

*Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024*

## **Remarks at the Congressional Picnic**

*June 4, 2024*

*The President.* My name is Joe Biden. I'm Jill's husband. *[Laughter]*

I want to thank all the congressional leaders here today: Chuck; my guy who's going to be the next Speaker of the House, Leader Jeffries; and a guy I'm going to have to admit to you I couldn't do without as President of the United States, Dick Durbin.

*The First Lady.* Yes.

*The President.* He gets it all done all the time for me. And Katherine Clark, the whip in the—*[applause]*.

And always happy to see Nancy—Nancy Pelosi—*[laughter]*—who's hiding right there in the corner. Nance, the best Speaker in American history.

*The First Lady.* Yes.

*The President.* No, you really are, Nancy.

And I wouldn't be here were it not for the fact that Tommy Carper got me here. *[Laughter]* Senator Carper, good to see you, pal.

And so many other people.

Look, to all of—and I—is Steny here? Where is Steny Hoyer? Steny Hoyer—

*The First Lady.* I hear him in the back. He's drinking—he's over by the beer. *[Laughter]*

*The President.* Yes. Well, Steny Hoyer lives on the western shore of Delaware, in Maryland. *[Laughter]*

To all the family members joining us, sent decades in the Senate, as Jill pointed out. Hard to believe—36 years in the Senate. But I tell you—I swear to God, I miss it. We had such camaraderie. We used to—back in those days, we all got along pretty well, even though we had real differences.

And Jill and I know that sometimes it can be a lot. Look, thank all of you for the sacrifice you make.

This picnic is an important tradition. And it goes back for a long, long way. And to know—and you know, I think the thing about—I'm just—let me put it this way: I remember when I was Vice President and things weren't going too well, and I realized there were a lot of Senators that were coming in that I didn't know very well. And so I decided I'd go over to the Senate dining room—the private dining room. We used to have two big conference tables there and an archway separating the two and a—and a buffet place.

And you'd go, and you'd sit with the people you had strong disagreements with on almost everything, but you sat there, and you ate together, you got to know each other. You got to know about each other's families. It's hard to dislike a woman or a man when you know they're having a problem with their son or their daughter or one of them is sick or—it's just hard. You get to know people.

And we didn't—and so I realized I didn't know that many people, so I went over. I was President of the Senate. I think I told you this before, Nance. Go over to the Senate dining room and to sit down and talk with all my old friends and get to know new ones.

It turned out there's no dining room there anymore. There's—the tables are gone. There was a dining room where a Senator could take a guest in the larger dining room, but there's no private dining room. And I think one of the things that I miss the most now and I think I'd miss if I were still there is the failure to get together as much as we used to.

We used to travel together. We used to travel together as couples. We became good friends with—the other party. It's—as I said, it's hard to—really dislike someone when you know more about them, know about their families.

And so, in my years of experience, taking time to make a better Senator makes a better leader—taking the time to get to know one another. To—and that's what I hope to do a little bit today.

Excuse me, I've got a little bit of a sore throat.

And there's a lot to be proud of today. And I'm going to end by saying, look, I know I'm accused of being a congenital optimist, but the truth of the matter is, with the grace of God and the good will of the neighbors and the creek not rising, we have a shot to make some real changes—Democrats and Republicans—for the better for the country.

We're the most powerful Nation in the world. The rest of the world looks to us—not a joke. I know every major world leader well. I've been doing this a long time. And they look to us, the United States, to—for leadership. Now ask yourself the rhetorical question: If it wasn't us, who would it be?

And so there's a lot we can do. There's a lot we can do and a lot we can look forward to. So, as my grandfather would say, with the grace of God, the good will of the neighbors, and the creek not rising, we're on to better days.

Thank you, thank you, thank you for being here. I want to say hello to everyone.

Do you want to come this way?

*The First Lady.* I'll—are you going to go that way? I'll go this way.

*The President.* You go that way; I'll go this way?

*The First Lady.* Yes.

*The President.* She's going to that; I'm going this way. You're out of luck.

[*At this point, the President exited the stage and greeted attendees. He then continued his remarks as follows.*]

Hey, folks, I am sorry, but they tell me I've got to leave in 4 minutes to go to the airport to go to Normandy, France, to speak at the—D-Day. And I apologize for having to leave. I really am. I—you know me, I keep going the whole time if you're willing to stay there.

But thank you, thank you, thank you for all you do. To all the Members, thank you. I truly appreciate all you do. I really mean it.

Remember, we're the United States of America. There's nothing beyond our capacity—nothing—when we do it together. So let's get together. Thank you all. Appreciate it.

Sorry, I've got to go out—they're having me go out the front door. So thank you.

Whoa, wait a minute. I've got one—I've got to go over here. Because guess what? When my son went off to school, he went off to Yale University. And they were looking for—he rented an apartment next to this woman's parents—mother's home. And I was on the ladder helping them paint it, because it needed to be painted. And her mom came in and said, "Where's Biden?" I said, "I'm Biden." She said: "No, where's Biden? Where's Biden?" [*Laughter*]

You're incredible, kid. I'm going to give you a hug, and then I'm getting the hell out of here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:31 p.m. on the South Lawn of the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Senate Majority Leader Charles E. Schumer; and Rep. Rosa L. DeLauro. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 5. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Congressional Picnic.

*Locations:* Washington, DC.

*Names:* Biden, Jill T.; Biden, R. Hunter; Carper, Thomas R.; Clark, Katherine M.; DeLauro, Rosa L.; Durbin, Richard J.; Hoyer, Steny H.; Jeffries, Hakeem S.; Pelosi, Nancy; Schumer, Charles E.

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