

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024

Remarks at a Campaign Reception in Beverly Hills, California
February 20, 2024

The President. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Please sit down. I'm sure you're standing up because you're so bored of sitting down all this time. [*Laughter*]

Leslie, thank you for that introduction.

And a special thanks to Haim and Cheryl and opening their home to us. And to Casey for cohosting. I wish them the quickest recovery.

And thanks to all of you for your support and—including Congressman Brad Sherman. Where are you, Brad? There you are. You've come through one of the toughest periods in recent American history.

Look, folks, you know, I wouldn't wait this long for anybody except possibly—can you—what's—what's her name? Jane Fonda. [*Laughter*] I wouldn't do this for anybody else, Jane—wait this long.

But thank you. Thank you all very, very much.

Look, folks, I'm going to try to—I'm going to shorten what I was going to say in the interest of your sanity and a little bit of time. I'd like to talk about the future and what it means to finish the job.

Folks, "finish the job" means beating Big Pharma again to keep lowering drug prices across the entire country. We made insulin drop from about \$40—\$400 a month to about \$35—not—you can't charge more than \$35 for seniors on Medicare. We wanted to make it for everyone, but Republicans blocked it.

"Finishing the job" means \$35 insulin for everyone with diabetes, lowering drug prices for dozens of other prescriptions, and by the way, saving—saving the Federal Government—reducing the debt over 10 years by \$260 billion. It reduces the debt. It means that the—Medicare is not paying those prices.

Trump and his MAGA friends have promised again to get rid of the Affordable Care Act, the law that provides millions—millions—of Americans with preexisting condition the opportunity to have insurance. They wouldn't have it without that.

"Finish the job" means protecting and expanding the Affordable Care Act. It means protecting and strengthening Social Security and Medicare that our MAGA Republicans—not all—this—by the way, let me—I should say at the outset: This is not your father's Republican Party. This a different party. And I mean that sincerely. There's a lot of really, really fine Members of Congress that are Republicans that I disagree with, but we're friends and they play it straight.

But look, they want to put Medicare and they want to put Social Security on the chopping block. Trump wants to do away with the most historic action ever on climate.

"Finishing the job" means implementing the Inflation Reduction Act at every—every—level and building a clean energy future here in America. That's what it's all about. And by the way, you all know in California there's no global warming. [*Laughter*] This is like it—this is what it's like every year, right?

Look, folks, finish the job means making housing more affordable and accessible.

We've made progress—[*applause*]. We've made progress on tax fairness, making sure the biggest corporations pay their fair share with a minimum corporate tax of 15 percent, and that's not even enough.

By the way, I—in case you wonder, I know a little about corporations. I come from a State that has more corporations incorporated than every other State in America combined, and I represented it for 36 years. I think they should be able to function to make money but not—they should pay their taxes.

They also helped pay for our historic investments to help reduce the Federal deficit. We've—but we're—but we're not done.

Trump's \$2 trillion tax cut, which is about to expire, overwhelmingly helped the very, very wealthiest of us, but not the vast majority of the American people.

"Finishing the job" means getting rid of Trump's tax cut, closing loopholes. You know, we have a thousand billionaires now in America after—since the—a thousand. You know what the average Federal tax they pay: 8.3 percent. Who want—raise your hand if you only want to pay 8.3 percent. [*Laughter*]

But all—but all kidding aside, if we just charge them 28 percent, which is not even getting into the highest category, it's \$400 billion over 10 years in additional revenue.

But, folks, look—look, we have to plan for the long term: paying for our priorities like childcare, long-term health care, and so much more. It's good for families, and it's also good for the economy. The economy grows when more women are able to work because there's someone able to take care of their children.

Trump and his MAGA friends are determined to take away your fundamental freedoms. They attack the right to vote you—have your vote counted. "Finish the job" means the John Lewis Voting Rights Act should be passed—should be passed.

Donald Trump continues to amaze me. He brags about overturning *Roe v. Wade*, taking away a woman's freedom to choose. Now reports show he supports a national ban on the right to choose across the board, every State—not leave it to the States—every State.

I'm determined to restore *Roe v. Wade*. Let me make it clear. And if MAGA Republicans pass a national ban on the right to choose, I will veto it. And if reelected—me and Kamala—and we take back the House and a bigger majority in the Senate, we're going to finish the job. We're going to restore *Roe v. Wade* as the law of the land again. We can do that.

And I keep my promise—I kept it to appoint the first Black woman to the Supreme Court of the United States of America. I've appointed more Black women to the Federal courts of appeals than every other President combined in all of American history. "Finish the job" means getting more judges on the bench across the board.

All the progress matters from the American people in the positions—to put us in a position to win in 2024. And that brings me to my second point: I have to make a constant—and we have to contrast the choices between Trump and me. We've got to make them crystal clear.

Time and again, Republicans show they're a party of chaos and disunion. They'll shout about the problems, but there's nothing they—they offer about them. Think about it. They have no platform. I'm—not a joke. They have no platform.

Look at what they're doing with the bipartisan immigration and border bill. We worked—I put together—we put together a group of Democrats and Republicans in the Senate and the House. And we worked on this for 5 months—4 months, and we came up with an answer.

The first bill I ever introduced in the United States Senate—in the Congress as President was an immigration bill to provide them the means to be able to have enough judges, enough—enough Border Patrol, enough—down the line, they don't have it—enough technology to be able to determine whether fentanyl is being hidden, et cetera.

We get a bill, and—and guess what? It passes. It passes—I mean, it gets a consensus in the Senate. And guess what happens? After making this issue for years, the House Republicans and the new leader took a 2-week vacation instead of actually getting it done.

Why? Because Donald Trump literally was on the phone telling them: If you vote for this legislation, giving the authority to really make progress at the border and give all the means necessary to control the border, then you're my—I don't know what he exactly said—you're going to be my retribution. But that's the kind of language he uses.

Look at what they're doing with the national security supplemental bill that provides assistance to Ukraine, Israel, and the Palestinian people: nothing. Not a single thing. Why? Because that's what Donald Trump tells them to do.

The same guy who said if an ally didn't pay their dues, he would encourage Russia to, quote, "do whatever the hell they want." A former American President—can you imagine him saying that—the President of the United States?

But you see it all on television. I don't even have to tell you about it anymore. It's constantly on television, the things he's saying.

When Putin—this fierce opposition to—anyway, I shouldn't get going. *[Laughter]* But look, when Navalny died last week and the world holds Putin responsible, Trump fails to even condemn him. It's outrageous.

Bottom line is Republicans have to decide: Who do they serve, Donald Trump or the American people? Because that's where it is right now. Are they here to solve problems or just weaponize them for political attacks?

I know my answer. I'm here—I'm here to serve the American people. And let me make it very clear, we—if we make that clear to all the American people, we're going to win. Just look at 2020. They told us we weren't going to win when I talked about democracy was at stake; 2020, we won, notwithstanding the fact we only did it by 7 million votes—*[laughter]*—2022 was going to be the red wave, remember?

For the best year for an off year for an incumbent President ever, 2023: We won every contested major race in the country.

So, folks, when voters have a choice between what we stand for, what Trump and his MAGA Republicans stand for, we win.

And that gets me to my final point. We can't take anything for granted. In 2020, I ran because I thought everything this country stood for, everything we believed in, everything that made America "America" was at risk.

I'd made a speech in Independence Hall—I made several of them saying democracy was at stake. The press said, "What's he talking about democracy for?" Well, guess what? Sixty-five percent of the American people thought I was right, because they worry about it being at risk.

I think people thought I was being hyperbolic at the time. "Joe, what do you mean, 'Democracy is at risk'? What do you mean, 'We're in the battle for the soul of America'?" Well, people don't say that anymore.

Trump and his MAGA friends are driving us not—and dividing us every step of the way, not uniting us; dragging us back to the past, not leading us to the future; refusing to accept the results of a legitimate election; seeking, as Trump says, to "terminate"—his word—"terminate" elements of the United States Constitution; embracing political violence; calling January 6 insurrectionists "patriots." He called these guys "patriots," and he says he's going to pardon them if he wins. Calling immigrants "vermin" who "poison the blood of our country," threatening our very democracy.

Well, folks, we have to make clear that we stand with the truth, and we're going to defeat him and his lies. We must make clear in America that we still believe in honesty, decency, respect. We believe that we're all created equal and deserve to be treated equal. We haven't lived up to that. We've never walked away from it, though.

Look, folks, we leave nobody behind. We believe everyone deserves a—just a fair shot. And we give hate no safe harbor. We believe in America.

Folks, the stakes couldn't be higher. They're the highest they've ever been. We've made more progress in 3 years than most Presidents have made in 8 years, because of the help of all of you. I wouldn't be standing here without you.

But it can all be wiped out in this election. So we have to stay focused on what we have to do to win. We have to get out the vote. We have to keep the White House. We have to increase the numbers in the Senate. And we have to take back the House.

And when we do that, we'll look back and say something few generations are able to say: We saved American democracy when it was at risk. I think it really is literally that—that consequential.

Look, folks, we've got to remember who the hell we are. We are the United States of America. There's nothing, nothing, nothing we've ever failed to do when we set our mind to it and did it together. So—well—[*laughter*]. So we've got to move again. We've got to move in a way that—and I think the American people are ready for it.

And by the way, I know I'm only 40 years old—[*laughter*—times two. And—but you know, the only thing I do know is that I may not run as fast as I used to, I may not be able to play flanker back for Delaware again but—[*inaudible*]. But I tell you what—I tell you what: I've been around long enough to know what's going on. I've been around long enough to, hopefully, with age, have a little bit of wisdom about how we can get things done.

And so far, with your help, we've gotten a lot done. The vast majority of Presidential historians—Democrat, Republican, conservative, and liberal—have pointed to the success you've allowed this administration to have. It's real.

We have the finest economy in the world. We've got a lot more work to do—a lot more work to do. But things are beginning to move. We can't slow down now.

As I said, I've been doing this a long time. And the fact of the matter is—and I say this from the bottom of my heart: I've never been more optimistic about America's chances. Never.

Every single world leader that I've known, and I've known all of them—literally all of them the last 40 years—every single one, when I attend international meetings now—not a joke—grabs my arm and says: "You've got to win. You've got to win because my democracy is at stake."

And it's not about me. It's about America keeping its commitments. It's about America keeping its commitments. And we're going to—we're going to do it.

Again, I'm sorry to keep you waiting so long. And I'm sorry to speak as long as I did. But there's a lot we can do together. A lot. And I really mean it: I am truly optimistic.

You know, my dad used to say: "Joey, a job is about a lot more than a paycheck. It's about your dignity. It's about respect. It's about being able to look your kid in the eye and say, 'Honey, it's going to be okay,' and mean it—and mean it."

Just give them a chance. The vast majority of people are just looking for a chance. And I think that's what the economy we put together is doing: giving them a chance. We have the lowest unemployment rate in 50 years.

And so I won't go through the—but the point is—Madeleine Albright wrote a book about America before she passed away. She said America is the essential country. Many of you travel the world. We are the essential country. Name me another country that has the potential capacity to keep the free world free, to hold the nations together as we've done.

This is the United States of America. There's nothing, nothing, nothing beyond our capacity.

Thanks for your patience. [*Inaudible*] Thank you. And God bless our troops. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:17 p.m. at the residence of Haim and Cheryl Saban. In his remarks, he referred to Leslie Gilbert-Lurie, member of the board of trustees, California State University; Casey Wasserman, chairman and chief executive officer, Wasserman Media Group; actor Jane Seymour Fonda; former President Donald J. Trump; Vice President Kamala D. Harris; Supreme Court Associate Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson; Sens. Christopher S. Murphy, Kyrsten L. Sinema, and James P. Lankford; Speaker of the House of Representatives J. Michael Johnson; and President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia. He also referred to H.R. 815. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 21. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Campaign reception in Beverly Hills, CA.

Locations: Beverly Hills, CA.

Names: Fonda, Jane Seymour; Gilbert-Lurie, Leslie; Harris, Kamala D.; Jackson, Ketanji Brown; Johnson, J. Michael; Lankford, James P.; Murphy, Christopher S.; Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich; Saban, Cheryl; Saban, Haim; Sherman, Bradley J.; Sinema, Kyrsten L.; Trump, Donald J.; Wasserman, Casey.

Subjects: 2021 civil unrest and violence at U.S. Capitol; 2024 Presidential election; Abortion; Border security; California, Democratic Party event; California, President's visit; Climate change; Corporate tax rates; Economic improvement; Federal court nominations and confirmations; Federal deficit and debt; Gaza, international assistance; Health insurance, access and availability; Immigration reform; Insulin cost controls; Israel, U.S. assistance; Medicare and Medicaid programs; Opioid epidemic, efforts to combat; Prescription drug costs, reduction efforts; Renewable energy sources and technologies; Russia, President; Social Security program; Speaker of the House of Representatives; Supreme Court Associate Justice; Tax Code reform; U.S. diplomatic efforts, expansion; U.S. Supreme Court opinion overturning 1973 decision in *Roe v. Wade*; Ukraine, U.S. assistance; Vice President; Voting rights, protection efforts.

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