

*Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024*

**Remarks at the National Association of Counties Legislative Conference**  
*February 12, 2024*

*The President.* Hello, hello, hello.

*Audience members.* Hello!

*The President.* If you have a seat, take one. *[Laughter]*

Thank you so very, very much. You know, I want to thank Commissioner McGuire from Ramsey County, Minnesota. You know, the fact is that it's an honor to join all of you. And I want to thank you for how far we've come these last 3 years. And I want to thank you.

We have more to do, but with your help, we're making real progress in red counties and blue counties. I promised to be a President for all Americans, whether you voted for me or not. Well, together—*[applause]*. No, it's okay.

Together, we're making a big difference bringing this country together and not tearing it apart.

Now, some of you know I started my career as a county councilman. I ran for the United States Senate because serving as a local official was too hard. *[Laughter]* That's almost true. *[Laughter]* When folks have a problem, they know where you live, they come knocking on your door. Not a joke. I know.

Kidding aside, what you do really matters. It matters to people's everyday lives through kitchen-table issues. You're answering key questions in people's lives: Is my neighborhood safe? Is it going to get better? Will the bus get me to work on time? How about the schoolbus showing up for my kid? Will my kids have a good future in this hometown? Are there going to be jobs?

That's what I filled my administration—why I filled my administration with so many who served in county government, starting with Vice President Harris; Tom Perez—the point person in the White House, who wants to join you all permanently, I think—*[laughter]*—all he does is brag about you; you think I'm kidding, I'm not—*[laughter]*; and others throughout my Cabinet.

They know what you do. The measure of success isn't how partisan—how many partisan points you can score, but can you fix the problem. It's really—*[applause]*—no, it really is basic. Democrat and Republican, you fix the problem.

We all share the same belief: We're here to deliver results for families, for communities, for the country. That's why I've kept my commitment to leave no one behind, to rebuild an economy from the middle out and the bottom up, because if we do that, everybody—everybody—does well.

Look at the progress we've made together. And I mean it when I say "we." I came to office, the pandemic was raging, and our economy was reeling. Counties nationwide faced devastating budget cuts. But we turned things around. The American Rescue Plan provided \$350 billion to State and local governments.

That money put cops on the beat, teachers in the classroom. Money to keep childcare centers open, families in their homes, small businesses on their feet. Money directly to every single community in America so all of you—all of you—could decide how best to spend your money without having to go through the statehouse or your Governor. They're not bad, but you know what you need.

Then we passed the most significant investment in our Nation's infrastructure in generations: roads, bridges, railroads, ports, airports, public transit, clean water, high-speed internet, and so much more.

The American infrastructure plan used to—you know, we used to be the best in the world in infrastructure. Literally, we were ranked number one in the world. By the time I took office, America was ranked number 13—had the 13th best infrastructure in the world. How can you have the best economy in the world when you don't have the best infrastructure in the world? I don't know how that works.

So, today, we're on our way to leading the world again. Over 46,000 new projects announced with jobs now, jobs for the next decade in your counties, in your communities.

You know, just like FDR passed the Rural Electrification Act to deliver electricity to nearly every home and farm in America, we're building affordable high-speed internet for everyone in America, because the internet is just as essential today as electricity was then.

How does your county deal with telemedicine without it? How do you—I could go down the list. I'm not going to take your time. But you know it's consequential.

Last month, I was in Wake County, North Carolina——

*Audience members.* Woo!

*The President.* Holy mackerel—[laughter]—where we're investing \$3 billion to connect the entire State to affordable high-speed internet by the end of the decade. We're doing that in all 50 States, where we've already saved 23 million families as much as \$75 a month on their infrastructure bill—in their internet bills.

It's essential for children to do their homework, small-businesses to sell their products, folks to have access, as I said, to telemedicine instead of driving long distances to see the doctor.

We're also replacing every poisonous lead pipe in America so everyone can turn on a faucet and drink clean water and not worry about brain damage for our children.

One recent study shows that reducing the lead exposure for children improves students' test scores as much as reducing class size [by a third; White House correction] to—from one-tenth—for one-tenth the cost. I mean, that's a practical impact. But mainly, no kid should have to turn on a—no parent should have to watch their kid turn on a water fountain and know there's lead in the pipe and not—and worry about what effect on the brain it has.

At the same time, we're making the biggest investment in climate change ever anywhere in the entire world. I've been with many of you after devastating floods, tornadoes, wildfires, and hurricanes. We're going to keep working together to respond, to rebuild, and boost resilience in—to extreme weather.

My administration is also helping to install rooftop solar—[applause]—to build a national network of electric-vehicle charging stations. We're revitalizing fenceline communities smothered by the legacy of pollution, like where I lived in Claymont. We're promoting clean energy and industries of the future, made here in America—made in America.

What I didn't realize—and I've been around—I know I don't look like it, but I've been around a while. [Laughter] I do remember that. [Laughter]

But you know, there's so much we're getting done. I signed the CHIPS and Science——

*Audience member.* [Inaudible]

*The President.* Okay. [Laughter]

I signed the CHIPS and Science Act, which attracted \$640 billion in private companies' investments that are building factories, creating jobs in America again.

And here's an example. America invented the semiconductor. I may have said it last time I spoke to you. That little, tiny computer chip about the size of the—my—the tip of my little finger. Everything from smartphones, dishwashers, automobiles, nuclear weapons, everything—all these things.

Over time, we went from producing nearly 40 percent of the world's chips to less than about 10 percent.

Now semiconductor companies are moving back to America to produce, back to your counties—[applause]—so folks never have to leave their hometowns to get a good job they can raise a family on.

And by the way, you know, they're building these—what they call "fabs." They're factories. You know what those—how much those factories pay? They pay about \$110 a year—\$110,000 a year. And guess what? You don't need a college degree to have that job.

And all these companies tell me they're coming back because they have—we have the best workers in the world. When I got on a plane and went to South Korea, they said, "What they hell are you—what the heck are you doing, Joe?" [Laughter] I said, "I'm going to try to convince them to invest here."

Why? Remember we had that supply chain issues? We couldn't get these chips? Well, guess what? Samsung came, and I met with the President of South Korea. And all of a sudden, I asked the leader of the company. I said, "Why would you invest in America?" He said, "You have the best workers in the world, number one." And he also said, "It's the safest place in the world I can make my investment."

Given half a chance—[applause]. Think about this in practical terms. Given half a chance, American workers have never, ever, ever, ever let this country down—ever—when they're given a chance. Never.

As I started to say, you know, we had a—I didn't realize that there was a provision in the law back in the late thirties having to do with whether or not unions can organize and what limits they had and all of that.

But there was a provision also in that law. It said that when a President is given money by the Legislature to spend on a Federal project, he should hire American workers and build it with American products.

Well, guess what? That's what we're doing. That's why things are moving the way they are. That's why we made historic investments. For example, we're expanding registered apprenticeships so people can get paid while they're learning how to—their careers. For example, when I took office, only two States had registered apprenticeships for teachers. Now more than 30 States have it.

The American Rescue Plan also made one of the biggest investments ever in local public safety. All of you have done a tremendous job putting these resources to work: hiring more officers for accountable, effective community policing; supporting violence intervention programs that help prevent crime in the first place—and they work.

Folks don't always hear about it, but the fact is, we're making tremendous progress. Violent crime rates are falling all across the Nation, down nearly in every major category. Record declines in homicides.

We also are investing billions in improving mental health services—[applause]—which I know is another major priority.

You know, after we—the fellow who's running again—well, I—[laughter].

[At this point, the President made the sign of the cross.]

[Laughter] After he did not—he did not move on making sure that we dealt with vaccinating the American public, we ended up losing over a million people dead—a million people. A million.

And the studies show that for every one of those who died, there are 8 to 10 significant others who are left behind—brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers—sitting down at a kitchen table with an empty chair.

Folks, my top priority to me is to add—that's why I asked Dr.—the Surgeon—Dr. Vivek Murthy—Admiral Murthy to be the Surgeon General, because—to make mental health a national priority.

We're expanding community clinics, mobile unit clinics, working to treat causes of addiction while cracking down on deadly fentanyl trafficking.

Folks, we've spent months working on a bipartisan border bill that included the most humane, fair reforms to our immigration system ever. It also included the toughest set of reforms to secure the border ever.

It was a win for the American people and a win for your counties. But some of my extreme Republican friends—and by the way, this is not your father's Republican party. I don't mean to take—I'm not taking on all Republicans. I really mean it. The MAGA Republicans—a minority, but a powerful minority—they went out, and they killed the deal. My predecessor said he didn't like it; it was a loss for him.

We have to end the political games, folks. Who we work for—[applause]—we work for the American people, and I'm going to continue making the case to them, the American people.

Folks, in all, my "Investing in America" agenda has ignited a manufacturing boom, a clean-energy boom, a jobs boom. We're investing in all of America—urban, suburban, rural, Tribal communities.

And it's clear we have the strongest economy in the world: nearly 15 million new jobs since I came to office. The longest stretch of unemployment under 4 percent in 50 years. Growth is strong. Rages are—wages are rising. Inflation is down.

In fact, the costs have fallen from everything from a gallon of gas to a gallon of milk. We know prices are still too high because of what I call "greedflation" and "shrinkflation." I'm calling on corporations to pass their savings on to consumers, for God's sake.

We're making real progress.

A recent Washington Post headline summed it up, quote—this is the headline of the Post—"Falling inflation and rising growth give the U.S. the world's best recovery." "The world's best recovery." It's because you implemented what we did. You made it work.

And folks are starting to feel it. We've got a way to go yet. Consumer sentiment surged 29 percent in the last 2 months, the biggest jump in 30 years.

Americans have filled a record 16—filed for a record 16 million new business applications since I came to office, and every one of those applications is a sign of hope. We're just getting started, folks. We've got to keep moving. We have to defend our democracy.

To all the county-elected workers in America—electoral—election workers, thank you. I never thought I'd have to say this to anybody. But thank you for your physical courage. Thank you for your courage and your service to your community.

The idea that I ever thought—[*applause*]. The idea that I ever thought I'd be standing before over a thousand county officials and having to thank somebody for being an election worker because they're putting their life at risk, something's wrong, folks. We've got to change this. We've got to change the attitude in this country.

Let me close with this. These past few years, I've talked to folks all across America in their communities, at their kitchen tables. They often tell me how, back in 2020, they were down. They'd lost their business. They'd lost faith.

But then the laws we passed and the work you did to make them work began to bring them back on their feet, creating new jobs, new businesses, a new cycle of hope.

That's why when we see folks—when you see shovels in the ground, people going to work, I hope you feel the pride in what you've done—pride in your hometowns making a comeback, pride in America, pride in knowing we can get big things done when we work together.

That's America—[*applause*—working together. That's what you do. And that's why I've never been more optimistic about our Nation's future.

We just have to remember who in God's name we are. We're the United States of America. There is nothing, nothing, nothing beyond our capacity when we work together.

So God bless you all, and may God protect our—but let's keep going. We've got more to do.

Thank you, thank you, thank you. Thank you!

[*Music began to play; the President resumed his remarks as follows.*]

One more thing I forgot. I forgot to mention New Castle County, Delaware. Where are all my five—

*Audience members.* Woo!

*The President.* Come on. Stand up. Where are—over there. God love you. [*Laughter*]

Hey, I said they know where you live. All right. Thank you. [*Laughter*] Appreciate it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:41 a.m. at the Washington Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Director of the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs Thomas E. Perez; President Yoon Suk Yeol of South Korea; Lee Jae-yong, vice chairman, Samsung Electronics Co., Ltd.; and former President Donald J. Trump.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : National Association of Counties Legislative Conference.

*Locations:* Washington, DC.

*Names:* Harris, Kamala D.; Lee Jae-yong; McGuire, Mary Jo; Murthy, Vivek H.; Perez, Thomas J.; Trump, Donald J.; Yoon Suk Yeol.

*Subjects:* Apprenticeship programs and job training; Border security; Broadband and wireless technologies; Climate change; Community policing programs, improvement efforts; Community violence-interruption programs; COVID-19 pandemic; COVID-19 vaccines; Crime rates; Drinking water, safety improvement efforts; Drug and alcohol addiction, treatment and reduction efforts; Economic improvement; Economic stimulus legislation; Election security and integrity, strengthening efforts; Environmental justice; Immigration reform; Inflation; Infrastructure

improvements; Job creation and growth; Lead service lines, replacement efforts; Manufacturing industry, domestic investment; Mental health programs and services; National Association of Counties; Office of Intergovernmental Affairs; Opioid epidemic, efforts to combat; Renewable energy sources and technologies; Semiconductor manufacturing; Small businesses, promotion efforts; South Korea, President; State and local law enforcement, Federal support; U.S. Surgeon General; Unemployment rate; Vice President.

*DCPD Number:* DCPD202400101.