the midst of a great inflection point in world history that occurs about every six to ten generations where things are changing. Things are changing not necessarily because of a single person, but things are changing.

And they're changing it now. From global warming to glacial shifts in alliances, so much is changing.

But I promise you, I've been—I know—I've done foreign policy my whole life—and when I was Vice President and now as President. The rest of the world is looking to us not to fight their fights, but to help them generate the kind of change they want.

Folks, we are the essential nation, as Madeleine Albright said. We truly are.

There's not an international event that I've attended—I've been to 145 countries—since I've been President—there's not one where the rest of the world doesn't come up to me—the leaders—no matter what country they're from, and say: "You've got to—you can't let him win. You can't let him win." They mean it. They mean it.

Here's what we have to remember. Just remember one thing. We have to remember who the hell we are. We're the United States of America. There is nothing beyond our capacity—nothing, nothing, nothing—when we do it together. And that's the God's truth.

Think of this: Can you name me one major crisis America has ever encountered that we haven't come out stronger than when we went into it? That's who we are. We're the United States of America, for God's sake, and our diversity is a great person—a great reason for the power we have.

So, folks, I want to thank you for allowing me to be able to compete in this election, like you did my first time when I ran for the United States Senate. I look at that phenomenal amount of money I raised—\$69,000. *[Laughter]* Most of it was raised here in Philadelphia.

And so, folks, thank you for trusting me. Thank you for helping me. And with the grace of God, the good will of the neighbors, and, as my grandpop was saying, "the creek not rising," we're going to win this election. And we—not only we, the United States, but the world is going to be better off because of it.

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Appreciate it. Thanks. Thank you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:11 p.m. at the Hilton Philadelphia at Penn's Landing hotel. In his remarks, he referred to former Govs. Thomas W. Wolf and Edward G. Rendell of Pennsylvania; Sen. Christopher A. Coons; Supreme Court Associate Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson; former Vice President Michael R. Pence; Rep. Nancy Pelosi, in her former capacity as Speaker of the House of Representatives, and her husband Paul F. Pelosi, Sr. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Campaign reception in Philadelphia, PA.

Locations: Philadelphia, PA.

Names: Coons, Christopher A.; Dean, Madeleine C.; Deluzio, Christopher R.; Durbin, Richard J.; Evans, Dwight E.; Houlahan, Christina J.; Jackson, Ketanji Brown; Parker, Cherelle L.; Pelosi, Nancy; Pelosi, Paul F., Sr.; Pence, Michael R.; Rendell, Edward G.; Scanlon, Mary Gay; Shapiro, Joshua D.; Trump, Donald J.; Wolf, Thomas W.

Subjects: 2021 civil unrest and violence at U.S. Capitol; 2024 Presidential election; Climate change; Corporate tax rates; Federal court nominations and confirmations; Federal deficit and debt; Federal student loans, partial forgiveness; Gun violence, prevention efforts; Health insurance, access and availability; Infrastructure improvements; Pennsylvania, Democratic Party event; Pennsylvania, Governor; Pennsylvania, President's visit; Supreme Court Associate Justice.

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