

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024

Remarks at the Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies Awards Gala Dinner

May 14, 2024

The President. Hello, hello, hello. *[Applause]* Whoa! What a crowd.

Please have a seat if you have one.

Audience member. We love you, Joe! *[Laughter]*

The President. Well, thank you, Judy Chu, for that introduction and for your leadership of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus.

By the way, I was raised early on by a guy who was—became my sort of sponsor when I got here as a 30-year-old kid: Danny Inouye. And Norm Mineta was a close friend as well, so I got trained early on.

Thank you, leaders of the House Democratic Caucus. And, Leader Jeffries, you're here somewhere, I'm told. I can't see you, but I know you're here. And Whip Clark, Chair Aguilar, and all of the Members of Congress here tonight.

Thank you, thank you, thank you also to the Asian Pacific—American Institute of Congressional Studies for 30 years of empowering AAAHP *[AANHPI; White House correction]* leaders all across the government.

And let me say, I have kept our commitment to having an administration that looks like America. I made that commitment when I got elected. While members of the AANHPI community at every level, led by the incredible Vice President of the United States, Kamala Harris—and so many here today, including my Cabinet: U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai; Acting Labor Secretary Judy Su—Julie Su; Director of my Office of Science and Technology—where is Arati? Where is she? *[Applause]* Stand up, kid. I like that dress. Let them see your gown.

And thanks to all of you: leaders of labor, business, philanthropy, civil rights, arts, culture, and so much more. All of you—and I mean all of you—represent a simple truth: There is no singular Asian American, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander identity. The diversity of cultures and breadth of your achievements that has shaped and strengthened the fabric of our country. The fastest growing demographic in the United States, you represent how we are a nation of immigrants, a nation of dreamers, a nation of freedom.

That's the America we share. That's the America we know.

And you've made incredible progress: 15 million new jobs recorded, historic-low levels of unemployment, record small-business creation. In fact, loans from our Small Business Administration to AANHPI small business is up by 44 percent compared to the previous administration.

Because we extended the childcare tax credit during the pandemic—which not one Republican voted for, I might add—we cut Asian American child poverty by nearly 25 percent to a record low.

The lowest *[To lower; White House correction]* costs across the board, we finally beat Big Pharma and gave Medicare the power to negotiate prescription drug prices. We also capped

insulin at \$35 a month, down from about \$400 a month for seniors on Medicare, including for millions in this community.

Our reforms not only saved lives—guess what?—it saved the taxpayers \$160 billion—160—because Medicare no longer has to pay those exorbitant prices.

We're also making college more affordable by relieving student debt for millions of borrowers, including many in this community. *[Applause]* That's worth clapping for, I promise you. How we can be the leader of the world without having the best education in the world, I don't understand.

We increased Pell grants by \$800 a year—the largest increase in a decade—which matters to 40 percent of the AANHPI students—they rely on Pell grants. Folks, when I was growing up, \$800 makes a lot of difference to a family.

More people have health insurance today than ever before. And I'm proud that my administration announced DACA recipients will finally have access to health care through the Affordable Care Act.

And by the way, the first bill I introduced was the most comprehensive immigration reform bill in decades. It includes a pathway to citizenship for "Dreamers" and expands the number of green cards so many more families can build their American Dream together.

Unfortunately, those provisions were not included in the recent bipartisan border bill. That was the first bill I ever introduced when I came—became President. But this bill had the majority—that bipartisan bill has majority support in the House and Senate. But I was told that other guy—that loser—*[laughter]*—I think he's having trouble. *[Laughter]*

Trump called Republicans in the—to block that Senate bill—got on the phone and said, "It'd be a win for Biden and a loser for him," so he—they have to make sure you don't allow it to get to a vote. But he's wrong. Republicans in Congress must act because it's the right thing to do, and America needs it done.

Thanks to the decades of advocacy by so many of you, I'm proud our administration recently announced major changes in how Federal Government collects and reports Federal data on race and ethnicity. By disaggregating data on a community that's so diverse, we can better serve the entire community.

After all, if our Government doesn't really see the difference between Korean Americans distinctly from Filipino Americans, how in the hell can they address the needs of each community? And we've changed that with disaggregation.

We're also making historic investments to rebuild our roads and our bridges and to lead the world in science and innovation. And that includes the most significant investment ever—ever, ever—anywhere in the history of the world on climate.

I'm so proud, with your help, that the new report co-released by 20 major climate organizations—from the Sierra Club to the Sunrise Movement—credited our administration with making more than—taking 300 actions related to climate, conservation, public health, and clean energy.

I signed the most significant gun safety law in nearly 30 years, which I know matters to the community that I mourned with—and I remember—in Atlanta, in Half Moon Bay, and Monterey Park.

This guy said—when the last shooting occurred, he said what—they asked him about it; he said, just "get over it." "Get over it." Ugh—anyway. I'll be good. *[Laughter]*

Together, we'll not stop until we ban assault weapons again—this time permanently.

I can go on, but I'm between you and your dinner.

The point is, we're—[laughter]—we're lowering costs; we're expanding opportunities with your help; we're protecting freedoms. That's in stark contrast to my predecessor's view of it and of you.

Look, I'll never forget him lying about the pandemic, telling Americans to inject bleach into their skin. I wonder if he did it. [Laughter] It might explain some things. Anyway. [Laughter]

We'll never forget the rise in anti-Asian hate crimes during the pandemic. And I was proud to have signed the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act with your support to help States, cities better report, respond, prevent crime.

We also provided historic levels of funding to public safety in local communities that is delivering results. We're seeing near—a near 50-year low in violent crime in America. According to the Justice Department, hate crimes targeting Asian Americans fell by 33 percent from 2021 to 2022.

But there's still more to do so that every community feels safe.

When Trump was in office, he enacted a \$2 trillion tax cut, overwhelmingly benefiting the very wealthiest among us and the biggest corporations, that exploded the Federal deficit. His administration added more to the Federal debt than any previous Presidential term. And now he and the congressional Republicans want to do it all over again.

At the same time, they want to—I love this word "terminate"; I love the way these guys talk—"terminate" the Affordable Care Act, which would terminate a lot of lives, denying millions of you and your families in health care insurance, denying protections for preexisting conditions for literally several million people.

They want to undo what they finally got done and then—what we did—finally got done to make up for it. They want to—they want to give power back to Big Pharma to charge exorbitant prices on prescription drugs. This is what they're saying on the platform. Those of you in the Congress know this.

My predecessor wants to cut Social Security and Medicare. He said there's a lot of reasons you can do it "in terms of cutting." Not on my watch.

He brags about getting *Roe v. Wade* overturned. But Kamala and I are going to keep fighting to restore *Roe v. Wade* as the law of the land again.

And while we fight for comprehensive immigration reform, Trump continues to vilify immigrants. I can't believe the way this guy talks. He talks about immigrants as "rapists" and "murderers"—his words, not mine. He said they are "not people"—they are "not people." He says immigrants are "poisoning the blood of this country."

Folks, that's not who we are. Diversity is our strength as a nation and always has been and always will be. And my predecessor's prejudices lead him to obscure positions. And they [we; White House correction] want a country for all of us—that's what we want.

Let me close with this. Two years ago, I signed a landmark law to pave the way for the creation of a National Museum of Asian Americans—which was mentioned already—Native Americans [Native Hawaiians; White House correction], Pacific Islanders History and Culture. So very proud to do so because it amplifies why we are a great nation. It matters.

But Trump and his friends want to—they want to erase history, not make history. Together, we make history, all of us in this room. And that's why I see all of you and we celebrate Asian

American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander Heritage Month, including my dear friend we all miss and whose family is here tonight, Norm Mineta, who helped create this caucus.

Norm once said: "Democracy is not a spectator's sport. It requires everyone's active participation. You don't have to be running for office to be a public—be in public service," end of quote.

Folks, there have always been competing values and visions of what America should be. My predecessor believes we are a country of revenge and retribution. I believe we're a nation of hope and opportunity for everybody. We're a country of honesty, decency, faith, fairness. That's the future we're building together.

I see a future where we defend democracy, not diminish it. I see a future where we protect freedoms, not take them away. I see a future where the middle class finally has a fair shot and the wealthy begin—the wealthy finally begin to pay their fair share so we can provide chair—childcare, paid leave, and so much more and still reduce the Federal deficit. Folks, I see a future where we save the planet from the climate crisis and our country from gun violence.

Above all, I see a future for all Americans. I see a country for all Americans.

And it's because of you—and I mean this sincerely—I've never been more optimistic. We just have to remember who in the hell we are. We're the United States of America. And there is nothing beyond our capacity when we work together.

So let's keep working together because we can get so much done.

God bless you all, and may God protect our troops.

Thank you, thank you, thank you. And I mean it. Thank you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:03 p.m. at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Office of Science and Technology Policy Director Arati Prabhakar. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 15.

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