

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024

Remarks at a Campaign Reception in Chicago, Illinois

April 8, 2024

The President. I think I should leave now. [*Laughter*]

Thank you, Michael and Cari, and—for the introduction, but even more than that, for your friendship. You know, this is an unusual business. Some of the people you meet, that you work with, both help you in your—in your campaigns and also work with you become your closest friends, like Billy Daley. He doesn't want to—he wants to deny it, but he can't. [*Laughter*]

Folks, look, you know, you hosted me back in 2019, the first event we did for the 2020 campaign. And this is the first event in Chicago we've done for this campaign. So thank you again.

And I know your husband is not here. He's doing the solar eclipse, but no one has helped me more than your husband and you. Thank you. Thank you.

And look, the Governor is—has a hell of a job to do. But I know that one thing about us we have in common: We both married way above our station. [*Laughter*]

And, as I said, I want to thank my friend Billy for being my friend for such a long time. Bill, you're a hell of a guy, and there's no way to get rid of me—[*laughter*—none, none, none.

Look, it's awful—always special to be back in Chicago. Election night 2008 was a special moment. We were excited to bring the convention here. And 2024, here again in August.

Trust me when I say you Governor and the entire Illinois delegation, including my buddy Dick Durbin, were determined to make it happen. I'm not exaggerating. [*Laughter*] Not even a little, tiny bit.

And I want to thank Michael for your serving as president of the host committee and for all you do to support us.

Look, I'm looking forward to the—this convention, for real. You know, as some of you in here know me very well, I—you know, you always want to win when you run. That's always just the competitive nature of it. But this is an election that I feel more obliged to win than even want to win, because the alternative is not very good. The alternative for the country is, I think, really somewhat worrisome.

You know, we head into spring. We're genuinely excited about the momentum building in our campaign. So far, 1.5 million contributors have contributed to the campaign—1.5 million. Five hundred fifty thousand new contributors since the last election; 97 percent of those contributors contributed under \$200.

And we're ramping up the campaign headquarters, field offices, hiring staff all across the country. Before Trump and the Republicans have opened one single office, we've opened hundreds.

And while the press doesn't write much about it, we have 18 national polls in the recent past, just since—I guess it was about 4 weeks—3, 4 weeks now—where those 19 polls, we're ahead of Trump. They never write that, but we're ahead of Trump since my State of the Union Address, including the battleground States, like Michigan and Pennsylvania.

In Pennsylvania, one of the most reputable polls has us winning by 10 points. I don't take any of this for granted because I don't think the polls are able to accurately predict like they used to because of the nature of how hard it is to get in contact with people.

But look, I know not everyone is feeling the enthusiasm. And so, just the other day, I—a defeated-looking man came up to me and said: "Mr. President, I'm being crushed by debt. I'm completely wiped out." And I said to say, "Sorry, Donald, I can't help." [Laughter] "I can't do much about it."

Look, Trump is in trouble, and he knows it. Just today he released a video where he's scrambling on the abortion issue—scrambling on the issue. He's worried voters are going to hold him accountable for the—overturning *Roe v. Wade* and for the cruelty and chaos that it's created.

Well, the bad news is, for him, he bragged about overrowing [overturning; White House correction] *Roe v. Wade*. The voters are going to hold him accountable. Voters will hold him accountable in the—for the 14 States where abortion is now illegal in all cases, even rape or incest, because of—*Roe v. Wade* is no longer the law of the land.

Voters are going to hold him accountable for the extreme 6-week bans that exist, the women who have been turned away in emergency rooms, the women who have—lost—nearly lost their lives or had their—had to flee their States to get care they needed.

For 50 years, women in America did not have to worry about a fundamental right. It didn't matter where they lived. It didn't matter whether—where they were. It didn't matter. It was a fundamental right, and Trump took it away. Now women in America today have fewer rights than their mothers and grandmothers had.

And this is outrageous, in my view. Mark my words, it's going to be—move millions of voters—women and men—to the polls this year. And I've said many times: Trump and the MAGA crowd don't have a clue about the power of women in America. But they're not about—they're about to find out. They're about to find out.

Look, no one—I'll just be very blunt about it; the press is here—no one trusts Donald Trump. He's made a political deal to get rid of *Roe v. Wade*. Now he hasn't—he's already realized that political deal with his MAGA friends may be imposing a national ban, and if they put one on his desk, he said he'd sign it.

That's never going to happen, if I'm elected. But as long as I'm President, I'm going to veto any national ban on choice. Kamala and I are determined to make *Roe v. Wade* the law of the land. If you give us a Democratic Congress next time around, we're going to do just that.

And, folks, look, chaos is nothing new to Trump. His Presidency was chaos. Trump is trying to make the country forget how dark and unsettling things were when he was President.

But we'll never forget. We'll never forget lying about COVID, telling Americans to drink bleach. [Laughter] No, it's not a—if you did—if it didn't happen, it'd sound bizarre. But it was bizarre.

We'll never forget his love letters to North Korea's Kim Jong Un and his admiration for Putin, which he still exhibits. We're never going to forget waiting for the tear-gassed innocent protesters outside the White House, just so he could hold a Bible upside down and—at a nearby church.

And by the way, now he compares himself to Jesus Christ. I find it fascinating. I find it fascinating. He also talks about how he's like Nelson Mandela—persecuted like Nelson—I mean, saying these things. [Laughter]

If you didn't—if you haven't heard them come out of his mouth, you'd think I'm making it up.

Well, we're never going to forget the insurrection on January the 6th, one of the darkest days in history. And he did not a single thing to stop it—not a single thing—one of the worst derelictions of duty of any President of the United States in the history of the United States.

And look, anybody want to go back to that? I don't think so. Look how far we've come: 13 million new jobs; over 300 jobs—300,000 jobs just this last month; 26 months of—2 years of unemployment under 4 percent; more people have health insurance today than ever before in the history of the country.

And we looked at Big Pharma. We looked at them for a long time. We've tried like hell to get them under control. But finally—finally, we won. Medicare can now negotiate what price they'll pay with Big Pharma, bringing down the cost of insulin from \$400 a month to \$35 a month. And so much more to come.

We've made historic investments in rebuilding the country, in computer chips, combating climate change, gun violence. But the first—I put the first Black woman on the Supreme Court, as I promised I'd do. And I could go on.

But the—but all—but this is all at stake. Trump wants to get rid of all of it. He's made no—all of it—all of it.

Trump wants to terminate—I love his phrase, "terminate"—the Affordable Care Act. Why? Because Obamacare—and when Bill was helping the President—is—what the Affordable Care—Health Care Act is. It's Obamacare on steroids. But he can't—because it was Barack Obama, he wants to get rid of it.

From the very beginning, he's determined to get rid of cheaper prescription drugs. Why? Because the drug companies hate them.

They're determined to get rid of the climate—he's coming after the climate bill. Why? Because the companies hate it.

And he's determined to get rid of—to reduce Social Security, raise the age to get rid of Medicare.

Look, the fact of the matter is the biggest threat to—Trump poses to our—is to our democracy. And you know, all—all that is at risk in 2024: the freedoms, our democracy.

Trump only embraces the violence of—not only embraces—embraces the violence of January 6, he's running on it. Do you ever see his ads? He's running on it. He calls the insurrectionists who are in prison now—he calls them "patriots." And he says, if reelected, he wants to pardon them.

Now Trump says if he loses again, there will be another "bloodbath"—his phrase, not mine. It'll be a "bloodbath" if he loses again.

Well, folks, we must say with one voice as Americans—as Democrats, Independents, Republicans—there's no place for political violence in America—none, zero, never. Period.

Let me close with this. This election is about competing visions for America. Trump's vision is one that is really full of anger and hate and revenge and retribution. He looks at America and sees a failing nation—his phrase, not mine—his phrase: "a failing nation." He's dead wrong.

I have a very different view of America—and I mean this from the bottom of my heart—one of hope and optimism. I see an America where we defend democracy, we don't diminish it. I see

an America where we protect the freedoms—the freedom to vote, the freedom to choose—not take them away.

I see an America where the economy grows from the middle out and the bottom up, not just the top down, and where working—and where working people finally have a shot—finally have a shot, where health care is a right not a privilege.

I see a future where we save the planet from a climate crisis and our country from gun violence and still grow significantly.

And this—look, folks, this election is about democracy, freedom in America. I wish the stakes weren't this high, but they are. That's why I need you. I know we can do this together.

I've never been more optimistic about our future. And I [we; White House correction] have to remember who we are. We're the United States of America.

I told a couple of you in the past that, before Dr. Kissinger died, 10 days before, I got a phone call: Would I talk to him? So I called him, and he said something fascinating to me. And I knew him because I was a young Senator when—during the Vietnam War, when he was Secretary of State and we used to argue like hell.

And he said, you know—he said, "Not since Napoleon—not since Napoleon has Europe not looked over their shoulder at Russia with dread and fear and concern, until you guys came along." And he said, "What you're done, you've strengthened NATO, you've expanded NATO, you've set into motion where the next six decades can be decades of peace in Europe, not insecurity, because of what you've done."

Well, what's he doing now? He refuses to—we had the ability to get a deal where we finally continued to support Ukraine. He got on the phone and called the Republican Senators and said: "Don't vote for it. Don't be for it." Why? Because he doesn't want to offend Putin. He has a secret plan. I bet I know what the secret is. That what you're going to do is—he's going to work out something, if he's President, where he gets Ukraine to give up a big chunk of its land that has been invaded in order to get peace.

Look, folks, I've been doing this job in politics for a fair amount of time. I know that sounds strange for a 40-year-old guy to say that. [Laughter] But all kidding aside, we are, as Madeleine Albright said, the essential nation. The rest of the world looks to us.

Who fills the vacuum if we're not there? I mean it sincerely. And we're not—we're not sending American troops. Who fills the vacuum though, if we're not there? What happens if we're not there?

Every international meeting I attend—and I knew—I think Bill would agree that the reason Barack asked me to be Vice President was because of my background in foreign policy. I've known most of these heads of state for a long time. I know all of them now as well.

Every international meeting I attend—and Madeleine Albright was right about us being essential nation—not because of me, because I'm the President of the United States of America, every one—one of them—they'll get to me in the corner before the meeting is adjourned and grab my arm and say: "You can't let him win. My democracy is at stake." And not about me. They really, genuinely worry about their democracies.

What happens? What happens in Europe? What happens if we don't do what we've been doing able to keep China where it was? What happens if we don't continue to maintain these allegiances?

Folks, look, there's a great deal at stake, but I'm confident—I'm absolutely confident the American people are ready to face the challenge. And we—because if we don't, we're going to have a real problem. And I think they know it.

So what you've done is, you put me in a position to be able to fund a campaign. As I said, we have significant contributions from significant group of people all across the country. And they're Democrat, Republicans, and Independents.

And so—and by the way, I promise you, we're putting it to good use. We're opening hundreds of headquarters and so on and so forth all across the country. And we're just getting this rooted in everyday campaign techniques that are going out, particularly in the States that are the toss-up States.

So I think we're going to be in good shape, but only because of you, if it occurs. We have to win. We have to win. Democracy, I think, depends on it, for real.

So thank you very much for your confidence. And I promise you, I'll do everything in my power not to let you down.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:27 p.m. at the residence of Michael J. and Cari Sacks. In his remarks, he referred to former White House Chief of Staff William M. Daley; Gov. Jay R. "J.B." Pritzker of Illinois; Sen. Richard J. Durbin; Vice President Kamala D. Harris; State Affairs Commission President Kim Jong Un of North Korea; President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia; and Supreme Court Associate Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson. He also referred to H.R. 815. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 9. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Campaign reception in Chicago, IL.

Locations: Chicago, IL.

Names: Daley, William M.; Durbin, Richard J.; Harris, Kamala D.; Jackson, Ketanji Brown; Kim Jong Un; Obama, Barack; Pritzker, Jay R. "J.B."; Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich; Sacks, Cari; Sacks, Michael J.; Trump, Donald J.

Subjects: 2021 civil unrest and violence at U.S. Capitol; 2024 Presidential election; Abortion; Climate change; Economic improvement; Health insurance, access and availability; Illinois, Democratic Party event; Illinois, Governor; Illinois, President's visit; Insulin cost controls; Job creation and growth; Medicare and Medicaid programs; National Security Act, 2024; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; North Korea, State Affairs Commission President; Prescription drug costs, reduction efforts; Reproductive health care; Russia, conflict in Ukraine; Russia, President; Supreme Court Associate Justice; U.S. diplomatic efforts, expansion; U.S. Supreme Court opinion overturning 1973 decision in Roe v. Wade; Ukraine, Russian invasion and airstrikes; Unemployment rate; Vice President; Voter participation.

DCPD Number: DCPD202400272.