

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024

Remarks at a Campaign Event in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

April 18, 2024

The President. I tell you what, I'm not sure I want this night to be over with. *[Laughter]*

I tell you what, man, this is a bit of a dream for me. I mean it sincerely. Having the Kennedy clan here supporting me like they are, that really means a lot to me.

You know, when I was the age of some of you guys in this audience, the—all I had to look to—not all I had—had to look at the Kennedy family.

I have—as I said, I have—I have President John F. Kennedy's desk, the Resolute, where John-John came out through the front of the desk, you know? And I sit there, and I look at the—those two—those two busts by the fireplace. I'm sitting at my desk, from here to the wall, there's President—or excuse me—Martin Luther King and there's Teddy Kennedy, whose brother is the one sitting—brings to my head about what we got to do, but his brother sitting there on that other—other pedestal, Robert F. Kennedy.

And look, you're—you're my ticket to the White House: you, Pennsylvania. No, it's not hyperbole. You're the ticket to the White House.

And I was able—and you're getting a whole hell of a lot of people on board.

I went home, as they say, to——

[At this point, the President imitated a Scranton, PA, accent.]

"Scranton"—*[laughter]*. There's no "t" in Scranton if you're from Scranton. *[Laughter]*

I went home to Scranton, and we got a chance to talk about a lot of things. But the main thing we got to talk about is the value set that's up there, just like it is throughout the working class areas of this State—you know, an awful lot of good people, decent people I grew up with, people who taught me, for real, that—that everything was about treating everybody with dignity, no matter who you were. Not a joke. Not a joke.

And so then we headed off to Pittsburgh. And you know, Pittsburgh is back—the "City of Bridges," 438 of them, as a matter of fact. They keep building them too—*[laughter]*—a whole hell of a lot of them.

But you know, steel—you know, I've always joked and said that this not only a steel State, this is a State that has a spine of steel. And the folks in Pittsburgh are really working like hell, and they're doing well. And we're finally making sure that United States Steel stays United States Steel. It's not going to be anything—anybody else's steel.

And then, you know, we—I'm here because—some of you remember—some of you—I'm only 42, but—*[laughter]*—some of you who are a little bit older may remember that, for the longest time, my little State of Delaware, just south of here—I was raised in—after Scranton, in Claymont, Delaware, right on the border. And you know, for the longest time, Delaware had no television station. We were covered by Philly.

And one of the proudest moments of my life—I nearly got killed politically—was when I was the most popular Senator in Pennsylvania. *[Laughter]* No, really. Remember that? It was—because they had to cover—I was on—Philadelphia television as much as both the Senators were from Pennsylvania. *[Laughter]*

But look, there's a lot at stake. And I'm only going to take a few seconds.

Audience member. Take as long as you want.

The President. No, no, no. [*Laughter*]

It really is about—our democracy is really at risk. It's not a joke. I mean, I'm being deadly earnest. And this guy means what he says. If we haven't learned that now, we're kidding ourselves. He means what he says.

And when he talks about being a dictator on the first day, he means being able to negate elements of the Constitution. He's named where they were. He said what he would do.

The idea that he thinks that those insurrectionists were "patriots" and he's going to free them all if, in fact, he gets elected—I mean, this is a full-blown attack on the Capitol in a way that hadn't happened since the Civil War.

So there's a lot going on. He's committed to be opposed to—not just figuratively, literally—everything you've helped me get done—everything. He wants to get rid of the Affordable Care Act. He wants to get rid—just go down the list.

So what you're doing here is bigger than me, bigger than you, bigger than any—all of us combined. It's about what kind of country our kids are going to live in. Not because I'm running—not Joe Biden. I mean this sincerely. Not because of me, but because of the opposite, what happens if we lose this election.

And it's—you know, Joe has done a hell of a job. I asked Joe to be the Envoy to Ireland when we were—no, it's a big deal. The Irish accords, we were not sure they were going to—weren't going to fall apart. He went over, he gained the respect of the Republic as well as the North, and he made sure they stayed in place.

So, Joe, I've got to warn you: If I win, you're not going anywhere, pal. [*Laughter*] You may be out of the country, but you're going to be working with us. [*Laughter*]

Any rate. So I just want to—I just want to thank you all. You've been incredible to me. Philadelphia has always been the base of how I've won all my elections. I mean, for real. So, I'm counting on it.

And you know, Pennsylvania is—I think Pennsylvania is one of those States where it's kind of unique. It's a very successful State. It's a wealthy State. But it's also a working class State, where people keep their word, where people mean what they say, where people show up and do what they say they're going to do. And that's who we are.

So I'll end by saying: For the longest time, as a young Senator, I heard about trickle-down economics. You know, there used to be—there was a law that was passed in 1934. It was about unions and could they be—were they legal or not, so on and so forth. But the law that ended up being passed said not only are unions legit and they have a right to—you can't artificially stop them from organizing, but they did a second thing.

It said that, in the United States of America, if a President is given money from the Congress to do something that is for America—build a new aircraft carrier deck, build a highway, build—whatever it is the money is given for—he should do two things or she should do two things: Number one, make sure they use American products and, number two, American workforce.

That was honored in the breach for the vast majority of the years. When I came to office—and the only excuse could be is there weren't workers that could do the job in America and if there weren't materials to be able to do the job.

But since I've been President, it's been investing in America. The longest time we spent, including some administrations—even some—[inaudible]—some Democratic administrations.

What did we do? Corporate America—and I know a little bit about corporate America, being from Delaware—more corporations incorporated there than every other State in the Union. That's not a joke.

But I've always been straight with them. But what did corporate America decide to do? If they had to build something, they found the cheapest labor in the world to build it with. So, they go overseas so they—the labor was cheaper—whether it was to Taiwan, South Korea, wherever it was—and then they'd import the product back home. We changed that. We are making sure we build it here and sending the product over there. And that's why we're working.

And for the longest time, you notice, the—the mainstream economists criticized me, said I didn't get it right. But guess what they're saying now? No, I'm serious. Not—not the right wing, but even the conservative economists. It's working. Invest in—because they started to say: "This about the government making judgments of what's best for the country. Let the free enterprise system do it." The free enterprise system didn't do it as well as we're doing it now. It's still a free enterprise system. We decide where to invest the money.

So thank you for all you've done. We're going to do well here in the State because of you. But it gets down to basic things. As Joe said, it's about picking up the phone. It's about knocking on doors. It's about standing in the shopping centers. It's about showing up and just asking: "What do you care about? What's on your mind?" Because an awful lot of people become very sour. Think about it.

It used to be the way we would communicate. Most people picked up the paper and read the, quote, "Philadelphia Inquirer," in the old days, picked up the phone, or turned on the TV and watch the nightly news. They don't do it anymore. It's on this phone. It sounds—no, that's not a joke. If you look at the percentages of people where they get their news, and there's so much on—and it's not—you can almost not blame them because so much of what you read is just flat lies. Simply not true.

And so the only way to get through is eye to eye. That's the best way to do it. And that's why I'm counting on all of you.

And lastly, I'll point out that, you know, we have 11 headquarters here in Pennsylvania and still we're going—keep going. But we also have more people employed here as volunteers—volunteers for full-time employees as well in this effort. He doesn't have one single headquarter in this State. The one he had, he closed. No, I'm serious. He doesn't have any headquarters around the country.

You know how much money we raised so far? We raised a whole hell of a lot of money. We got one-point—but here's the deal: 1.6 million people. Let me make sure that's—either two or six. I—the press is here, and I don't want to be misquoted. [Laughter] Get the exact number. Hang on.

Aide. One-point-six.

The President. Is it one-six—it's 1.6, isn't it?

Aide. One-point-six.

The President. Yes.

White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre. One-point-six.

The President. One-point-six million individual contributions. Okay. Those of you that have been involved in politics before know what—the next number I'm going to give you is important: 97 percent of those contributions are under—under \$200. Ninety-seven percent.

Five hundred fifty new contributors—individual contributors just since the last election. I mean, is the—and we raised a lot of money last time around.

So, folks, we're really moving. And I think we're going to see in all the—in—I didn't even get into the—into the issues which you all know so well.

But I mean—and isn't it amazing how principled the opposition is? [*Laughter*] Trump: "I am the reason why *Roe v. Wade* was overturned. I think it should be States' rights issue now." [*Laughter*] "But, wait, I don't know. Maybe"——

These guys—I'm going to get in trouble. Anyway. [*Laughter*]

Thank you all so very, very much. Appreciate it, appreciate it, appreciate it. Thank you. And thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:16 p.m. at the Martin Luther King Jr. Recreation Center. In his remarks, he referred to former President Donald J. Trump; and U.S. Special Envoy to Northern Ireland for Economic Affairs Joseph P. Kennedy III. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

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