

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024

Remarks at a Campaign Reception in Raleigh, North Carolina
March 26, 2024

Vice President Kamala D. Harris. Roy Cooper, everyone. Roy Cooper. Thank you, Roy.
Please, everybody, have a seat.

It is so good to be back in North Carolina. Every time I come to North Carolina as Vice President, Roy meets me on the tarmac at Air Force Two. And as soon as I take the last step, he tells me what visit it is in terms of what number it is—keeping track. And I think now we're at—what?—11, I think—11 trips to North Carolina since I've been Vice President. And you are a dear friend and an extraordinary leader, Roy.

As Roy mentioned, he and I did work together as attorneys general. And of course, each State has a representative in that group at the National Association of Attorneys General. And Roy was always a leader among leaders.

And as Governor of this State, you have been courageous, you have been fearless, you always do your work with incredible conviction, you believe in the foundational principles upon which we stand as a country, and you've been a dear friend to the President and me. Can we please, again, applaud Roy Cooper for his work? Truly. Truly.

And earlier today it was good to see the next Governor of North Carolina, Attorney General Josh Stein. And I don't need to tell you all, as attorney general, he has a long track record of taking on special interests and defending the people of the State of North Carolina. And I look forward to continuing the work we will do together.

So, many of us have been through these election cycles, for years, every 4 years—for many years now. And each time we have said, for good reason, "This is the one." Well, friends, this is the one. *[Laughter]* This is the one.

This is the most existential, consequential, and important election of our lifetime. We all know that.

I'll tell you, as Vice President, I have now met with over 150 world leaders—Presidents, Prime Ministers, Chancellors, and Kings—including, many of them, multiple times. And most recently, saw a number of them at the Munich Security Conference just last month.

More than a few world leaders have said to me in the last many months, "Kamala, is America going to be okay?" And understand, they ask that question purely out of self-interest.

The United States is a global role model for freedom, democracy, and rule of law. Imperfect though we may be, we have the earned and self-appointed authority to walk in those rooms and talk about the importance of democracy and rule of law.

But here's the thing about being a role model. It's a room full of role models. When you're a role model, people watch what you do to see if it lines up to what you say.

The world is watching America right now. They are watching. And they see, as we do, the urgency, then, of this moment. Across our Nation, we witness a full-on attack on hard-fought, hard-won freedoms and rights: the freedom to vote, the freedom to live safe from the horror of gun violence, the freedom to be who you are and love who you love openly and with pride, and the freedom of a woman to make decisions about her own body and not have her government telling her what to do.

And among the big issues that we are dealing with right now that are not binary, November, it's binary. This election: binary. Just pull up the split screen. On the one hand, you have our President, Joe Biden, a champion of freedom and opportunity for all. And we have made historic progress on issues of longstanding concern. Roy was talking about them.

We have lowered prescription drug prices for our seniors. We have forgiven student loan debt for millions of people. We have invested billions of dollars in our entrepreneurs and small-business owners and passed the first major gun safety legislation in 30 years.

And when we win—when we win reelection and when the United States Congress passes a bill that restores the protections of *Roe*, Joe Biden will sign it into law.

When we win in November, we will invest in affordable childcare and paid family leave. We will invest billions of dollars in lower housing costs for millions of Americans—renters, homeowners, and homebuyers—building on the work of Erskine Bowles and the work he has done for years. I've talked to Erskine about this.

So that's one side of the screen: competence, care, and calm. On the other side: cruelty and chaos; a former President who openly praises dictators and has said he will be a dictator on day one; who openly talks about his intention to weaponize the Department of Justice against his enemies; who openly says that he is, quote, "proud" that he handpicked three members of the highest court in our land—the court of Thurgood and RBG—with the intention that they would do what they did in overturning *Roe*.

So, North Carolina, ultimately, then, in this election, I believe we each face a question: What kind of country do we want to live in? What kind of country do we want to live in? A country of liberty, freedom, and rule of law or a country of disorder, fear, and hate? And we each have the power to answer that question with our voice, with our feet, and with our vote.

So I'll close with this. The election is 224 days away. Sounds like a lot of—a lot—a long time. It is not a lot of time. So we know what is in front of us. We know that this is not a time for us to throw up our hands. This is a time for us to roll up our sleeves and to fight. And when we fight, we win.

And now it is my great, great honor to introduce a leader who we know knows how to fight—he likes a good fight—[*laughter*]—a leader who has a bold vision for our future and who has the strength, the skill, the capacity, and the compassion to make that vision real: our President, Joe Biden.

The President. Hello, North Carolina. Thank you.

I should probably leave now. [*Laughter*]

Kamala, thank you for the introduction and, more—much more importantly, for your—for your partnership and your friendship all across the board. Kamala is incredible. She does what she says, she knows what she's talking about, and she has—like Roy, she has enormous integrity.

You know, and I want to thank Roy and Kristin Cooper also for—incredible people and dear friends. You know, last thing—and I've met both the kids—two of the three girls—and you know, there's nothing like being the child of an elected official. [*Laughter*] You get to come to all those things that bore the living hell out of you. [*Laughter*]

But all kidding aside, thank you for being here. I want to thank the Coopers because I think of—when I think of Roy, I think of one word, and I've said this about half a dozen times since I've been here. The word that I think a—the highest compliment an elected official can receive is he has great integrity. He has enormous integrity.

Roy is going to be missed in the Governor's office, and it's up to all of us to make sure integrity remains in that office. And he couldn't be here now, but we saw him earlier—Josh Stein, your next Governor.

Folks, with your help, we're going to win North Carolina up and down the ticket.

And I also want to thank another great North Carolinian, a leader of integrity and a good friend of mine, former Congressman, chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, G.K. Butterfield. G.K.

Folks, we're seeing an incredible enthusiasm all over the country. I've traveled to Pennsylvania, Michigan, Georgia, Wisconsin, New Hampshire, Nevada, Arizona, North Carolina, and I don't know how many other States. But Jill, Kamala, and Doug—we all travel as well. Our husbands and our wives.

Look, our grassroots support keeps getting stronger. So far, we have over 1,300,000 people who have contributed to our campaign. Five hundred thousand of these contributors are new from 2020, and 97 percent of them have contributed less than \$200.

Folks, we're ramping up our campaign headquarters and field offices. We're opening up nearly 100 field offices so far. We're hiring staff across the country here in North Carolina, before Trump and MAGA Republicans even open one single office.

And while we probably haven't read a lot about it, in the last few days, there have been several national polls showing us leading now. We're up five points in Pennsylvania.

And I should have said at the outset: I thank you all, because many of you in this room are the reason why we were elected in the first place. Not a joke. You stood with us in 2020, and you're with us again.

You know, the first time, you can be—blame it on you. You know what I mean? Second time, if you did it twice, it's all your fault. *[Laughter]*

But look, I know everyone is not feeling the enthusiasm. The other day, a defeated guy walked up to me and said, "Mr. President, I'm being crushed by debt. I'm completely wiped out." I had to look at him and say, "Sorry, Donald. I can't help you." *[Laughter]* "Just can't do it." *[Laughter]*

Speaking of Donald Trump, last week, he asked a famous question: Are you better off today than you were 4 years ago?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Well, the fact that we have the best economy in the world shouldn't matter much. But, Donald, I'm glad you asked. *[Laughter]*

I hope everyone in this country takes a moment to think back to—what it was in March of 2020. COVID had come to America. Trump was President. Hospitals and emergency rooms were overwhelmed. First responders were literally risking their lives. Nurses were wearing garbage bags as garments because they couldn't get any other help. And there were ventilator shortages. Mobile morgues were being set up. And loved ones were dying all alone, and they couldn't even say goodbye to them. Unemployment shot up to 14 percent. The stock market crashed. Grocery store shelves were empty.

And it was—you know, Trump tried to downplay the virus. He told us—remember this?—hard to believe now. He said: "Don't worry. Just stay calm. We'll be out of this by Easter." He also said: Why don't you just go and inject a little bleach in your system? *[Laughter]* Not a joke.

Folks, look——

Audience member. Crazy.

The President. Yes. *[Laughter]* Yes.

Of course, we now know from Bob Woodward's book that Trump was lying to the American people all along. He knew how dangerous this virus was, but he tried to hide it from us because he thought it would hurt him politically.

He told Americans, as I said, to inject bleach. He told us to hit the body—hit our body with UV light.

And then, by the summer, American's peaceful protested for justice in front of the White House. He wanted to tear-gas them for a photo op.

And then, after losing in two-twenty election—the 2020 election, I should say—Trump finished his Presidency by sending a mob to attack the Capitol.

Think about it. I mean—it's hard to imagine—if I said that in 2019, this is going—even though we knew a little bit about him, I doubt whether anybody would have thought that would happen.

But 4 years later, look how far we've come. Donald Trump is not President. I am, and Kamala is a historic Vice President.

COVID no long controls our lives. We've created 15 million new jobs. We have the lowest unemployment rate in over 50 years. We have record growth, record small-business creation. The stock market is as high as it's ever been. American manufacturing is booming—over 800,000 manufacturing jobs.

I was always asked, "What makes you think we can be manufacturing is done in America?" Where is it written that we can't lead the world again in manufacturing? We've attracted \$650 billion in private investment for clean energy, advanced manufacturing, semiconductors all across America, including right here in North Carolina.

We made the biggest investment in history to combat climate change.

And in January, I came here to North Carolina to announce an \$82 million to deliver high-speed internet to everyone in this State by the end of the decade—everyone. It's going to save them an average of \$75 a month.

We're doing the same thing to replace lead pipes so every child in North Carolina can drink clean water without fear of brain damage.

And, folks—and today Kamala and I come back to North Carolina to celebrate the 14th anniversary of the Affordable Care Act. You know, as you know, I thought it was a big deal at that time. *[Laughter]*

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

[Laughter] Thank God my mom wasn't around.

Well, it's an even bigger deal today. Because of Roy Cooper, it's even a bigger deal because he expanded Medicare coverage, which is already—what you did, Roy—you're already expanding and helping nearly 400,000 North Carolinians so far—400,000.

And, folks, Josh Stein defended it as attorney general. He's going to make a hell of a Governor.

But that's not all. Because of the law I signed, insulin for seniors costs 35 bucks a month instead of \$40—\$400 a month. And you know what? You know how much it costs to make it?

The guy who invented it did not patent it because he wanted everybody to have access to it. It costs 10—t-e-n—dollars to make it; \$12 to—total to make it and package it. And they're still making three times that.

Folks, look, if I said to you—if you had a prescription to be filled by any—American drug company, I said, "Let's go get in Air Force One, and I'll fly you to any city in the world." Not a joke. "Toronto, Paris, London, anywhere in the world. I can buy you that same prescription for 40- to 60-percent less than you pay for it right here." And it's wrong.

I've been fighting to get Medicare under control—excuse me—allow Medicare to negotiate prices for drugs since I was a Senator. And, folks, we finally made it.

Like I said, we will also have in the bill that's already passed pocket—out-of-pocket costs for prescription drugs for seniors is capped beginning in 2025 at \$2,000 a year no matter what their costs are. No matter what. And as you know, a lot of cancer drugs are \$10-, \$12-, \$14-, \$15,000 a year.

And it doesn't just save seniors money. It saves the American taxpayers money by reducing the deficit. Guess what? The one—just the one implementation so far for—of that legislation, which not one Republican voted for, you know how much it reduced the deficit—it will reduce the deficit over 10 years? One hundred and sixty billion dollars. One hundred and sixty billion dollars.

And I might add, when Trump was President, he increased the deficit more in one term than any other President has. I've lowered the deficit.

Look, folks, we have more to do, of course. Inflation peaked at 9 percent a little over a year ago. Now it's down—dropped to 3 percent, the lowest in the world and still dropping. But more to do.

So let me ask you: Does anyone here want to go back to 2020?

Audience members. No!

Audience member. Hell no! [*Laughter*]

The President. When fear ruled our lives, when Trump was President—I don't think so.

But look, folks, the problem isn't just looking back to where Trump had the—had the country. The problem is where he and the MAGA extremists want to take it now. I didn't think they could get worse, but—I'm being deadly earnest. I'm serious.

Look what they're saying. Trump and his MAGA extremists want to, quote, "terminate"—his phrase—I love this choice of word—"terminate" the ACA, as he says. He wants to get rid of the savings just the law—and put all—that we just put into law for lower prescription drug prices. He wants to get rid of allowing Medicare to negotiate drug prices so we're back up to 400 bucks a month.

Look, he's enacted a \$2 trillion tax cut. Okay. I—that's—that's not bad, if it—as long as everybody starts paying their fair share.

You know, we have a thousand billionaires in America right now. You know, at the end—I—I'm a capitalist. If you can make a billion bucks, have at it, as long as you do it under the law and as long as you pay your taxes. You know what the average tax rate of billionaire is today? Not a joke. It is 8.3 percent. Anybody want to change tax brackets? [*Laughter*]

No, I'm being deadly earnest. It's way out of whack.

As I said, the last time he exploded the national debt more than any previous President has.

And if anyone doubts that Trump and the Republicans want to cut Social Security and Medicare, just look at what he said in the last few weeks. Trump recently said Social Security and Medicare, quote, "There's a lot we can do in terms of cutting." Right on cue, 180 Republicans in the House of Representatives introduced their budget for next year, where they raise the retirement age and cut Social Security.

I've got a better idea. Let's protect Social Security and Medicare.

And that's not all the Trump extremists want to do across America and here in North Carolina. Another school shooting recently, about 3 months ago, as you recall—remember what he said when they said, "What are you going to—what do you think about that?" He said, quote—I'm quoting him now; I'm not making this up—"Just get over it." "Just get over it." Geez.

No, I want to stop it. I don't want to get over it; I want to stop it.

Trump brags about how he's the reason *Roe v. Wade* was overturned—that's already been mentioned—and the freedom to choose was taken away. America needs to know Donald Trump and his extremist MAGA friends are calling for a national ban, not just some States, every State in America. That's what they're pushing.

On top of that, the MAGA candidate for Governor here said, quote—quote, "I want—absolutely want to go back to the America where women couldn't vote." What an enlightened guy. [Laughter] Where the hell—I—[laughter].

I never thought I'd see that. I've been involved in politics for a couple of days. [Laughter] You should know, with a Democrat in Congress, Kamala and I are going to make *Roe v. Wade* again the law of the land—again, again, and again.

Folks, but for all the threats posed to the country, the greatest threat he poses is to our democracy, and that's not hyperbole. The violence of two thousand—of January 6, Trump embraced it. He's running on it.

You know, if you ever watch his—his rallies, he starts off with the folks in prison that have either been convicted or pled guilty singing the national anthem, and he's repeating the Pledge of Allegiance over top of it.

He calls insurrectionists who are imprisoned—he calls them "patriots." And he says, if reelected, he wants to pardon them. Trump says if he loses again in November, there will be, quote, "a bloodbath." What in the hell is going on here?

No, I'm serious. Think about it. Think—did you ever think that any President of the United States would say that?

Folks, we can't stand this, including here in North Carolina, where you have MAGA extremists on the ballot. Not just for Governor, but the MAGA candidate for State Superintendent of Education said the potential for killing a public official is that she, quote, prefers to watch it on Pay-Per-View "in front of the firing squad."

I mean, this is the United States of America. Folks, that's not North Carolina, and it's not America.

We have to say, with one vote—as Americans, as Democrats, as Independents, and Republicans—there's no place in America for any political violence, period, period, period.

I don't want to get started. [Laughter] Some of you are standing and—anyway.

Let me close with this. There's a lot of focus these days on how old Trump and I are. I'm 40—[laughter]—times 2, plus 1. [Laughter] But the real question is: How old are our ideas? That's the question.

And by the way, I'll be happy to compare physical characteristics with Donald Trump. Granted, I don't have his orange hair, but I—[laughter].

Donald Trump's vision for America is one of anger—for real—anger, hate, revenge, retribution—some of the oldest ideas known to humankind. I generally have a different vision for America—focused on our future and answers another important question: Will we be better off 4 years from now?

Here's the future I see, and I mean this. I see a future where democracy is defended, not diminished. I see a future where we restore the right to choose and protect our freedoms, not take them away. I see a future where the middle class finally has a fair shot and the wealthy pay their fair share in taxes.

My dad used to have an expression—for real. My dad was a wonderful man, very well-read. He got into Johns Hopkins during—just before the war, but he ended up working in a—in the shipyards, and he never got to go. But my dad used to say—and I mean this—give you my word to this. He'd always come home before he went back and closed the dealership—he didn't own, but he managed.

And he'd say: "Remember, Joey, a job is about a lot more than a paycheck. A job is about your dignity. A job is about respect. A job is about being able to look your child in the eye and say, 'Honey, it's going to be okay,' and mean it."

I see a future where we save the planet from the climate crisis and our country from gun—did you ever think—those of you or anybody over 40 years old—none of the women are in this audience, but some of the men are. [Laughter]

All kidding aside, did you ever think you'd see where your children or grandchildren went to school and were learning how to duck and cover? Not—not a joke. Duck and cover.

Look, above all, like all of you, I see a future for all Americans, where we demonize no one, where we give hate no safe harbor. We leave nobody behind. It's a future we can build together. And it's the reason I've never been more optimistic.

We just have to remember who in the hell we are. We're the United States of America. There is nothing—and I mean this from the bottom of my heart. All the time I've been in public office, I've never been more optimistic about our potential—not because I'm President; because the world is changing.

Things are in flux. What we do in the next—the last 2 years and the next 4 or 5 years is going to determine what the next four or five decades are going to look like.

But there's nothing beyond our capacity—nothing we—beyond our capacity when we act together.

And that's what you all are allowing me to do. Your generosity has allowed me to stay in the game in a way that we're going to be able to make our case. And I'm confident—I'm confident, over the next—between now and November, we're going to make the case as strongly as we can. And I believe we'll prevail because of you.

Thank you. Thank you very much.

Every time I'd walk out of my grandfather Ambrose Finnegan's house up in Scranton, Pennsylvania—he came out—he came out west to go to school. He went to Santa Clara. He was—by the way, he was an All-American football player in 1906. But any rate.

He was in the newspaper business on the business side. And he'd look, and he'd yell, "Joey, keep the faith." And my grandmother would say, "No, Joey, spread it."

Vice President Harris. There we go.

The President. Let's go spread it.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 5:20 p.m. at the Raleigh Marriott City Center. In his remarks, he referred to Kirstin Cooper, wife of Gov. Roy A. Cooper III of North Carolina, and their daughters Hilary, Claire, and Natalie; Douglas C. Emhoff, husband of Vice President Harris; Robert U. Woodward, associate editor, Washington Post; North Carolina Republican gubernatorial candidate Lt. Gov. Mark K. Robinson; and Michele Morrow, Republican candidate for North Carolina Superintendent of Education. Vice President Harris referred to Erskine B. Bowles, former cochair, National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform; and Supreme Court Associate Justices Neil M. Gorsuch, Brett M. Kavanaugh, and Amy Coney Barrett. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 27. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

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