

*Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023*

**Remarks at a Campaign Reception in Bethesda, Maryland**  
*December 19, 2023*

*The President.* Hello, hello, hello.

Thank you, Governor Wes Moore, for that introduction. I tell you, I was ready to hear another hour or so. *[Laughter]* Thank you very much. And I want to thank you for—the First Lady, Dawn, for putting up with you all these years. *[Laughter]*

Look, the fact is that, you know, you have—do have a great Lieutenant Governor. She is first rate.

And my good friend, Steny Hoyer, we've worked together a long, long time. Now, you were saying all those things about Maryland being first. I've been saying to Steny for years the Eastern Shore of Maryland is really the Western Shore of Delaware. *[Laughter]* But I'm glad he's taken such incredible, good care of us. Steny, you're the very best, man. You are the very best.

Risa and Ben, thank you for hosting. This is really important to me, and I can't tell you how much it means to me and your friendship as well.

But before I begin, I want to say a few words about the situation in the Middle East because I know a lot of you want to hear about it. And I'm going to be very brief because I'll have time to talk about it later.

But I went—when I went to Israel, I went to—to fight Hamas, to—they faced a burden, a few milestones that few countries have to face and militaries that—a military enemy that says it has one goal: to—the elimination—elimination, using terror, of the entire State of Israel. Hamas has no regard—none whatsoever—on whether—if those civilians live or die.

They faced additional burdens too. Hamas is holding a significant number of hostages, including American hostages.

But from the beginning—I've said from beginning, those added burdens do not lessen Israel's responsibility to distinguish between the Palestinian people and Hamas and to take care to minimize civilian deaths.

And we're take—and you know, we're talking to Israel and the Arab partners about political future for the Palestinian people and a two-state solution with Israel's security guaranteed, where Israel enjoys peace and normal relations with their Arab neighbors.

And we're—I've been in discussion—I think one of the reasons why Hamas moved when they did—as Steny knows, I was working very closely with the Saudis in the formal recognition of Israel.

But, ladies and gentlemen, let me get to the reason we're here tonight. I want to thank you. In 2020, you were the reason why we got 81 million votes, more votes than any Presidential candidate has ever gotten in American history. But they're also the reason why Donald Trump not only is a former President, but a former defeated President.

And you're the reason why we're going to win in 2024.

You know, when we started, the pandemic was raging, the economy was reeling. Because of you, look at what we've achieved: record job creation, historic economic growth, among the lowest inflation rates of any major economy on Earth. We rebuilt our alliances around the world.

And because of the great help of Senator Dick Durbin of Illinois, chairman of the Judiciary Committee, we continue to provide for a significant number of—over 60 now—Federal judges at a historic pace, two-thirds of the people—of whom are people of color. The most diverse slate ever, the first Black woman ever appointed to the United States Supreme Court, and more Black women in the Federal—Federal appellate courts and circuit courts than every other President in history combined.

Trump and the MAGA Republicans want to get rid of the Affordable Care Act. In fact, they failed 50 times so far. They're going for 51. *[Laughter]* They're still not giving up. And it's going to—it's the very thing that allows people with preexisting conditions to have insurance. I won't go into all the detail. You know it.

On our watch, we made affordable care even stronger. We're in a position—we made the biggest investment in the history of the world to combat climate change. We signed the first new gun safety law in 30 years.

We need to do more. Despite actions from the Supreme Court and MAGA Republicans, I've relieved the student debt of 3.6 million Americans, and we're going to keep going.

I made a historic commitment to rebuild America. Here in Maryland, you've—we've already announced over \$11 billion, including 140 specific projects, including fully replacing the Baltimore Tunnel. I'm probably the only person in here who's ever walked through that tunnel. *[Laughter]* Not a joke.

I traveled over one million two—three hundred and twenty thousand miles on Amtrak, commuted every single day for years. And that tunnel was built about 180 years ago. *[Laughter]*

The tunnel will be all electric. Trains will travel through at 110 miles an hour instead of 30 miles an hour now, and it's going to be a game changer across the board.

But for all we've done, the real heroes of this story are really the American people. 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, your family, your town; pride in the Nation.

We know there's more to do for childcare and eldercare, making sure that the very big corporations—and by the way, I know something about big corporations. I come from Delaware. *[Laughter]* More corporations incorporated in Delaware than every other State in the Nation combined. I'm not anticorporation, but it's about time they start paying their fair share in taxes.

And by the way, even with the historic investments we've made, we still have reduced the deficit. All the talk about all we've done, we've reduced the deficit so far by \$1 trillion—\$1 trillion. In part because of increasing revenue, but the recovery is going so strongly that we now are able—relative to when I took office—are able to generate additional income.

We reached a bipartisan budget agreement, cut spending an additional \$1 trillion over the next 10 years, and in my budget, we proposed more than \$2 trillion in deficit reduction, on top of—mostly by asking the big corporations to begin to pay their fair share.

Look, and we all know that progress is at stake in the next election. But I want to talk about what I think is even more at stake in this next election: literally the future of American democracy. And it makes everything possible.

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.

Some of you are—you're all successful people; you've traveled the world. Find me a head of state or someone of consequence in a country you visit that doesn't say—you will not—will not—

will believe that every head of state I've met—come in contact with says: "You've got to win. You've got to win."

More—less about me, unfortunately, I think, than about the other guy. *[Laughter]*

But all—it's—the greatest threat Trump poses is to our democracy. Because if we lose, we lose everything.

When I first ran for President, I said democracy was at stake in America. I think a lot of people, particularly the press, thought I was exaggerating. But they don't think that anymore.

They saw what happened on January 6. Sitting in that little dining room off the Oval Office, Trump—Trump sitting there, watching it unfold on TV as a mob attacked the Capitol and desecrated the Capitol. A mob threatened the life of his own Vice President because the Vice President refused to violate his constitutional oath.

The same mob went looking for Nancy Pelosi, spun up by the same lies that inspired the assault that attacked her husband with a hammer to the head 2 months later.

This is a former President who actually condones and encourages violence against his fellow Americans. It's simply not acceptable in America to condone violence. It's despicable.

Trump became the first losing Presidential candidate in history who refused to accept the will of the American people, even though he lost 60 court challenges, recounts in Georgia and Wisconsin. In fact, Donald Trump is the only candidate in history to lose Georgia three times in the same election. *[Laughter]*

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

But look, listen to his words today. Just this weekend, Trump was embracing his old pal, Putin. Trump even quoted him this weekend. It's no surprise. After all, there's a lot of agreement between Moscow and Mar-a-Lago.

Trump says he's running not to serve the people of America, but to—his quote—to get "revenge" and "retribution." Just recently, he said he'd be a dictator for only 1 day. In that 1 day, he's going to take out the Affordable Care Act—40 million people—he wants to get rid of it. He wants to fill the Government with Trump loyalists, seeking a loyalty oath; fire career officials.

He uses the power of the Federal Government for revenge and retribution against his enemies. And the language he uses reminds us of the language coming out of Germany in the thirties. He has called those who oppose him "vermin." And again, this weekend, he talked about "the blood of our country" is being poisoned. Even conservative Republicans have spoken out against it.

He's threatened to use the U.S. military in the streets of America to go after his political opponents. Once again, he embraces political violence instead of rejecting it. We can't let this happen. God knows where he'll take us.

Look, all of you here understand that freedom means to tell the truth, to have the courage to hold up the mirror to the American people and say: "Is this who we are? Can we get better? How can we get better?"

Trump, we don't believe—he doesn't believe he—when he said—he talks about America being, quote, "a failing nation," driven by anger, fear, and revenge. Then Trump spoke—at his Inaugural, he spoken to the American—he spoke about "American carnage." When I spoke at my Inauguration, I talked about America's possibilities.

I believe—I was with Xi Jinping on the Tibetan Plateau when I was Vice President, because I had to get to know him because Barack and I knew he was going to be President. It wasn't appropriate for the President to travel with him. So I've spent over 68 hours alone with him, just he and I with contemporaneous interpreters, and a total of 100—over 100 hours on Zoom with him, total.

And he asked me on the Tibetan Plateau—this is the God's truth—he said, "Can you define America for me?" I said, "Yes, I can." And I meant it. "In one word: possibilities." Possibilities.

We're the only nation in the world that believes anything is possible if we put our mind to it—anything. We believe we're a hopeful and we're an optimistic nation, driven by a simple proposition that everybody deserves a clear shot.

We're only—the only nation in the world built not on race, religion, ethnicity, geography. We're the only nation built on an idea, literally an idea. Not hyperbole. An idea: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men and—you know the rest.

We've never fully lived up to it, but we've never walked away from it. It's the idea that created America. And, ladies and gentlemen, we're not going to walk away now.

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

I don't believe in—I don't believe and I will not believe that, after all this time, what we've done as a nation, we're going to be—walk away. From the—from the fight for independence to the Civil War to World Wars; after being blessed with leaders like Washington and Lincoln and Roosevelt and Dr. King; after having stood as a beacon of freedom, for equality in the world—for all the world, I don't believe our 250th anniversary is going to turn to Donald Trump.

Just this weekend, Trump said, and I quote, "Our country is not a great country anymore." "Our country is not a great country anymore." I simply don't believe that, and I don't think any of you do.

Folks, imagine that moment and ask, "What do we want to be on the 250th anniversary?" If we do our job in 2024, we'll be able to say something few generations get to say or have done: We'll actually be able to say we saved American democracy. Because the alternative is stark. It is stark.

I'm positive—absolutely positive—we can do it. You know, all the talk about polls and all the like—well, you know, there's an awful lot of polls. But the one that just came out talking about a summary of all the polling by Simon Rosenberg, we, on average, are up by 47, 45. It shouldn't even be that close—the New York Times/Siena poll.

Eight recent polls show us winning by 2 to 6 points. But that's not—that doesn't mean a lot right now, in my view, either way, in polls. Those of you who know the business, it's awful hard. You know, you've got to call—you've got to make about 20 calls to get 1 person to answer their cell phone. Seriously.

But I've never been more optimistic about America, about our country. I know that I was—when I had—I had an emergency operation years ago for a cranial aneurysm. And the doc—when they were wheeling me down, I said, "What are my chances, Doc?" And he gave me his estimate.

And I—he said, "I'm not sure whether this is congenital or—a congenital problem or it's environmental." And I said, "I don't care what it is, Doc, just take care of it." *[Laughter]*

And he looked at me and said, "You know what your problem is, Senator?" And I'll never forget this. He said, "Your problem is, you're a congenital optimist." *[Laughter]*

I am a congenital optimist about America. There's nothing, nothing, nothing beyond our capacity. I really mean it.

Think about it. Name me another nation in the history of the world that has come out of every crisis stronger than we went in—stronger than we went in. That's who we are, because we're the American people.

We're the United States of America. We've got to remember that. There's nothing, nothing, nothing beyond our capacity.

I promise I'll do everything in my power not to let you down. I guarantee I'll work like the devil. And I guarantee you: We make our case, we win.

God bless you all, and may God protect our troops. Thank you for taking the time.

Folks, I used to think that traffic was a problem before I was President—[laughter]—but they tell—the Secret Service tells them when to shut down the roads. For every vote you're helping me pick up, I'll lose three. [Laughter]

We told them we'd be doing this now. If I don't, they shut down the roads, and they may come for the tent.

So thank you again. Thank you, thank you, thank you very much.

And by the way, your Governor is one of the best in the Nation. [Inaudible]

Thanks for the help, man. Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:36 p.m. at the residence of Risa S. Bender and Benjamin B. Klubes. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Gov. Aruna Miller of Maryland; Rep. Steny H. Hoyer; Supreme Court Associate Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson; former Vice President Michael R. Pence; Rep. Nancy Pelosi and her husband Paul F. Pelosi, Sr.; President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia; President Xi Jinping of China; former President Barack Obama; and Democratic strategist and commentator Simon Rosenberg. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 20. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Campaign reception in Bethesda, MD.

*Locations:* Bethesda, MD.

*Names:* Bender, Risa S.; Durbin, Richard J.; Hoyer, Steny H.; Jackson, Ketanji Brown; Klubes, Benjamin B.; Miller, Aruna; Moore, Dawn Flythe; Moore, Westley W.O. "Wes"; Obama, Barack; Pelosi, Nancy; Pelosi, Paul F., Sr.; Pence, Michael R.; Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich; Rosenberg, Simon; Trump, Donald J.; Xi Jinping.

*Subjects:* 2021 civil unrest and violence at U.S. Capitol; 2024 Presidential election; Arab-Israeli conflict, peace process; Childcare, access and affordability; China, President; Climate change; Corporate tax rates; Eldercare and home health services; Federal deficit and debt; Federal student loans, partial forgiveness; Gaza, conflict with Israel; Gaza, hostages held by Hamas; Gaza, humanitarian situation; Gaza, international assistance; Gun control efforts; Hamas political-paramilitary organization; Health care costs and affordability; Infrastructure improvements; Israel, military operations in Gaza; Israel, relations with Saudi Arabia; Maryland, Democratic Party event; Maryland, Governor; Maryland, Lieutenant Governor; Maryland, President's visit; Rail infrastructure, improvement efforts; Russia, President; Saudi Arabia, relations with Israel; Supreme Court, Associate Justice.

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