

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With National Union Leaders

July 10, 2024

The President. Hey, folks! Thank you, thank you, thank you. Please, sit down. Sit down.

Hey, look, number one, you know, the way I look at it—and I was thinking about this last night, knowing I'm going to be here and going from here to the NATO summit. You know, we have two strong, strong organizations in America that I look to for our security.

One, literally—and I mean this sincerely—is NATO. NATO—a joint assembly of democracies that made sure we're keeping the peace and no one is going to screw around with us—is the strongest it's ever been.

And I think of you as my domestic NATO. Not a joke. Not a joke. You're the ones—you're the ones. Beyond me—and you know—my with—this better than I do—beyond me, it's all about whether or not we're going to grow the economy, whether we're going to give working people a shot.

And I told you and you know, because you—a lot of you were there with me all the way back when I was a kid in—I'm only 42, but—[*laughter*]—when I was a kid back running for the Senate when I was 29 years old. Labor elected me. And we were then a right-to-work State, and we changed it all.

And here's what we're doing. You are the—you've heard me say it a thousand times, but I'm going to say it again. The middle class built this country. You built the middle class. [*Applause*] No, no, no.

And by the way, I don't want to hurt your reputations, but even Wall Street is acknowledging your power. No, I'm serious. Look at every projection about what we want to do with the economy on the issues that we're talking about and what the other guy wants to do. They're supporting us. It's your agenda we're working on.

And by the way, I've said from the beginning that when labor does well, everybody does better. Not a joke. That's not a talking point. That is a reality. You know that, Lee. That is the reality. It is an absolute reality.

When we were going—making—you know, I said I was going to be the most pro-union President in American history. Well, guess what? I am. And I'm staying that. [*Applause*] No, I mean it.

Because you represent the folks I grew up with. You represent where I come from. You represent where—the vast majority of the American people.

You know, I come from a household—it was a three-bedroom—we weren't poor, but we weren't—[*laughter*]—we didn't have anything left over at the end of the month. And—but you know, a three-bedroom house, four kids, a grandpop living with us, someone living with us full time. I look back now and wonder how my dad handled all those thin walls.

But any rate, the point is that we're just giving people a fighting chance.

And when I got elected, and when I was a—and even when you guys were with me all—going all the way back into the seventies, when I was a kid, that—what we talked about was the—whole idea of this was to give everybody a shot—no guarantees, just a shot, an even shot.

And that's why I determined—and I—we've done it with your help and your leadership: We're going to build this country from the bottom up and the middle out, not the top down. No, I mean it. *[Applause]* Not a joke. Not a joke.

I'm not going to—they're warning me not to take too much time with you all today, but—in terms of talking—but here's the deal. The fact of the matter is, take a look at what all the major economists, including the Wall Street economists, are saying.

They looked at his proposal, what he's done, and what our proposal is moving forward. And overwhelmingly—overwhelmingly—you've got 16 Nobel laureates in—economic—and they won the Nobel Prize for economics—16 of them. And what did they say? They say his proposals are going to bankrupt the country, his proposals are going to cause a recession, his proposals are going to cause us to be—higher interest rates.

And what you and I—and you've been helping me—you've been either leading on or I've been following you or you've been following me—what we propose is growing the country.

American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations President Elizabeth H. Schuler. That's right.

The President. No, no, we're the fastest growing economy in the world. That's a fact. We're the strongest economy in the world.

And here's what we've got to do. We've got to talk to our people. We've got to talk to our people.

Food prices are still too high because of corporate greed. We're in a situation where we're at—rents are too high. We need more housing. We have a whole range of things we're going to get done with your help in the second term, because that's what we've got to get done.

So, folks, I have real—I've never been more optimistic about America's chances, not because of me, but because of what we're doing together. I really mean it. We are better positioned than any country in the world to own the remainder of the 21st century because of union labor. I'm serious.

Ms. Schuler. Thank you, Mr. President. We are going to have a conversation.

And the most diverse Cabinet in history. I think that goes sometimes unnoticed.

The President. I promised that I was going to have a Cabinet that looked like America, and it does. More minorities. More women. More labor. I'm serious. Think about it. That's who we are. That's why we're strong. We're diverse. We're strong. We've got to stop looking at it like it's some problem; it's an asset. It's an asset.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:09 a.m. at the AFL–CIO headquarters. In his remarks, he referred to Lee Saunders, president, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees; and former President Donald J. Trump. He also referred to his sister Valerie Biden Owens and brothers Francis W. and James B. Biden. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : National union leaders, meeting with President.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Biden Owens, Valerie; Biden, Francis W.; Biden, James B.; Saunders, Lee; Schuler, Elizabeth H.; Trump, Donald J.

Subjects: American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL–CIO); Diversity, equity, and inclusion, improvement efforts; Economic improvement; Food markets and prices; Housing, affordability and access; Labor movement and organized labor; National union leaders, meeting with President; North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

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