

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024

Remarks With Former Presidents Barack Obama and William J. Clinton in a Question-and-Answer Session Moderated by Stephen T. Colbert at a Campaign Reception in New York City

March 28, 2024

President Obama. Hey!

President Biden. I think I should go home.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

President Obama. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

President Biden. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

CBS "Late Show With Stephen Colbert" Host Stephen T. Colbert. Thank you. Good evening, everybody. I'm your moderator, Stephen Colbert, for what I'll hope—will be a lively conversation this evening between these three gentlemen.

Mr. Presidents, thank you so much for joining me this evening.

President Obama. Good to see you.

Mr. Colbert. This is an—such an exciting and rare occasion: Three Presidents have all come to New York, and not one of them is here to appear in court. [*Laughter*]

Now, before we begin, just a few ground rules, gentlemen. You are all very intelligent men who have at one time or another been the most powerful person in the world. And on top of that, you are all, shall we say, champion talkers. [*Laughter*] We have limited time together here, so I'm going to hold you two gentlemen—President Obama, President Clinton—I'm going to hold you to 5-minute answers. [*Laughter*] There will be an audio cue to let you know when to stop talking. It will sound like this: Please stop talking. [*Laughter*]

President Biden, because you are the sitting President and—you get 7 minutes, because as the sitting President, you can order SEAL Team Six to take me out—[*laughter*]—which, according to Donald Trump's lawyers, is perfectly okay to do. [*Laughter*]

Every election cycle, we're told that this election is the most important election in our lives. And here we are in 2024, and this election really feels like the most important election of our lives when it comes to rights and freedoms and the heart and the soul and the future of our country.

First question for you, President Biden. How would you describe what's at stake in this election?

2024 Presidential Election

President Biden. I think our democracy is at stake. Not a joke. I think democracy is literally at stake.

Look, I wasn't going to run in 2020, because I just lost my son Beau a little earlier and—until I watched what happened down in Virginia when those folks came out of the fields carrying torches and Nazi flags and accompanied by White supremacists. And a young woman was killed, a bystander.

And when the President was a—former President was asked what he thought of that, he said, "There are very fine people on both sides."

Think of the things he said. Think of the things he's done; the things he says he wants to do—he's indicated that he really wants to have the first day of his new term—quote, unquote—will be one where he engages in absolute autonomy that he can do whatever he wants to do; the way he talks about people; the way he characterizes people.

I think a lot is at stake, but I'm really hopeful. Because I think we get by this election—not because of me, but we get by this election—we're in a position where we can set the course for the next four or five, six decades in a way that can make us much, much better. I really mean it. And, again, not because of me. We're at a real inflection point in history, because things are changing.

This guy denies there's global warming. This guy wants to get rid of not only *Roe v. Wade*, but he—which he brags about having done, he wants to get rid of the ability of anyone anywhere in America to ever choose.

I mean, all the things he's doing are so old—speaking of old. [Laughter] And you know, he—a little old and out of shape. But anyway. [Laughter]

Mr. Colbert. President Obama and President Clinton, is there anything you—you'd like to add to that sense of urgency?

President Obama. Well, I think it's worth adding that it's not just the negative case against the presumptive nominee on the other side, it's the positive case for somebody who's done an outstanding job in the Presidency.

Well, it's—sometimes, we forget where we started and where we are now. You've got record-breaking job growth. You've got an unemployment rate that is as low as it has been, for African Americans, by the way, the lowest on record ever. You've got extraordinary progress building off the work we did: first, Bill Clinton passing the Children's Health Insurance Act; we passed the Affordable Care Act.

Joe Biden takes the baton. He's now expanded coverage; made sure that seniors are seeing big discounts in their prescription drugs, capping—insulin drug prices—capping the price of insulin at 35 bucks, where it used to cost them up to \$400—you know, helping young people go to college—the record-setting investment in clean energy that's going to transition us to the kind of future that our children and grandchildren deserve.

So—and we could obviously go on. The point is—am I at 5 minutes yet? [Laughter]

Mr. Colbert. You have 30 seconds.

President Biden. Keep going. You're sounding good. [Laughter]

President Obama. The President of the United States says I can go longer. [Laughter] But the point I'm—

Mr. Colbert. You cede some of your time to this gentleman? [Laughter]

President Obama. The point is, you know, that—look, passions get stirred by what we're against. And Joe is absolutely right that we've got not just a nominee, but frankly, a party and an entire infrastructure that increasingly seems unconcerned with the essence of America—right?—the idea of self-governance—and the possibilities of us all cooperating and bridging our differences and moving forward.

But we also have a positive story to tell about the future. And that is something that Joe Biden has worked on diligently each and every day on behalf of working Americans, and I expect him to continue to do that for the next 4 years and 8 months.

President Clinton. He's really done a good job. [Laughter] And I think the way you opened this—we talked about the defense to democracy—begs not only support for President Biden, but also begs the question of why are we even arguing about some of this stuff?

I'll tell you what's old. What's old is the United States of America. We are the longest lasting, free democracy in the history of the world. And one of our Republican predecessors, Dwight Eisenhower, said he worried whether when times got tough and arguments got hot, Americans would be strong enough to preserve their democracy.

And we have to realize that in order to do that, no one is going to be right all the time. A broken clock is right twice a day. [Laughter] And the rest of us are compelled to spend our freeing lives going back and forth between trying to be right all the time and at least trying to be—do better than being right twice a day.

Into that mess that President Biden inherited was a very vibrant, diverse society and economy. And you know, President Trump—let's be honest—had pretty good couple of years because he stole them from Barack Obama. [Laughter] I mean—

President Biden. That's true.

President Obama. Thank you. Thank you.

President Clinton. But look—

President Obama. The Obama-Biden economy for those first 2 years. But, please, continue.

President Clinton. But look—

President Obama. I'm going to give him an extra minute. [Laughter]

President Clinton. No, it's true. I listened to him tell us how terrible the American economy was all during 2016. And then, by January of 2017, after the Inauguration, it had become wonderful—[laughter]—miraculously, overnight. [Laughter]

Well, what happened was, actually, job growth under President Trump was slower than it was under President Obama in his last term. But people didn't feel it. It takes a while to feel it.

So then he claimed credit for everything. Then, all of a sudden, Joe Biden comes along and creates roughly twice as many jobs in 3 years as he did. And so I believe in keeping score. [Laughter] And not in a vindictive way, but in a positive way.

He's been good for America, and he deserves another term. And democracy around the world needs him.

President Biden. Thank you.

Mr. Colbert. Mr. President, I want to point out that we are 10 minutes in, and I have asked one question. [Laughter]

So I'm going to do a quick lightning round here. We're going to get back to some policy, some ideas here. But a quick lightning round here.

Do any of you have plans to sell golden sneakers or \$60 Bibles? [Laughter] Show of hands. Show of hands. We'll do this debate.

No? Okay, no. All right.

President Biden. No golden sneakers.

Mr. Colbert. Yes. [Laughter]

President Obama and President Clinton, what do you miss about being President? Is it nice to live in the White House, or do you always feel like you're in a museum? For you also, President Biden, is it a nice place to live? I know it's pretty, but do you always feel like you're, you know, walking around the corner——

President Clinton. No.

Mr. Colbert. ——and there will be a gift shop? [Laughter]

President Clinton. I loved living there. I mean——and the last time I walked in, the day before I left, I landed on Air—the Marine One helicopter and I walked in, I was just as idealistic and hopeful about America as the day I showed up.

But I support the two-term limit. I believe that no one should serve forever in a democracy. And—but I do miss, on occasion, especially when I think President Biden's getting the raw deal—I think, "Boy, I wish I were there to push back." Because I think—because I think he's done a good job and because I think democracy is on the line all around the world.

It's not surprising that freedom and democracy are being questioned. There are no such things as permanent victories in politics. But I do believe——

Audience member. [Inaudible]

President Clinton. ——that's good.

Mr. Colbert. For people watching at home——

President Clinton. You want to say anything?

Mr. Colbert. Excuse me. Excuse me, Mr. Presidents.

Audience member. [Inaudible]

Mr. Colbert. For people who are watching—who are watching at home on the feed, you may not be able to hear that there's some protesters here who——

Audience member. [Inaudible]

Mr. Colbert. Hold on a second here.

Audience member. [Inaudible]

Mr. Colbert. There's some protesters here who are no doubt related to the protests we saw across the street. Everyone in here saw the protests across the street before we came in.

Gaza Conflict/Humanitarian Situation/Hamas Attacks on Israel/Peace Process

And this is a subject I was going to get to later, but as long as this—it's been brought up here, Mr. Biden, I wanted to ask you this question.

As the leader of the United States and as a leader of the alliance of democratic nations, and also aware of the moral leadership that the United States provides to the entire world, there are people outside and people in this room, I'm sure, who have passionate divisions about what they think the best course of action is for the crisis in Israel and Gaza right now.

What do you believe the United States role should be going forward to ensure the most peaceful and prosperous future for the people of Israel and for Gaza—these two people, who the world sees and for whom the world's heart breaks?

President Biden. Well, both these gentlemen——

Audience members. [Inaudible]

President Biden. That's all right. Let them go. Let them go.

Look, there's a lot of people who are very, very—there are too many innocent victims, Israeli and Palestinians. We've got to get more food and medicine and supplies in to the Palestinians. We're working like hell to do that. We've got to open more opportunities.

But you can't forget that Israel is in a position where its very existence is at stake. You have—you have all those people—1,200 people. Now, they weren't—they weren't killed; they were massacred. They were massacred.

And imagine if that had happened in the United States. And the—tying a mom and her daughter together, pouring kerosene on them, burning her to death. There's—it's understandable Israel has such a profound anger. And Hamas is still there.

But we must, in fact, stop the effort to—that is resulting in significant deaths of innocent civilians and, particularly, children. And we can.

And I won't go into detail now. But look, I've been working with the Saudis and with all the other Arab countries, including Egypt and Jordan and Qatar. They are prepared to fully recognize Israel—fully recognize Israel—first time.

But we have to—there has to be a post-Gaza plan here, and there has to be a train to a two-state solution. Doesn't have to occur today, but it has to be a progression. And I think we can do that. I think we can do that.

And that's why we're seeing more avenues open into Israel—excuse me, into Gaza to bring food and medicine. And there's much more we can do. But I'm confident it can be done and Israel's integrity, Israel security, Israel's—Israel nationally can be preserved.

We can do this.

President Obama. You asked earlier about being in the White House. [Laughter] No, no, no. You know, you'll see there's some relevance here. [Laughter]

It is a lonely seat. I mean, one of the things I miss is the incredible team that you have around you. You have some of the smartest, most dedicated, selfless people who are every day sacrificing—you know, their families are sacrificing. They are putting heroic, Herculean efforts into just trying to make the world a little better——

President Biden. And every time you show up at the White House, they all come and thank you.

President Obama. Well, they——

President Biden. No, no, no. I'm not joking. The affection for you is overwhelming.

President Obama. Well, I appreciate that. But here's the thing. So you have this incredible, you know, team. And I think Bill and I—we've talked about it—that's one of the things you miss most. But although it's a team, you're still ultimately the person who has to make the calls.

And one of the realities of the Presidency is that the world has a lot of joy and beauty, but it also has a lot of tragedy and cruelty. And there's history there. And you don't start from scratch. And you don't have neat, easy answers to really hard problems.

And I think people, understandably, oftentimes want to feel a certain, you know, purity in terms of how those decisions are made. But a President doesn't have that luxury.

And so, when you look at a situation like we're seeing in Gaza and in Israel, and your heart breaks initially for a massacre of unbelievable cruelty, it is also possible for us to say we unequivocally support the people of Israel and their ability to live and raise families and so forth, which is what Joe's position has been and my position was and Bill Clinton's position was—and every American President, and it is also possible for us to have our hearts broken watching innocent people being killed——

President Biden. That's right.

President Obama. ——and trying to manage through that in a way that ultimately leads to both people being able to live in peace, side by side. But that is not an easy task.

And so the reason I think I—the reason——

Audience member. [Inaudible]

President Obama. No, listen—and it's—but here's the thing: You can't just talk and not listen—because that's part of democracy. Part of democracy is not just talking; it's listening. That's what the other side does.

And it is important for us to understand that it is possible to have moral clarity and have deeply held beliefs, but still recognize that the world is complicated, and it is hard to solve these problems.

And the thing that—the reason why I originally selected Joe Biden to be my Vice President, the reason that I think he was one of the best Vice Presidents we've ever had, and the reason why I think he has been an outstanding President is because he has moral conviction and clarity, but he also is willing to acknowledge that the world is complicated and that he's willing to listen to all sides in this debate and every other debate and try to see if we can find common ground. That's the kind of President I want.

I don't want a President who thinks he's got the right answer every single time and is not—not only not willing to listen the other side but demonizing the other side. And we should value that decency in Joe Biden. That's one of the reasons I'm going to be working hard for him.

President Clinton. I know there are many other things we need to talk about tonight, but I believe that this is one of the most important reasons to reelect President Biden. And I'll explain why.

Because he genuinely cares about preserving the existence of Israel, which Hamas doesn't. And he genuinely cares about giving the Palestinians a decent state, self-governance, and the support they need for self-determination. And you've got to do both.

Look, this—the world we live in is hard, because you have to keep two apparently conflicting ideas in your head at the same time. But don't forget, those of you who—particularly if you're younger and all you know is Israelis' Government is denying the rights of the Palestinians. Perhaps my closest friend among other world leaders was Yitzhak Rabin—who got himself killed standing for a Palestinian state.

And so, when Joe Biden says he wants a two-state solution, we all lived through the same things. He's not making this up. We lived this. And you should trust him to work for it, to work to ease the suffering of the totally innocent Palestinian citizens and not to allow Israel's security to be lost over a bitter difference between the legitimacy of the Palestinians to statehood, which we agree with—all three of us. So——

Mr. Colbert. President Biden, 3 weeks ago, you gave an energetic State of the Union Address.

Yes.

President Obama. It was energetic.

Civil Unrest and Violence at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021/Former President Donald J. Trump

Mr. Colbert. And for almost 8,000 words, you never said your predecessor's name.

[*Laughter*] And a lot of people out there complained that there's "Trumpnesia," people don't remember what it was like when he was President. And I remember what it was like. I remember, particularly, how it came to its apotheosis on that terrible day on January 6. I remember my feelings that day. But I have never heard you talk about what was going through your mind that day. What were you thinking when you saw that unfold?

President Biden. Look, we had no President on January the 6th. [*Laughter*] No, no, no. No, I'm not being a wise guy. There was an insurrection happening.

Audience member. Shame on you, Joe Biden!

President Biden. And here's what happened.

Audience member. Shame on you!

President Biden. I was supposed to make a speech on the economy.

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

President Biden. And I decided I couldn't remain silent. So what I did was, I made a speech about January the 6th—what was happening. And I said there was an insurrection underway and it must be dealt with. And I pled with the President to stop and do his job, call these people off.

He sat there in the dining room off the Oval Office for several hours and watched. Didn't do a damn thing.

And that's why I felt obliged—even though I wasn't sworn in yet; I was President-elect—that I went out and said, "This is what we should be doing," and laid it out.

And here's what's happened since then. What's happened since then—it's not only is—he said it wasn't an insurrection. He says that what was happening was totally legitimate, that these people were patriots. He's calling them "patriots." You notice he starts off all his rallies with them singing from prison and him interjecting with the—I think it's the of Pledge of Allegiance or whatever. I'm not sure exactly what he does with it.

But the end result of it is that he says he wants to free—if he's reelected, he's going to pardon all of them—pardon them. What—what is—and look——

Audience members. Boo!

President Biden. No, no—no—and by the way, he means it. He means it.

And here's what's going to happen. You know, when—we went up on Inauguration Day, and these guys were there—on Inauguration Day, you walk through the corridors—broken glass, smattered statues, the actual place we get sworn in was—was a mess because these guys had rampage—ramped through it.

And look, I'll give—one real quick story. First time I went to the G-7 meeting—that's the meeting of the European heads of state and—as President and—end of January. And I sat down and I said, "America is back." And the French leader looked at me, and he said, "For how long?" [*Laughter*] It wasn't humorous. He said for—he was serious. "For how long?"

And then the German Chancellor looked at me. He said: "What would you think, Mr. President, if in fact you picked up the paper tomorrow and found out here in Great Britain, on the London Times, the headline says, 'Mob storms Parliament, breaks down the door of the House of Commons to protest the election and two bobbies were killed.' What would you think back in America?"

And think about that. What would you think if another democracy—and not just a leading democracy in the world, but another democracy—went through this thing? What would happen if—what would you say? And the rest of the world looks to us.

Look, we are the essential nation. And that's not pounding our chest. Everybody in the world looks to us. Imagine what would happen—Madeleine Albright, your Secretary of State, was right when she talked about "we are the essential nation." And we have to lead.

And when we look like we're countenancing this unruly—and, like, saying, "You know, I'm going to—I'm going to be a dictator on the first day." He's not joking. And he's serious about it. And it really shakes the entire foundation of the world, in terms of what's going on.

So that's why we have to—and, lastly, when did you think you'd ever have a President of the United States whose people he talked about—he sends—talks about love letters with the North Korean dictator. He talks about his closeness with Putin and what—and Kim Jong—I mean, this is a guy who has a perverse view of the world in terms of—[*applause*]. No, I—mean it. Anyway—

Mr. Colbert. Presidents Obama and Clinton, you know, you both know how this office works, obviously, and the extent of power and the pitfalls of power. When Donald Trump was President, what kept you up at night? And before—you answer, while I'm flattered, you can't both say my show. [*Laughter*] I get it, and I'm flattered. And thank you. [*Laughter*]

What kept you up at night about that Presidency?

President Obama. I want to emphasize the point Joe just made about how deeply that 4-year stretch affected views of America around the world.

America is imperfect. We have not always abided by our founding documents. We—a Civil War and enormous struggles were fought to try to perfect our Union. And we, in our actions overseas, sometimes did not live up to our ideals.

But what has always made America exceptional is this radical idea that you can get people from every corner of the globe—don't look alike, don't have the same name, worship differently, speak different languages, have different cultural traditions—and somehow they're going to come together under a set of rules and we're all going to pledge that's our creed: that we can live together, self-governing, have a representative government, peacefully transfer power. And that ideal matters. It matters to our children and their grandchildren, but it also matters around the world.

When we see a deemphasis, when America is not forthright in speaking on behalf of those ideals, you see backsliding around the world. You see authoritarians emboldened around the world. You see aggression around the world because there's no check.

And when we're living up to those ideals, even in difficult times, things feel a little bit better, not just here, but elsewhere, people are a little bit more hopeful.

So what would keep me up during those 4 years was: How badly are those ideals tarnished?

The good news is that people still want to believe in those ideals. They want to believe in human rights. They want to believe in freedom of speech and religion. And they want to believe in the idea that all people are equal.

Women are equal and have the right to control their bodies and, you know, shouldn't be subject to domestic violence. And girls should be able to go to school just like everybody else.

And people of different sexual orientations should have the same rights and protections.

And religious minorities and ethnic minorities and racial minorities all deserve the same respect and are afforded the same dignity as everybody else.

Those ideas, they can ebb and flow depending on what happens in the White House.

And the good news is that we had a period of time where those ideals were not just deemphasized but were violated, and then we have somebody come back in who says, "No, no, that's—we do believe in the—this is what America is about."

And that's the same test that we're going to be undergoing over the next 8 months: Do we, in fact, believe in those basic ideals? And if we do, not only are we going to be okay, but the world is going to be okay.

President Biden. You know, one of the things Barack—think about this. This is not hyperbole. We are the most unique nation in the world in this sense. Every other nation was founded based on geography, ethnicity, religion. None of—that's not us. We're—we came about as a consequence of an idea—an idea. No, I'm serious. Think about it.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men and women are created equal, endowed by their Creator—we—that's what found—that's what—the basis of our existence. That's what—that's why we're found.

We didn't—we haven't always lived up to it, but we've never fully walked away from it—until now, someone is contemplating walking away from it completely.

Our diversity is our strength. It's the reason why the rest of the world looks to us.

President Clinton. But this is the big reason you should win. [*Laughter*] And that is that everything you said is true, but it only works if we all live under the same set of rules, we all have an equal set of chances to make it, and we treat each other with respect. We fight our differences. We have our arguments.

And I'll never forget a prominent member of the other party on the right once looked at my Chief of Staff and said, "You and the President actually think we should all live under the same set of rules, don't you?" [*Laughter*] He said, "Yes, that's what we thought being an American was all about it." He said: "Well, we don't believe that. We think we should first do what's best for our party, then argue about the rest."

That's what's at the heart of this. Joe Biden has bent over backwards to reach out to members of the other party to negotiate in good faith to solve problems, including on the border. And——

President Biden. And they did.

President Clinton. And in the case of the border, his apparent opponent basically said, "Hey," to his own party, "you can't do that. Get off of that bill. We need a problem, not a solution, at the border." Well——

President Biden. That's a fact.

President Clinton. ——you know, I think life has plenty of problems. [*Laughter*] You know, your kids can get sick——

President Obama. You don't have to manufacture them.

President Clinton. Yes. Yes, you—we don't have to make them up. And—but the problem is, they're good at branding and blaming and we don't like their solution so much.

He's good at finding solutions people are actually glad they embraced. And that's why he should win.

Mr. Colbert. We are running short on time. And I know you're all busy men. You've got to go run the world. *[Laughter]*

Here's an important question. All three of you have been on Air Force One. You still have the keys, Mr. Biden. That's made by Boeing, right? *[Laughter]* Do those doors stay on? Before you get on, do you send on Pete Buttigieg with a socket wrench set to tighten them—tighten the bolts? *[Laughter]*

Air Force One

President Biden. I don't sit by the door. *[Laughter]* Obviously, I'm only kidding. And I shouldn't even joke about it. I shouldn't even joke.

Mr. Colbert. A fine American company.

President Biden. And by the way, the one thing I can tell you about Air Force One: We're not changing the color.

Oh, he tried——

Mr. Colbert. We have——

President Biden. Trump wanted to change the color.

President Obama. Yeah, we're not doing that. *[Laughter]*

Mr. Colbert. Since the State of the—sir, did you want to—*[inaudible]*.

President Obama. No, no, no. I have nothing——

Mr. Colbert. Since the State of the Union, President Biden, you've been busy. You've been in Raleigh, Saginaw, Milwaukee, Phoenix, Vegas, Hotlanta, the Philly suburbs, Manchester, Dallas, and Houston. Donald Trump, as far as we can tell, has just been trying to win a third championship at his own golf course. *[Laughter]*

Golf

My question to you, sir: Can voters trust a Presidential candidate who has not won a single Trump International Golf Club trophy? At long last, sir, have you no chip shot? *[Laughter]*

President Biden. Well, look, I'd be happy to play. I told him this before, when he came into the Oval when he was being—before he got sworn in. I said, "I'll give you three strokes if you carry your own bag." *[Laughter]*

And I've only played 21 holes since I've been President. *[Laughter]*

Mr. Colbert. President Obama, I've been lucky enough to spend some time with you and your wife. She has repeatedly asked me to call her Michelle—which I now do. I say, "Hello, Michelle."

I continue to call you, "Mr. President"—*[laughter]*—because you have never invited me to call you anything else. *[Laughter]* So my question is, to Presidents Biden and Clinton, don't you think, at this point, I should be able to call him "Barack?" Because it's weird. I went to your house, and I said: "Hello, Michelle. Hello, Mr. President." *[Laughter]* I'm not asking for "Barry." *[Laughter]* Come on.

President Obama. No. [Laughter]

Mr. Colbert. Doesn't that feel weird? [Laughter]

President Obama. Nope. [Laughter] Your wife can. I like her. [Laughter] She's here tonight. Lovely.

Mr. Colbert. She's—

President Obama. That's the only reason you might get another invitation. [Laughter]

President Biden. By the way, every time—

President Obama. Next question. Move on.

President Biden. I told these guys, for the first 2 years—for real—every time I'd be introduced, they play "Hail to the Chief," I'd turn around—"Where the hell are they?" [Laughter] "Where"—

Mr. Colbert. You were this man's Vice President for 8 very exciting years. What—on your first day in the Oval Office as the President, did you learn anything and immediately you went, "He could have told me about this"? [Laughter]

The Presidency

President Biden. Well, I learned that what the President—I'd always kid the President. I'd get to be the last person to speak with him, give him my advice. And I'd—he'd thank me, and I'd walk out knowing he has to make the decision. That's the big difference.

And as Harry Truman said: "You're President. If you want a friend in Washington, get a dog." [Laughter] I got one, and he bit a Secret Service agent, so I don't know. [Laughter]

Mr. Colbert. Before we go, President Biden, there have been a lot of jokes about your age. And I've done a lot of them. And—[laughter]—and they've been very successful. Thank you—[laughter]—for that.

What would you like to say to the people who think that you're too seasoned for the job?

Perceptions of the President's Age/Former President Donald J. Trump

President Biden. Well, I don't know about seasoned, but I hope they—they're not too old—they're old ideas. You know, this last guy that I ran against and running against again this time is—his ideas are from the 18th, 19th century. [Laughter]

No, I mean—I'm serious. He talks—the way he talks about what he—the way he says he going to suspend the Constitution, all the things he says.

But look, I think that there is, if you pay attention—if you've been around a while, no matter what your background is—if you pay attention, you know, the one thing age does bring is a little bit of wisdom. And I hope—

Now, I know I don't look much over 40. I know that. [Laughter] But all kidding aside, I think that one of the advantages that I've had: I got to work for and with both of these men. I got to serve in the Senate a long time, and I got to know the place.

And I think at least—like, for example, when we got elected, everybody told me we couldn't do any of the things we got done—literally anything. We couldn't get the—we couldn't get anything done. We couldn't get the CHIPS Act. We couldn't get the veterans—all these things we were told we couldn't get done.

But there are still enough people in the Republican Party—this is not your father's Republican Party. This is a different breed of cat. This is the—about 30 to 40 percent are the MAGA Republicans. And I don't know what—the thing that disturbs me most is, I don't know what it is that a—that my predecessor has on these guys, why they—why they're not stepping up more like Liz Cheney and others. Because I know that they don't like a lot of what's going on.

And, for example, these guys are not going to vote against—they don't want to vote against raising the age of Social Security. They don't want to cut Social Security benefits. They don't want to end the whole—they don't like the idea what's happened in *Roe v. Wade*.

By the way, you elect me, we're going to restore *Roe v. Wade*. Anyway—

I see those three zeros on that clock. So I'm going to hush up—

Mr. Colbert. Yes, we are just—

President Biden. —as my mother would say.

Mr. Colbert. —we are just out about time here.

But before we go, I wanted to talk to you, President Clinton, for just a moment. You oversaw a rapidly growing economy in the 1990s. And you oversaw a huge increase in our economy.

What do you think people need to know, who might be watching, the voters out there, who may not yet see or feel in their pocket the growth of the Biden economy?

President Clinton. Well, I think, first of all, there's two things we've been through since I left the White House that changed the rules for everybody.

One was the financial crash of 2008, which marred and limited what President Obama could accomplish early and required him to invest a lot of Government money to try to jumpstart the economy in a program that he put President Biden, then Vice President, in charge of running, and he did a heck of a good job.

Now—and we had good recovery, but we were—they were criticized for the deficit spending. But the truth is, when interest rates are zero or negative, you have to invest money, and only the Government can do it. And there was a \$3 trillion hole in the economy that they spent \$800 billion starting to fill. It worked great.

But by the end of President Obama's 8 years, we had a roaring economy, but people didn't feel it yet. It normally takes 2 or 3 years of real changes before people knew it.

So, when Donald Trump got elected by telling everybody how terrible it was, all of a sudden, the day after he was elected, he said how great it was. [*Laughter*] And it was, but it was pretty great the day before it too. [*Laughter*]

So, anyway, now, we had COVID. It was devastating in human ways, in economic ways. So, President Biden gets in, and he doesn't want to under suit the way the Republicans required President Obama to do back when he was President. So he says, "Give me this big recovery program," which is not everything he asked for, but it was big and robust. And he starts to implement it. And he gets criticized because not all the programs were solved the day after tomorrow.

But you know the whole structure of the international economy, the supply chains, everything was thrown out of whack. And Joe Biden and Vice President Harris and their whole team methodically began trying to put the Humpty-Dumpty back together again. And we're doing really well, I think.

I mean, I think you—and because—yes, there was inflation, but there is nothing he could have done about that, unless it was to throw the country into depression.

I mean, when—you start when everything stops. So you've got a shortage of everything and the supply chains are all messed up, there's going to be inflation in the beginning. But he's building all these chip plants around America and doing all these other things.

I noticed we finally got a big electric charging station for—in Queens for all the yellow cabs in New York that are coming and stuff like that.

This stuff is happening, and you're going——

President Biden. And we cut the deficit.

President Clinton. ——to feel it all. It's going to get better and better and better and better and better.

So we should not make 2016's mistake. We should stay with what works and not let people who try to undo it take credit for what happened.

President Obama. And just—because I know we're running out of time, Stephen, but I do want to make this point, because Joe understands this deeply. Bill understood it.

There are structural problems in the economy that can frustrate people—you know, long-term trends in terms of growing inequality because of globalization and technology; you know, the suppression of unions, which Joe has specifically battled against, making sure that working people have the right to collectively bargain.

And so, you know, the frustrations that people feel in a lot of situations—if you're working hard and your paycheck is getting stretched, you know, beyond the breaking point and you're worrying about rent and you're concerned about the price of gas, you know, it's understandable. And one of the things that all three of us accept when you have this extraordinary privilege of serving the American people is, if it's happening on your watch, then even if you didn't have anything to do with it and even if you're making progress, there's going to be frustrations and sometimes those will be directed towards your office. That's part of the deal.

But the thing that not only Joe has to communicate, we who support Joe have to communicate, is, at the end of the day, who do you think is actually going to look out for you? Who do you think is going to fight on your behalf? Who's gone through tough financial times? Who has actually experienced the worry of a child getting sick and you trying to figure out, you know, how you're going to pay for it?

And Joe has gone through those struggles. He's got family members who have experienced that fear and pain and have gotten knocked down and had to get back up.

And, at the end of the day, what you're—what you want, not just out of your President, but out of your Government, is people's whose values are rooted in wanting to make sure everybody gets its shot——

President Biden. Gets a fighting chance.

President Obama. ——that is willing to fight on behalf of people who weren't born into privilege. And that's who Joe Biden is.

And so, you know, when we make an argument about the economy, it's not because we don't recognize that they're real problems and that they're—entire communities that are still feeling like they're being left behind. And it's legitimate for them to feel frustrated. And they're going to occasionally take it out on the President. And that's fair. Because, you know, Joe volunteered for the job—[laughter]—as we all did.

But, at the end of the day, you do have to make a choice. And the question then becomes: Who is it that really sees you and cares about you?

I can—[laughter]—I'm pretty confident the other guy doesn't. This guy does.

President Biden. You know——

President Obama. That's why we're going to have to fight so hard——

President Biden. Thank you. Let me say one thing——

President Obama. ——over the next 8 months.

President Clinton. We do.

President Biden. My dad, who was a very well-read guy. He didn't get to go to college. He got into Johns Hopkins. He was in Baltimore when the war began, and he never got to go.

But my dad used to say: "Joey, a job is about a lot more than a paycheck. It's about your dignity. It's about your family. It's about having a little bit left over at the end of the month—just a little bit. It's about being able to look your kid in the eye and say, 'Everything is going to be okay,' and mean it."

What I decided to do is to follow along with these guys have done. I wanted to build a middle class—build the economy from the middle class out and the bottom up.

When that happens, everybody does well. The wealthy do very well. But guess what, guys? Anybody think the tax system is fair? It's about time the wealthy—the very superwealthy start paying their fair share.

I'll give you one example. We have a thousand billionaires in America—a thousand billionaires in America. If we, in fact, just raise their—you know what they pay in taxes? Eight-point-three percent of their income—Federal taxes.

Audience members. Boo!

President Biden. If they just paid 25 percent, we'd raise \$400 million—billion dollars over 10 years and be able to wipe out the debt. We'd be able to do so much more. Just paying your fair share.

Mr. Colbert. President Biden——

President Biden. By the way, we cut the deficit—I know you got to wrap up. Cut the—we cut the deficit by the Medicare things we changed. That saved the taxpayer \$170 billion a year—\$170 billion because they don't have to pay the price—[inaudible]. Anyway, I don't want to get going. [Laughter]

"Wrap up." I'm wrapping. I'm hushing up.

Mr. Colbert. We have come to the end of our evening. I just want to ask you before we go, sir. A lot of people do impressions of you. Have you seen my impression of you? [Laughter] I'm the first to admit it's not very good. [Laughter] This—the—I put on your glasses. They do a lot of the work. [Laughter]

[At this point, Mr. Colbert put on sunglasses in an impersonation of President Biden.]

Now, we go to do the—and then we got to talk quiet. [Laughter]

President Biden. You know, you're a pretty dull President when you're known for two things: Ray-Ban sunglasses and ice cream.

[President Biden put on sunglasses.]

[*Laughter*]

Mr. Colbert. Gentlemen, would you care to join us in our—in the impression of President Biden? [*Laughter*]

[*President Clinton and President Obama each put on sunglasses.*]

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in thanking President Clinton, President Obama, and President Joseph Biden—

President Biden. By the way, Dark Brandon is real.

Mr. Colbert. Ladies and gentlemen, the Presidents of the United States. Go vote!

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:57 p.m. at the Radio City Music Hall. In his remarks, he referred to President Emmanuel Macron of France; Chancellor Olaf Scholz of Germany; State Affairs Commission President Kim Jong Un of North Korea; President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia; and former Rep. Elizabeth L. Cheney. President Obama referred to Evelyn McGee-Colbert, wife of Mr. Colbert. Mr. Colbert referred to D. John Sauer and John Lauro, personal attorneys for former President Trump; Secretary of Transportation Peter P.M. Buttigieg; and former First Lady Michelle Obama. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Campaign reception with former Presidents Barack Obama and William J. Clinton in New York City, remarks and a question-and-answer session.

Locations: New York City.

Names: Cheney, Elizabeth L.; Clinton, William J.; Colbert, Stephen T.; Kim Jong Un; Macron, Emmanuel; Obama, Barack; Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich; Scholz, Olaf; Trump, Donald J.

Subjects: 2021 civil unrest and violence at U.S. Capitol; 2024 Presidential election; Arab-Israeli conflict, peace process; Climate change; Federal deficit and debt; France, President; Gaza, conflict with Israel; Gaza, humanitarian situation; Germany, Chancellor; Group of Seven (G-7) nations; Hamas political-paramilitary organization; Israel, attacks by Hamas; Israel, military operations in Gaza; Medicare and Medicaid programs; New York, Democratic Party event; New York, President's visit; News media, Presidential interviews; North Korea, State Affairs Commission President; Russia, President; Social Security program; Tax Code reform; U.S. Supreme Court opinion overturning 1973 decision in *Roe v. Wade*.

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