

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024

Remarks at a Campaign Event in Northville, Michigan

July 12, 2024

The President. I don't want to ruin her reputation, but lately, seriously, when she and I are together, she looks like my wife Jill. And they go, "Are you married?" [*Laughter*] And we both—I say, "Yes," but I don't tell them who. [*Laughter*] Anyway.

Anyway, thank you, thank you. You all need this like you need another hole in your head on a beautiful day like this—to come in to say hi, and I can't thank you enough.

And you kids who got—had to get dressed up, I owe you big. [*Laughter*] We owe you big. Everybody knows I like kids better than people. [*Laughter*]

Look, folks, there's a lot going on. We're here to have a rally a little bit later on.

But you know, John and the Congresswoman and I got involved for the same reason. I come from a family that—we weren't poor, but we were just a basic middle class family, three-bedroom split-level home on a development of 45 homes all the same, and four kids and a grandpop living with us. And we were fine.

But my dad used to 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 in the eye and say, 'Honey, it's going to be okay' and mean it." And that's what it's all about.

You may recall—and I'm not going to make this long, I promise you—what—the reason I decided to run back—my son died in 2015. He was a Bronze Star, Conspicuous Service Medal, spent a year in Iraq, volunteered to go with his unit when the—when he went he was the attorney general of the State of Delaware. And so I decided I wasn't going to get engaged in public—I wasn't going to run again. I had been Vice President. I was a professor—a full professor at the University of Pennsylvania at the time.

And what happened was that I—I was going to stay out of it. But then what happened was, remember down in Charlottesville, Virginia, when those folks came out of the woods carrying torches and Nazi banners and literally singing the same Nazi—anyway, the same songs sung in Germany in the thirties? And a young woman was killed who was a bystander. And that young woman, I met—I talked to the mother.

And the press contacted Trump and asked him—they said, "Well, what do you think?" He said, "There were very good people on both sides"—"very good people." And honest to God, that's when I decided to run. That's when I decided to run.

And because, folks, there's a lot at stake. And I'll end it with this. You know, there's—probably every five or six generations, we reach an inflection point in history where what happens in the near term is going to determine what the next four or five decades look like.

The postwar period is over. If we—and look around the world. I just got finished having—you may have seen on television, the—dealing with NATO and all the foreign heads of state—32 of them here for 4 days.

And you know, every—whether it's climate change, whether it's—anyway, I won't go through—into it all, but there's a lot—there's a lot—changing, not because of Joe Biden being President, but just a time of significant movement we're in.

And what happens in the next several years is going to determine what the next several decades look like. I mean, for real. Not a joke.

We're either going to step up and do something about the environment. We're going to need to make sure that middle class folks have a fighting chance to make it. We're going to either decide we're going to provide health care for people who need it.

We're going to—we have to—and I think, when Debbie and I were—this last 3 years, I think we've made a lot of progress. We've made a lot of progress.

I remember everybody——

Hi, how are you? How old are you?

Audience member. Fourteen.

The President. Remember, no serious guys until you're 30. Okay? [*Laughter*]

Audience member. All right.

The President. I told that to my daughter and granddaughter. It hadn't worked yet, but I'm working on it. [*Laughter*]

But anyway, the whole notion here is that we—they told us when I ran—and I'll end this. I ran in 2020 saying I ran for three reasons. And you may remember, I got roundly criticized.

One was that I thought it was time to restore some ethics to the politics, to—you know, to restore the soul of the country. We're a good, decent people. The American people are good, decent, honorable people. But we were—but the way things were going, it just—the way we talk to one another in politics anymore, the way things have become so polarized.

And I said the second reason I was running was to deal with the issue of giving the middle class a fighting chance.

Like I said earlier, I come from one of those families. We weren't poor, but we weren't—there was never anything left over at the end of the month. And you know, the idea that the trickle-down economics—and I—look, if you can make a—go make a million bucks, make a million bucks. If you can make a—\$500 million, make it. Just pay your fair share as you go along. Just pay your taxes. Just pay a fair share.

And so I decided I was going to end the trickle-down economics where, you know, if the—if the wealthy do well, everybody else does well. That—not a lot trickled down to my dad's kitchen table. And so I decided we're going to build the economy from the middle out and the bottom up. And that way, the wealthy still do very well.

I made a commitment that offended a lot of Democrats. I said, "No—I will not raise taxes on anybody had—making less than \$400,000." So I couldn't be accused of not wanting people to be able to make money. And we have—and that's what we've done. Not a single penny of taxes have been raised by anybody making under \$400,000.

But, in the meantime, what's happened? We've grown the middle class. We've created 800,000 manufacturing jobs, 1.6 million—1.6 million [16 million; White House correction] new jobs—more than any President has in American history in this—in that period of time.

We've moved our—[*applause*]. Well, thank you, but we—well, the other thing we've done is, we provided health care shouldn't be an option. You know, we—I was able to change the Affordable Care Act and another 800,000 [8 million; White House correction] people—anyway—access to insurance, access to health care.

I won't go into the—and the last thing I said, which I really got clobbered by the press, as you recall—and they're good folks; they just thought I was naive, even though I've been around 270 years. [Laughter] I said, "You know, we've got to bring the country together." Because when I left the Senate, I was honored to the—you know, they do this ceremony. When I was Vice President, I left, and they vote and say nice things about you. Well, one of the things said was that I was able to get more done than anybody in the Senate because I had relations with Democrats and Republicans. I crossed the aisle.

And so I said we've got to bring the country together. They said: "That's naive. That used to be the case when Biden was a Senator, but he can't do it anymore." Well, guess what, folks? We're the most diverse country in the world. Not a joke. We're the most unique country in the world—every other country is organized based on either ethnicity, geography, religion. But we're the only country based on an idea—not a joke, an idea. Only country in history.

And the idea was: We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men and women are created equal, et cetera. We've never lived up to it, but we've never fully walked away from it.

But what I realized was, the other guy was walking away from it—walking away from it. And so we ran, and we were told we were going to lose in 2020. You remember? Well, we won. We were told we were going to have—[applause]. Because of you. Because of you.

And by the way, we're also—we were also told that what was going to happen is the—there—there was no possibility of being able to get bipartisan legislation passed.

You know, remember, Trump used to always talk about all he was going to do in terms of—of the whole idea of building bridges, roads, internet, and he had Infrastructure Month every month. He didn't build a thing. [Laughter]

But look what we're doing. We're rebuilding—how can you be the most powerful country in the world and have bridges that don't work, highways that don't work, people—look, the internet is as consequential to most people as the telephone used to be 50 years ago.

And so the point is that we were able to put it together.

I'm optimistic. I'm optimistic. We've done—I'm going to say something that's going to sound awful. The press is here, so I'm going to say it in front of them. I think most of the political historians say I've gotten more done than most Presidents have since Franklin Roosevelt in terms of fundamental changes and—and by the way, in the process, all this is going on, we saved money. We lowered the deficit. We gave people more jobs. It didn't do any of the things—remember, it was going to be this hard landing, and nothing was going to happen? Well, guess what?

I was worried—today, the Wall Street Journal talks about how—Wall Street Journal economists think I am better at—than Trump in terms of the economy. That's worrisome to me. [Laughter]

But all kidding aside, think about it. Because when you give people a fighting chance, everybody does better. Not a joke.

And the last example I'll give you is, I've been fighting for years on—taking on Big Pharma. I can put you in Air Force One with me as we flew up in, and if you have a prescription by an American drug company, I can fly you to Toronto or to Berlin or to London or to Rome; get you the same exact prescription from the same exact company for somewhere between 40- to 60-percent less.

For example, I was able to reduce the price of insulin for people who have serious problems they have—need on a regular basis were \$400 a month to \$35 a month. I—[applause]. But here's

the deal. Here's the deal. The reason I was able to do that—guess what? The fact of the matter is, they still make three and a—350-percent profit. It cost them 10 bucks to make it. It cost them 10 bucks to make it.

And so my point is, what that did was—everybody said, "Biden is, you know, this big liberal," or are—you know, "This is going to cost us money"—guess what? It saved you, the taxpayer, \$1.7 billion. And somebody——

Audience member. Thank you!

The President. No, I'm—[*applause*]. No, I'm serious. Because Medicare didn't have to pay these prices; they can negotiate it.

My generic point is that all the stuff we've done—like, for example, I make no apologies: I'm the most pro-labor President in American history. I mean factually. I know how to say the world—word "union."

But here's the deal. I had the Treasury Department do a study: With an increase in union membership and the contracts like I—I know I got a lot of criticism because I walked the picket line with UAW; the only President ever has done that. Well, guess what? What happened is, I asked them to do a study: What's the impact on the rest of the workers in America? Everybody does better. Everybody—[*applause*]. No, no, I'm serious.

Got another \$50 billion in investment from chips manufacturers. We invented those chips. In everything from a telephone to a rocket. And guess what? They're all somewhere else. They were being—they exported those jobs because they've got cheaper labor. And we have what they call—anyway.

So I went to South—I went to South Korea to get them to come back. And guess what? We got the—all these companies to come back. Not come back—reinvest in America. I asked Samsung why are they going to invest \$20 billion in Western Pennsylvania. And they said, "Simple reason"—that they are. "One, you have the safest place in the world to invest. And two, you have the best workers in the world."

Everybody thinks, you know, you show up and you want to be an electrician, you say, "I want to be an electrician." You go, like—5-years apprenticeship. It's like going back to college.

My generic point is, I'm convinced to give people a chance—give people a chance. Everybody deserves—no guarantees. Just a chance. And that's what we've done.

And we're—and that's why I'm running again, to finish this job. There's more to do. I know I'm only 41. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. God love you. You're like my sister. [*Laughter*]

Anyway. But, folks, this is a—this is an important moment. And I hope you—I used to—always when I finished my—I got elected—I was, for the longest time, I was too young, because I was the second youngest man ever elected to the United States Senate. And anyway, and now I'm too old.

But I know, hopefully, with a little bit of age comes a little bit of wisdom. And I—hopefully that—in this moment, I think the alternative is not much of an alternative.

And I do think ethics matter. I do think decency matters. I do think we should reflect what the American—we're an optimistic, we're a decent, we're an honorable country.

And I give you my word—last thing I'll say—I am—never been more optimistic about America's possibilities than I am today. Every one of those foreign leaders you saw on television—the 32 members of NATO—I'm going to say something outrageous: I'm the guy that pulled NATO together. I'm—literally, I was able to expand it.

Every time I leave them, they go, "You've got to win." [*Laughter*] Because the other guy wants to—says—anyway.

But we have a—we have real opportunities—real opportunities. And so we've got to finish the job.

And I promise you, I am—I'm okay.

Thank you. I thought I'd walk around the tables and—[*inaudible*]. Is that okay?

Audience members. Yeah!

NOTE: The President spoke at 5 p.m. at the Garage Grill and Fuel Bar. In his remarks, he referred to Rep. Deborah A. Dingell, who introduced the President; Susan Bro, mother of Heather D. Heyer, who was killed during the vehicular attack in Charlottesville, VA, on August 12, 2017; and former President Donald J. Trump. He also referred to his sister Valerie Biden Owens and brothers Francis W. and James B. Biden. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 15.

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