

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024

Remarks at a Campaign Event in Tampa, Florida

April 23, 2024

The President. Thank you, thank you, thank you. Thank you. Please, sit down.

Before I begin, I want to say something to the kids here. Your mom and dad, they owe you big for being here. *[Laughter]* So——

[At this point, the President spoke privately with children seated in the front row of the audience; no transcript was provided.]

[Inaudible]—my team? Where's one of my team? You know the deal when I've got two young men over here making a sacrifice? You know what we're going to do, right?

Aide. Yes, sir.

[The President spoke with some other children in the audience as follows.]

[Inaudible]—my staff is going to come over and give you 5 bucks so you can buy ice cream for yourselves, or you can make mom and dad pay if they—*[inaudible]*. All right? Okay? All right.

Okay. I got that settled.

You know, I look out at these beautiful children, and I think to myself, "They're having to stand here and listen to some guy they have no idea what the heck he's talking about." *[Laughter]* And I think of—you know, they think when you—when you have—when you're elected to office, it's great to have—your children have a great opportunity. It's a pain in the neck for them. *[Laughter]* My kids had to stand for so many meetings. I—anyway, I owe them big.

Look, first of all, thank you, thank you, thank you for being here. Thank you for all you're doing. And it means a great deal. Florida—I think Florida is in play, nationally. And Nikki is doing a hell of a job as your State chairman. And I made her promise she's going to run again, I hope. *[Laughter]*

Look, a couple of things I want to say. You know, one of the things that earlier today I spoke about—up in Washington and, actually, also last week—talking about that this election is a basic, old-fashioned election. It's about getting out the votes. It's about putting together campaigns the old-fashioned way. Not that we don't use all the technology available, but just everything from knocking on doors to putting up road signs to make sure that we get people to the polls, all those things.

And you know, it's a—we've got to—there are some animated issues. Obviously, choice is one of the biggest ones. But it's not the only one.

You know, I know you're reading in the press lately that there's a great concern among—I've been doing this for a couple years. *[Laughter]* Well, it's hell turning 50. You know what I mean? *[Laughter]*

And as—and I've spent an awful lot of my time dealing with foreign policy because I was chairman of that committee and because that's why Barack asked me to—for 8 years, to handle portions of that. And one of the things that people don't understand, I don't think, fully, is we are the essential nation.

No, not a joke. It's not hyperbole. It's not bragging. It's—think of it this way: If the United States stepped off the world stage, like Trump wants us to do, who would lead the world? Who would lead the world?

And one of the things that's happening now is that—and I've—say this in front of the press that—they've heard me say it before. Every international meeting I attend with other heads of state—whether it's the G-7, the G-20, all these international meetings—before I leave, literally, almost every one will walk up to me and wait to get me in a corner alone and grab my arm and say, "You've got to win." Not because of me, but because of the alternative. And they say, "Because my democracy depends upon it," meaning their democracy.

So the whole world is looking, and they're looking to see how we handle ourselves in this election, not just on whether we win or not, but how we handle ourselves.

And one of the things that—you know, for me, I got involved when I was a kid in electoral politics out of the civil rights movement. And it all got down to one person at a time—I mean it sincerely—organizing.

My State, to its great shame, was segregated by law. That's why I got involved as a kid when I got out of high school and into college. And it's about just doing the basic things: talking to people—literally, talking to people.

And, for example, we're—I'm really excited. We've raised almost a half a billion dollars so far. *[Applause]* But here's what excites me: So far, we have 1.6 million contributors—1.6 million contributors—550,000 more than we had last time at this stage of the game. But here's the deal. Of those 1.6 million contributors, 97 percent contributed less than \$200. Think of all the numbers that that means.

We're in a situation where they have—and as I said, where we raised almost—we're headed toward a half a billion dollars. And that's all about—being able to do the things we have to do in a campaign, especially one that's as hard fought as this and one that is so full of lies, so full of misrepresentations being made.

I think—you know, whether the press thinks I'm good, bad, or indifferent, I think they acknowledge that there's less than truth that comes out of the other guy's mouth. And you know, you wouldn't know it from what you read and hear, but you know, we're in pretty good shape in the polls. The—and I know you're all activists, so that's why I'm bothering to tell you this: The polls don't win you an election.

But in the last 23 national polls, I've been ahead in 10 of them, Trump has been ahead in 8, and we've been tied in 5. More importantly, the momentum is clearly in our favor. For example, we moved 8 points in the latest Marquette poll and 7 points in the Echelon poll. And the Marist poll now has us up by 3 nationwide.

The point I'm making is, people are beginning to listen. This is a time people begin to focus and listen. They have generic impressions up to now, but now they're listening. And they're beginning to listen.

And so this campaign's—how many offices have we opened now, total? Where is my——
Aide. A hundred and thirty-three.

The President. A hundred—we've opened a hundred—*[applause]*—133 offices.

And here you are. That's the note I had. Yes. And here in Florida, we're opening coordinated offices, hiring staff, and recruiting volunteers as well.

But you know, I know we can do this, but I've never been more optimistic. I know—I've been saying this for a long time: I've never been more optimistic about America than I am today.

You know, when I—I wasn't going to run in 2020, because I had lost my son in Iraq—because of Iraq in nineteen—anyway, in 2015.

But what happened was, remember when, in—down in Virginia, those folks came out of the woods carrying torches and with Nazi banners and singing? For real. It's hard to make it up—make it up. And it just was astounding to me. And a young woman was killed—I spoke to her mom—who was a bystander.

And they asked the then-President Trump what he thought, and he said there were—"I think there are very fine people on both sides." That's when I decided I had to run, for real, because our democracy is also at stake—literally, the democracy is at stake.

But the way to make sure people understand that is to go out and find out what's on their minds, see what they need. What is it they're most concerned about? And you know, we—you know, we've had enormous success when we've actually asked people—when we go out and do it the old-fashioned way. And we're just really kicking it up now.

We're, you know—we're getting toward the end here. Last time out, we ran, and we raised the vast majority of the money we made in the last 3 months. That's when people began to focus.

But we're going to do—we're going to be—we have to be really organized in a big way. But it's basic organization; it's not rocket science. It's knocking on doors. It's sending out postcards. It's getting on the telephone. It's going around and making sure people have rides to the polls, all those things.

And by the way, when I ran this time, I made it real clear what I was going to do. I said I was going to change the way our economy works, instead of trickle-down economics where they go—where the very wealthy get all the tax breaks and all that will trickle down and grow the economy. I'm a capitalist. I don't care if you—if you make a billion bucks. Just pay your taxes. *[Laughter]*

No, I really mean it. You know what the average tax rate for someone making—there's—we have a thousand billionaires in America. You know what their average tax rate is? Eight-point-three percent. Not a joke—8.3 percent. Anybody want to trade with their tax rate?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. But look, everything we've done because of your help you've provided over the last 3½ years, he wants to undo. He's made no bones about it—all of it. Just like you have a—Scott wants to get rid of Social Security. You know, these guys are for real.

But look at what we've done. We built—we've got a lot—we've got a lot more work to do, but we built the strongest economy in the world. We've got to get inflation even further down. There's a lot more we have to do.

And by the way, I know a lot of people got a little frustrated with me when I said I'm going to be the most pro-union President in American history. Well, guess what? I asked the Treasury Department to do a study: With all the union help we're getting and all the union support that we're—they're getting, what's the impact? Everybody does better. Everybody does better, even the people who are [not; White House correction] paying for the union dues, because guess what? I mean, paying the union wage—because they get the best workers in the world.

So my generic point is, there's a lot we have going. There's no reason why we can't reclaim our heritage and who we are as the most generous, leading nation in the world and still grow.

So there's a lot more to say, but I'm already saying too much.

Audience member. No, you're not. No, you're not, Mr. President. No, you're not.

Audience member. Teamsters in the house.

The President. Teamsters in the house, that's the—I tell you what. They better damn well be in the house, man. *[Laughter]* I tell you what.

Audience member. The only reason I have a pension——

The President. And by the way——

Audience member. ——is because of you, sir.

The President. Is that right?

Audience member. The only reason I have a pension is because of you.

The President. Well, we did get that done.

Anyway—*[applause]*. Besides, I used to drive an 18-wheeler. You know what I did?

Audience member. *[Inaudible]*—you helped negotiate.

The President. That's exactly right.

Audience member. Thirty-billion-dollar contract with one of the largest employers in America: UPS. You stood strong with us, and we'll stand strong with you, sir.

The President. Well, thank you.

I mean, look, I'm getting a little off course here. But the bottom line is this—*[laughter]*—it matters to ordinary people.

When I said, when I got elected, I was going to build an economy from the middle out and the bottom up, because that way the poor have a chance, the middle class grow, and the wealthy still do very well. They still do very well.

And it's working. We've—we have 16 million new employees—I mean, we—it's working.

We still have to deal with inflation, and there's a lot of costs out there for ordinary people. We're going to be getting you a lot of information to get to the folks out there.

But, for example, we're in a situation now where you have a circumstance where there's a lot of junk fees. For example, you have a bank overdraft, they charge you 37 bucks instead—but guess what? Now they can only charge you 8. Because they're supposed—because it just—I don't want to cost them money, but that—exorbitant prices they're charging.

Same with credit card overdrafts. Same—a whole range of things that affect people.

My dad—I'll end with my dad. My dad used to say—my dad was a really well-read man who never got a chance to go to college because of World War II. And his—he'd always say: "Joey, a job is about a lot more than a paycheck. It's about your dignity. It's about respect. It's about being able to look your kid"—he meant it—"being able to look your kid in the eye and say, 'Honey, it's going to be okay,' and mean it."

The only thing we're about as Democrats, in my view, is giving everyone a shot. Everyone gets a fair shot.

And I'll be damned if we're not going to do that this time out.

So thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you.

Good seeing you.

Audience member. Thank you, Mr. President.

[*An aide approached the President.*]

The President. Thank you. [*Inaudible*]*—wait, wait. I'm not going—to take my microphone. Hey—*

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

The President. [*Inaudible*]*—10 bucks?*

Aide. [*Inaudible*]

The President. All right. Okay. Hey, kids, remember what I told you now? [*Laughter*]
Remember our deal?

All right. Anyway, thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:30 p.m. at Hillsborough Community College, Dale Mabry Campus. In his remarks, he referred to Nikki Fried, chair, Florida Democratic Party; former President Barack Obama; Susan Bro, mother of Heather D. Heyer, who was killed in a vehicular attack in Charlottesville, VA, on August 12, 2017; and Sen. Richard L. Scott.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Campaign event in Tampa, FL.

Locations: Tampa, FL.

Names: Biden, Ashley B.; Biden, R. Hunter; Bro, Susan; Fried, Nikki; Obama, Barack; Scott, Richard L.; Trump, Donald J.

Subjects: 2024 Presidential election; Civil rights movement; Economic improvement; Florida, democratic party event; Florida, President's visit; Group of Seven (G–7) nations; Group of Twenty (G–20) nations; Inflation; Job creation and growth; Junk fees imposed on consumers, prevention efforts; Labor movement and organized labor; Tax Code reform; Virginia, 2017 civil unrest and violence in Charlottesville; Voter participation.

DCPD Number: DCPD202400329.