

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024

Address to the Nation on the Attempted Assassination of Former President Donald J. Trump

July 14, 2024

My fellow Americans, I want to speak to you tonight about the need for us to lower the temperature in our politics and to remember, while we may disagree, we are not enemies. We're neighbors. We're friends, coworkers, citizens. And most importantly, we are fellow Americans. And we must stand together.

Yesterday's shooting at Donald Trump's rally in Pennsylvania calls on all of us to take a step back, take stock of where we are, how we go forward from here.

Thankfully, former [President; White House correction] Trump is not seriously linjured [injured; White House correction]. I spoke with him last night. I'm grateful he's doing well. And Jill and I keep him and his family in our prayers.

We also extend our deepest condolences to the family of the victim who was killed. Corey was a husband, a father, a volunteer firefighter, a hero, sheltering his family from those bullets. We should all hold his family and all those injured in our prayers.

Earlier today I spoke about an ongoing investigation. We do not know the motive of the shooter yet. We don't know his opinions or affiliations. We don't know whether he had help or support or if he communicated with anyone else. Law enforcement professionals, as I speak, are investigating those questions.

Tonight I want to speak to what we do know: A former President was shot. An American citizen killed while simply exercising his freedom to support the candidate of his choosing.

We cannot—we must not—go down this road in America. We've traveled it before throughout our history. Violence has never been the answer, whether it's with Members of Congress of both parties being targeted in the shot, or a violent mob attacking the Capitol on January 6, or a brutal attack on the spouse of former Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, or information and intimidation on election officials, or the kidnapping plot against the sitting Governor, or an attempted assassination on Donald Trump.

There is no place in America for this kind of violence or for any violence ever. Period. No exceptions. We can't allow this violence to be normalized.

You know, the political rhetoric in this country has gotten very heated. It's time to cool it down. And we all have a responsibility to do that. Yes, we have deeply felt, strong disagreements. And the stakes in this election are enormously high.

I've said it many times that the choice in this election—that we make in this election is going to shape the future of America and the world for decades to come. I believe that with all my soul. I know that millions of my fellow Americans believe it as well.

And some have a different view as to the direction our country should take. Disagreement is inevitable in American democracy. It's part of human nature. But politics must never be a literal battlefield and, God forbid, a killing field.

I believe politics ought to be an arena for peaceful debate, to pursue justice, to make decisions guided by the Declaration of Independence and our Constitution. We stand for an America not of extremism and fury, but of decency and grace.

All of us now face a time of testing as the election approaches. And the higher the stakes, the more fervent the passions become. This places an added burden on each of us to ensure that no matter how strong our convictions, we must never descend into violence.

The Republican convention will start tomorrow. I have no doubt they'll criticize my record and offer their own vision for this country. I'll be traveling this week, making the case for our record and the vision—my vision of the country—our vision.

I'll continue to speak out strongly for our democracy, stand up for our Constitution and the rule of law, to call for action at the ballot box, no violence on our streets. That's how democracy should work.

We debate and disagree. We compare and contrast the character of the candidates, the records, the issues, the agenda, the vision for America.

But, in America, we resolve our differences at the ballot [ballot; White House correction] box. You know, that's how we do it, at the ballot [ballot; White House correction] box, not with bullets. The power to change America should always rest in the hands of the people, not in the hands of a would-be assassin.

You know, the path forward through a—competing visions of the campaign should always be resolved peacefully, not through acts of violence.

You know, we're blessed to live in the greatest country on Earth. And I believe that with every soul—every power of my being. So tonight I'm asking every American to recommit to make America so—make America what it is—think about it. What's made America so special?

Here in America, everyone must be treated with dignity and respect, and hate must have no safe harbor. Here in America, we need to get out of our silos, where we only listen to those with whom we agree, where misinformation is rampant, where foreign actors fan the flames of our division to shape the outcomes consistent with their interests, not ours.

Let's remember, here in America, while unity is the most elusive of goals right now, nothing is more important for us now than standing together. We can do this.

You know, from the beginning, our Founders understood the power of passion, and so they created a democracy that gave reason and balance a chance to prevail over brute force. That's the America we must be, an American democracy where arguments are made in good faith, an American democracy where the rule of law is respected, an American democracy where decency, dignity, fair play aren't just quaint notions, but living, breathing realities.

We owe that to those who come before us, to those who gave their lives for this country. We owe that—we owe that to ourselves. We owe it to our children and our grandchildren.

Look, let's never lose sight of who we are. Let's remember we are the United States of America. There is nothing, nothing, nothing beyond our capacity when we do it together.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:02 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Freeport, PA, resident Corey Comperatore, who was killed in the shooting in Butler, PA; New Kensington, PA, resident David "Jake" Dutch and Moon Township, PA, resident James Copenhaver, who were injured in the shooting; Bethel Park, PA, resident Thomas Matthew Crooks, the suspected gunman who was killed at the scene by law enforcement officers; Paul F. Pelosi, Sr., husband of Rep. Pelosi; and Gov. Gretchen E. Whitmer of Michigan.

Categories: Addresses to the Nation : Attempted assassination of former President Donald J. Trump.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Biden, Jill T.; Comperatore, Corey; Copenhaver, James; Crooks, Thomas Matthew; Dutch, David "Jake"; Pelosi, Nancy; Pelosi, Paul F., Sr.; Trump, Donald J.; Whitmer, Gretchen E.

Subjects: 2021 civil unrest and violence at U.S. Capitol; 2024 Presidential election; Michigan, Governor; Pennsylvania, shooting at former President Donald J. Trump campaign rally in Butler; Presidency, U.S., attempted assassination of former President Donald J. Trump; Wisconsin, Republican National Convention in Milwaukee.

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