

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024

Remarks at the White House Correspondents' Association Dinner

April 27, 2024

The President. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

If you think your Irish grandparents are wondering—[*laughter*—my great-great-grandparents who got here in 1846 are going, "What in the hell is going on?" [*Laughter*]

I want to thank you for the warm welcome. But please, not so loud. [*Laughter*] Donald is listening. "Sleepy Don." [*Laughter*] I kind of like that. I may use that again.

Kelly O'Donnell, president of the White House Correspondents' Association, thank you for having me.

White House Correspondents' Association President Kelly O'Donnell. Thank you, sir.

The President. But, Kelly O., let's be honest, you're way too young to be president. [*Laughter*]

It's been a year since I delivered this speech. And my wife Jill, who is with me tonight, was worried how I'd do. I told her: "Don't worry. It's just like riding a bike." She said, "That's what I'm worried about." [*Laughter*]

Of course, the 2024 election is in full swing. And yes, age is an issue. I'm a grown man running against a 6-year-old. [*Laughter*]

But I feel great. I really feel great. I'm campaigning all over the country: Pennsylvania, Georgia, North Carolina. I always done well in the original Thirteen Colonies. [*Laughter*]

And speaking of history, did you hear what Donald just said about the major Civil War battle? Quote: "Gettysburg. Wow." [*Laughter*] Trump's speech was so embarrassing, the statue of Robert E. Lee surrendered again. [*Laughter*]

But look—[*laughter*—age is the only thing we have in common. My Vice President actually endorses me. [*Laughter*]

I've had a great stretch since the State of the Union. But Donald has had a few tough days lately. You might call it "stormy weather." [*Laughter*] What the hell. [*Laughter*]

Trump's so desperate, he started reading those Bibles he's selling. [*Laughter*] Then he got to the First Commandment, "You shall have no other Gods before me." That's when he put it down and said, "This book is not for me." [*Laughter*]

Look, being here is a reminder that folks think what's going on in Congress is political theater. But that's not true. If Congress were a theater, they'd have thrown out Lauren Boebert a long time ago. [*Laughter*]

Now, to all of my friends in the press—and Fox News—[*laughter*—some of you complain that I don't take enough of your questions. No comment. [*Laughter*]

Of course, the New York Times issued a statement blasting me for, quote, "actively and effectively avoiding independent journalists." Hey, if that's what it takes to get the New York Times to say I'm active and effective, I'm for it. [*Laughter*] It's okay.

I have higher standards. I do interviews with strong independent journalists who millions of people actually listen to, like Howard Stern. [*Laughter*]

And I know you're looking around and saying: "This guy has been doing this for 50 years. He's had his moment. Give him some—give someone else a chance."

To say that, I say: "Lorne, ignore the critics. Ignore the critics." [Laughter] Lorne is a great friend who has had eight comedians play me over the years on "Saturday Night Live." Eight. And who the hell says I'm not a real job creator? [Laughter]

Look, Lorne has had even more comedians and actors joke about me. Like the funny guy on "Weekend Update," Michael Che. [Laughter] He's hilarious.

Scarlett Johansson, you did such an incredible job in your State of the Union rebuttal that you should be "Weekend"—do "Weekend Update." [Laughter] Clearly, you're the funny one in the family. [Laughter]

Look, folks, on a serious note, in addition to marrying up, Colin and I have another thing in common. [Laughter] We both find strength in family.

I got to spend time with his family yesterday in the Oval Office. Colin's dad was a high school teacher in Staten Island, and his mom is an incredible woman—a family of firefighters, was chief medical officer in New York City Fire Department on 9/11. As a doctor, she rushed to Ground Zero, risking her own life, treating and saving fellow first responders. Rushing into danger for others for others is my definition of patriotism and heroism.

And so is what all of you do when you report truth over lies. That's why I want to close tonight with my genuine thanks to the free press.

There are some who call you the "enemy of the people." That's wrong, and it's dangerous. You literally risk your lives doing your job. [Applause] You do.

Covering everything from natural disasters to pandemics to wars and so much more. And some of your colleagues have given their lives, and many have suffered grievous injuries. Other reporters have lost their freedom.

Journalism is clearly not a crime. Not here, not there, not anywhere in the world. And Putin should release Evan and Alsu immediately.

Just as we're doing everything we can—[applause]. We're doing everything we can to bring home journalists—fellow journalists Austin and all Americans, like Paul Whelan, you know, who—wrongfully detained all around the world.

And I give you my word as a Biden, we're not going to give up until we get them home. All of them. All of them.

On the third anniversary of January 6, I went to Valley Forge. And I said the most urgent question of our time is whether democracy is still—is still the sacred cause of America. That is the question the American people must answer this year. And you, the free press, play a critical role in making sure the American people have the information they need to make an informed decision.

The defeated former President has made no secret of his attack on our democracy. He has said he wants to be a "dictator on day one," and so much more. He tells supporters he is their "revenge" and "retribution." When in God's name have you heard another President say something like that? And he promised a "bloodbath" when he loses again. We have to take this seriously.

Eight years ago, you could have written off, it was just Trump talk. But no longer. Not after January 6.

I'm sincerely not asking of you to take sides, but asking you to rise up to the seriousness of the moment; move past the horserace numbers and the gotcha moments and the distractions, the sideshows that have come to dominate and sensationalize our politics; and focus on what's actually at stake. I think, in your hearts, you know what's at stake. The stakes couldn't be higher.

Every single one of us has roles to play—a serious role to play in making sure democracy endures—American democracy. I have my role, but, with all due respect, so do you.

In the age of disinformation, credible information that people can trust is more important than ever. And that makes you—and I mean this from the bottom of my heart—it makes you more important than ever.

So tonight I'd like to make a toast. To a free press, to an informed citizenry, to an America where freedom and democracy endure. God bless America.

[At this point, the President offered a toast.]

Now, I'm going to turn it over to Kelly, then you'll hear from a real comedian. *[Laughter]*

I think I know what I'm in for. You know, Colin Jost has taken aim at me before with his jokes.

Ms. O'Donnell. Oh, I'm sure. You ready?

The President. Like saying, "After winning the South Carolina primary, Biden barely edged out his closest rival: time." *[Laughter]* Colin, when I win, I'm going to have a whole hell of a lot of time, and I'm going to be watching, pal. *[Laughter]*

Kelly, back to you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:12 p.m. at the Washington Hilton hotel. In his remarks, he referred to former Donald J. Trump; Rep. Lauren Boebert; Howard Stern, host, SiriusXM radio's "Howard Stern Show"; Lorne Michaels, creator and producer, and Colin Jost, actor and staff writer, NBC's "Saturday Night Live" program; Scarlett Johansson, wife, Daniel A. Jost, father, and Kerry Kelly, mother, of Mr. Jost; President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia; Evan Gershkovich, a Wall Street Journal reporter who was arrested by Russian authorities on March 29, 2023; Alsu Kurmasheva, a U.S. citizen and journalist with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty who was arrested by Russia authorities in Kazan, Russia, on October 18, 2023; Austin B. Tice, a reporter for McClatchy Newspapers who was abducted outside Damascus, Syria, on August 14, 2012; and Paul N. Whelan, a U.S. citizen who was arrested and held on espionage charges by Russian security services in Moscow, Russia, on December 28, 2018. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 28.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : White House Correspondents' Association dinner.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Biden, Jill T.; Boebert, Lauren; Che, Michael; Gershkovich, Evan; Harris, Kamala D.; Johansson, Scarlet; Jost, Colin; Jost, Daniel A.; Kelly, Kerry; Kurmasheva, Alsu; Michaels, Lorne; O'Donnell, Kelly; Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich; Stern, Howard; Tice, Austin B.; Trump, Donald J.; Whelan, Paul N.

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