

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024

Remarks at the House Democratic Issues Conference in Leesburg, Virginia
February 8, 2024

The President. Hello, hello, hello. It's good to be with you all. Steny.

Please, thank you. If I were smart, I should leave now. *[Laughter]* Thank you all so very, very much.

I don't see her, but I see—I hear my buddy Nancy Pelosi is here. Are you here, Nance? Nancy, thank you. I love you. I love you, really, truly.

And I see Steny Hoyer is here. Steny has been living in the western shore of Delaware for a long time. *[Laughter]* Good to see you, Steny.

And is Jim Clyburn here? Well, if Jim is here, he's one of the reasons why I'm standing here. I want to thank him.

Hakeem and Katherine and Pete, thank you to all of you—to all of you.

Let me say a few things before I get started with our discussion.

Department of Justice Special Counsel Robert K. Hur's Report on the President's Handling of Classified Documents From His Tenure as Vice President and Senator

First—I'm not going to be very long, I promise. First, the Special Counsel released their findings today about their look into my handling of classified documents. I was pleased to see they reached a conclusion I believed and knew all along they would: that there are—no charges should be brought in this case.

As many of you know, this was an exhaustive investigation going back literally more than 40 years—40 years—when I became a United States Senator when I was a kid. *[Laughter]* I was a kid, 29 years old. *[Laughter]*

Special Counsel acknowledged I cooperated completely, I did not throw up any roadblocks, I sought no delays. In fact, I was so determined to give Special Counsel what they needed, I went forward with a 5-hour in-person interview over the 2 days of October the 9th—8th and 9th last year, even though Israel had just been attacked by Hamas on the 7th. I was in the middle of handling an international crisis.

But I was especially pleased to see the Special Counsel make clear the stark differences between this case and Donald Trump. As the Special Counsel wrote, and I quote, "Several material distinctions between Mr. Trump's case and Mr. Biden's are clear." And by the way, this is a Republican Counsel. "Most notably, after given multiple chances"—this is a continuation of the quote—"he returned classified documents and avoided—to avoid—and avoided prosecution. Mr. Trump allegedly did the opposite."

This is to—continuing to quote: "According to the indictment, he has not only refused to return documents for many months, he also obstructed justice by enlisting others to destroy evidence and then lie about it. In contrast, Mr. Biden turned in classified documents to the National Archives, the Department of Justice; consented to a search of multiple locations, including his homes; and sat for a voluntary interview; and in other ways cooperated with the investigation." That's the distinction, among others.

The bottom line is, the Special Counsel, in my case, decided against moving forward with any charges, and this matter is now closed. I'll continue to do what I've always done: stay focused on my job, like you do—of my job of being President.

House Democratic Issues Conference

That means going to work with all of you every single day I can. Thank you for being great partners. Just this week, House Democrats showed how united you are. You defeated Mayorkas impeachment resolution. You—and I had no doubt he'd get out of his hospital bed and come in and vote. No, I'm not joking. I talked to him a little bit. Not—I mean after, not before. [Laughter]

You defeated the Israel-only—the Israeli-only supplemental. They weren't easy votes for you, but all of you all came through in a big way. All of this just shows that when we're united, we can beat House Republicans and their cynical political games.

And you've been incredible partners that have delivered historic results for the American people. I've traveled to many of your districts. I see the results on how you came through one of the toughest periods in our Nation's history. Hakeem just mentioned many of those accomplishments: vaccinating America, rebuilding America, bringing prices down, and delivering every day for everyday Americans.

A recent Washington Post headline—never thought I'd see this for a Democrat—says, "Falling Inflation and Rising Growth Give United States the World's Best Recovery," end of quote. Because of you. No, I mean it. I may have some good ideas, but you got it done.

But I'd like to use my time to talk about the future—you know, what it means to finish the job in my perspective—from my perspective.

We've made progress making the biggest corporations begin to pay—only begin to pay their fair share. We got—we were able to keep everything in place when the Republicans kept changing the deals we made about spending and the like, right? Remember those days?

Well, with a minimum—remember those 50 corporations that didn't pay a penny in taxes, made \$40 billion? Well, guess what? They're paying a corporate tax of 15 percent. And we're able to keep everything paid for, and we still cut the deficit. We helped pay for historic investments and reduced the Federal deficit. But we're not done.

Trump's \$2 trillion tax cut overwhelming benefited the superwealthy and biggest corporations and exploded the deficit. And it's coming up pretty soon for a decision of what we're going to do. He's already said he wants to not only keep it, but increase it.

Finishing the job means getting the Trump tax cut closed—gutting the Trump tax cuts, closing the loophole for billionaire minimum tax. You know, we went from 750 billionaires in America before the pandemic to 1,000 now. You know what the average tax they pay is—in Federal tax? Eight-point-three percent. Billionaire—those thousand—8.3 percent. That's less than a teacher or a firefighter, and I could go down the list.

I promised a billionaire minimum tax of 25 percent. If we did that, it would raise \$440 billion. Twenty five percent. Four hundred and forty billion dollars to pay for childcare, eldercare, and so much more, and reduce the deficit.

You know, we're also planning for a long-term effort to—I think we have to deal with the tax structure in a way. I mean, I—no matter where I go, whether I was speaking at the Business Roundtable—whatever I'm speaking to, I say, "Raise your hand if you think the present tax system is fair." No, I'm not joking—think about in—in practical terms. Is it fair? Is it remotely fair?

"Finish the job" means beating Big Pharma again to lower prescription costs for everybody. And by the way, you know, when my Republican friends were taking us on on that, what—it not only lowers—you talked about dealing with insulin: 35 bucks a month. Saved the individual a lot of money. But guess what? It saves the taxpayers \$160 billion, reduced the debt by \$160 billion, what we did—what you all did to Pharma. I mean it.

I mean, we—the things we're doing not only help people, but they're reducing the deficit and good economic policy because Medicare doesn't have to pay those exorbitant prices.

We've got to finish the job, meaning it's \$35 insulin not just for the—on Medicare, but like we originally had and they wouldn't continue it: \$35 insulin for everybody—everybody, all Americans.

Lower drug prices for dozens of other prescriptions—we got that into the law. It's coming up. And getting even more Americans health insurance by protecting and expanding the Affordable Health Care Act. You guys have done this.

We've got to—"finish the job" means making housing more affordable, more accessible. It means protecting and strengthening the Social Security system and Medicare.

Republicans want to put it on the chopping block. Remember the last State of the Union, when I—we talked about what their—

Participant. Yes.

The President. Bless me, Father. [Laughter]

And "finishing the job" means protecting fundamental freedoms: passing the John Lewis Voting Rights Act finally and making *Roe v. Ward* [*Wade*; White House correction] the law of the land—the law of the land.

It means beating the NRA again, banning assault weapons, high-capacity magazines, which we did before.

"Finish the job" means continuing our fight to save the planet with the most aggressive action on climate ever in the history of the America—of the world.

With every new bridge, every new factory, every new high-speed rail, internet, with every poisonous lead pipe removed, I see something else happening now and in the future: Pride is returning.

When I said—when I—we pushed all these programs, I said I'm going to be a President for everybody, whether you live in a red State or a green [blue; White House correction] State. I know it drives some of you crazy that we—a lot of these things are happening in red States, but the Americans need help.

You know, some of your more interesting colleagues go out and hold press conferences of the things they said was a "disaster" and was "almost immoral." What's that blonde-haired woman's name? Anyway. [Laughter] She's talking about all that's going in her district. [Laughter] Oh, God. Anyway. [Laughter]

Look, what happened with a lot of people—and particularly in the near-Midwest, in the Midwest, in the Northwest—is that, you know, for years and years you could go by the factory that employed 800, 1,000, 1,200 people—Mom had worked there, Dad had worked there, Grandpop, Grandma—and they had pride in what they did.

And, all of a sudden, corporate America decided—and it really did over the last 10 years—decided, "You know, I'd rather take my factory, move it overseas because the labor is cheaper, and then import the product." Well, not anymore. Not anymore.

Guess what, folks? There's a provision in the law that says—that I didn't even know it existed until I—about 8 years ago—and that is when—they had legislation in the thirties dealing with the issue of whether or not labor unions had a right to organize, what protections they had, et cetera.

There was a provision in the law that even Democratic Presidents didn't either know about or pay much attention to. It said any money you appropriate—that Congress appropriates and it goes to the President of the United States for a public purpose, that President should hire an American worker and American companies to do it. *[Applause]* Really.

Well, we're investing in America. That's what you're doing. We're investing in America. We're bringing back pride to communities, pride in our country.

And so I want to thank you for doing the job you were elected to do. It matters to the American people, and it's—we're in a position to win in 2024, I think.

That brings me to the second point. We have to make the contrast, the choice crystal clear—through [though; White House correction] our friends on the other side make it easy for us. Time and again, Republicans show they're a party of chaos and disunion. This is not your father's Republican Party. They shout about a problem, but then do nothing to solve the problem.

The bottom line is, Republicans have to decide: Who do they serve? This is—I'm not—this is not hyperbole. Who do they serve: Donald Trump or the American people?

You have worked so hard—a bipartisan group—so hard for so long to deal with the border and all the other issues we have in that appropriation. And guess what? Donald Trump allegedly—I can't prove this; I'm told—called people and said, "If you support that, I'm coming after you." Not his—not—I don't know what the exact words were, but "I'm coming after you."

Are they here to solve a problem or just to weaponize for political attacks those problems?

I know our answer. We're here to serve the American people. That's not—it's not like we—we're here, we're Democrats, we all—that's the job: serve the American people. We have to make that clear. If we do, we win.

Just look at 2020. We weren't supposed to do well. Remember? We won in spite of a lot—*[inaudible]*—2022: The red wave was coming. And guess what? It crashed up on a rock. *[Laughter]* In 2023, every close race, we won.

When voters have a choice between what we stand for and what Trump and the MAGA Republicans stand for, we win. Which makes Trump and his MAGA friends losers. *[Laughter]*

When we win, we have to do it the old-fashioned politics way. We have to get out the vote—an aggressive grassroots operation to get folks registered and get out the vote.

And here's the final point I want to make. I can't take anything for granted—we can't. In 2020, we ran—I ran because I thought everything this country stood for, everything we believed in, everything that made America "America" was at risk. And I believed that, and I spoke to that.

And I was—I think people thought I was being hyperbolic at the time. "Joe, what do you mean our democracy is at risk?" Seriously. Remember, I made that—you may not, but I made a speech at Independence Hall in the beginning. *[Laughter]* "What do you mean we're in a battle for the soul of America?"

Well, people don't say that anymore. They know the stakes are higher than ever.

We've made more progress in 3 years, because of you, than most Presidents have in 8 years. But it can all be wiped out in this election. So we have to stay focused on what we have to do.

We must—we must—keep the White House. We must keep the Senate. And we must take back the House—with all of you sworn in again and Hakeem Jeffries your Speaker of the House. And when we do that, we'll be able to look back and say something few generations can say: The American democracy was at risk, and you saved it.

Look, we just have to remember who in the hell we are. We're the United States of America. I mean it. There is nothing beyond our capacity when we work together.

So God bless you all. And thank you for all you do.

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:13 p.m. at the Lansdowne Resort. In his remarks, he referred to Reps. Steny H. Hoyer, Nancy Pelosi, James E. Clyburn, Alexander N. Green, and Marjorie Taylor Greene; House Minority Leader Hakeem S. Jeffries, who introduced the President; House Minority Whip Katherine M. Clark and Democratic Caucus Chair Peter R. Aguilar; former President Donald J. Trump; and Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 9.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : House Democratic Issues Conference in Leesburg, VA.

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Names: Aguilar, Peter R.; Clark, Katherine M.; Clyburn, James E.; Green, Alexander N.; Greene, Marjorie Taylor; Hoyer, Steny H.; Hur, Robert K.; Jeffries, Hakeem S.; Mayorkas, Alejandro N.; Pelosi, Nancy; Trump, Donald J.

Subjects: 2024 Presidential election; Abortion; Border security; Broadband and wireless technologies; Classified documents, access and storage; Climate change; Corporate tax rates; Department of Justice Special Counsel; Federal deficit and debt; Gaza, conflict with Israel; Gun violence, prevention efforts; Health insurance, access and availability; House Democratic Caucus; House minority leader; House minority whip; Inflation; Infrastructure improvements; Insulin cost controls; Israel, military operations in Gaza; Israel, U.S. assistance; Labor movement and organized labor; Medicare and Medicaid programs; Prescription drug costs, reduction efforts; Secretary of Homeland Security; Social Security program; Tax Code reform; Virginia, Democratic Party event; Virginia, President's visit; Voting rights, protection efforts.

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