

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024

Remarks on Cancer Prevention, Detection, and Treatment at Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana

August 13, 2024

Thank you. Please. Thank you. Thank you. Please. Thank you very much.

Well, thank you, Dr. Brown, for the—your generous introduction and for your incredible cancer research you're doing.

And thank you, Congressman Carter, who couldn't be here today because his wife is getting promoted to major general in the United States Army. I pinned on those two stars in Air Force One, but she's a—now going to another major event. You know, the fact is that they're an incredible family, as all of you are.

It's great to be with so many of my old friends: Cedric Richmond, who has been my buddy for a long—when he—when Cedric tells you something, he does it, he knows how to do it, and he's a loyal friend. And I appreciate it, Cedric. Only thing I like better than Cedric—[applause]—I only like better than Cedric is, he has a son named Cedric. You should see this kid. [Laughter] He's going to be President.

Mitch Landrieu, another key member of my team, and former Senator Mary Landrieu. Mary, God love you. Great to see you.

And John Breaux, a former colleague of mine and a guy who—whenever he said he'd do it, he got it done. Where's John?

Along with former Governor John Bel Edwards.

And members of my White House team: Director Office of Management and Budget—you know, Shalanda Young is a Louisiana girl, and she runs the show at my White House. She controls all the money. She's secured the funding for everything we're doing.

And I have the Director of Science and Technology, Arati. Where are you, Arati? There you are. There's—[applause]—she's smart as hell.

As well as Renee, who leads the ARPH-A and transformative work we're doing here and going to talk about today.

And Danielle, who leads our Cancer—Danielle, where are you? Danielle leads our Cancer Moonshot—[applause]—who was with me when I launched the Moonshot when I was Vice President of the United States. I made the case to President—at that time, my—I was Vice President—President Obama. And I convinced him to give me the authority to set up this Cancer Moonshot, which he did completely, and I had the run of the administration to do whatever I needed to do.

But I want to also thank President Fitts for welcoming us back. I knew him when he was up at Penn as an—on the other side of the ledger: the law. He was the dean of the law school.

It's an honor to be back at Tulane without having to pay tuition, by the way. [Laughter] You all think I'm kidding. [Laughter] Every time a kid or a grandchild—a child or grandchild graduates, it's a pay raise, man. [Laughter] Our daughter Ashley graduated from Tulane here in 2003 and had a great experience, and now she's working with—in Philadelphia as a social worker, working with abused women.

Folks, it's fair to say one of the most devastating words anyone can hear—and this is not hyperbole—is "cancer." You walk into a doc's office with your child and/or yourself, and you get a diagnosis of cancer. How many of you've heard that when you walked in the—it's frightening. It's frightening.

But I'm convinced and I've been convinced—my neurosurgeon when I had a couple cranial aneurysms they had to take care of—9-hour operations—he said to me—trying to explain whether aneurysms are congenital or environmental. And I said: "I don't care. Just get it done." [Laughter] And he looked at me; he said, "You know what your problem is"—I was a Senator. He said, "You're a congenital optimist." [Laughter]

And I am. I'm a congenital optimist about what America can do.

In 2016, President Obama gave me the authority to start this Cancer Moonshot. To that end, I traveled the country and the world going to every major cancer research center in the world from Australia to Ireland, visiting the world's top cancer institutes. In fact, Jill and I came to New Orleans for a cancer roundtable with your nurses, social workers, and caregivers and researchers.

And what amazed me when I visited a foreign country and spoke to heads of state about coming, they—always—they didn't just talk about it, John. Afterwards said, "What did you learn?" They want to know about cancer—everybody does. They'd ask me whether this Moonshot would work.

So one of the biggest things I found out is that there wasn't a fair—there wasn't a lot of information sharing going on. As we traveled all through the world, I'd find that in one area, they'd show me they had this research. I said, "But have you shared it?" "No, no, no, no." They were not sharing the information, even though funding from the Federal Government would give it—required sharing, but it wasn't happening.

Too many docs walked by that mirror and looked in and saw a Nobel Prize about to be won. I'm not kidding. It really angered me.

Scientists weren't sharing their results with other scientists. And that's one of the first things we tried to do, is breakdown the silos so the information was available to everybody.

When we were out of office, I knew there was a lot to do, but—so we stay engaged. So I decided to run—when I decided to run for President in 2020, I was determined to set up something called ARPA-H, Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health.

The idea is—as the elected officials here know, it's not new. It's—there's an outfit called DARPA, Defense Department's Advanced Research Project Agency, that drove breakthroughs in everything from the internet to GPS and so much more because that's all it focused on—all it focused on.

I wanted something that did nothing but focus on cancer. ARPA-H does for biomedicine what DARPA does for technology: driving breakthroughs to prevent, detect, and treat diseases, including cancer, Alzheimer's, and diabetes and so much more.

When Jill and I reignited the Cancer Moonshot in our administration, we were determined to launch this new outfit called ARPA-H. And that's what we did.

Imagine using mRNA vaccines to kill cancer cells. Imagine tackling exactly how a tumor changes over time so doctors can adapt treatments and stay ahead of the cancer as it changes. Imagine applying artificial intelligence to identify existing drugs that can target scientific mutations in rare cancers. Imagine clinical trials that bring innovation to all communities; a nationwide data system that allows us to learn from the experience of more patients and more

docs around the world and here in the United States, and it breaks down the research silos. This is not a thing we want to—we want to keep information. We want to share it.

All of these are being pushed through by ARPA-H, which has so far committed more than \$400 million to ending cancer as we know it.

And a year ago, ARPA-H set its sights on a big idea: calling on researchers and innovators to pioneer new techniques and technologies to make cancer removal more precise, accurate, and successful. Imagine a cancer surgery that removes all of the tumor the first time without harming healthy cells.

Compare that to today. As all of you know, cancer surgery is an incredibly challenging procedure. It takes the best surgeons in the world. And it takes its toll on families. As Jill and I said—as Jill said, it steals time; it steals away hope.

Our family knows the feeling, as many of you do. The surgery happens; then you have to wait a week or more to see if the tumor was removed fully. That anxiety of waiting and the unknown is just excruciating.

But today we're a step closer to relieving that burden on patients and families. Today we're announcing \$150 million ARPA-H funding for some of the Nation's cutting-edge cancer research institutions. That includes right here at Tulane University.

We just met with one of your research teams, and we saw 3-D views of tumors. It's incredible. It's a roadmap doctors can follow during surgery unlike anything they've seen before.

And right now surgeons determine how to remove cancerous cells and protect vital organs, nerves, and blood vessels without a clear view of them. A lot of it's a little bit of really educated guesswork. They're not positive.

The funding we announced today will help—will get these tools into the operating room to visualize tumors right away instead of having to wait for days and weeks and maybe reopen the patient to go back in. It's a promising step to reduce the need for follow-up surgeries and improve treatments. Outcomes are better all across—will be better all across the board.

And we're moving quickly, because we know all families touched by cancers are in a race against time.

It's all part of our goal of our Cancer Moonshot: to end cancer as we know it and even cure some cancers. We're mobilizing a whole-of-country effort to cut American cancer deaths in half by 2020—in—within 25 years and boost support for patients and their families. I'm confidence—in our capacity to do that. I know we can.

But it's not just personal; it's about what's possible. This is on top of the administration investing more than \$25 billion. I've been able to get money—\$25 billion—for the National Cancer Institute. That's an increase of more than \$4 billion in just 4 years. That investment is supporting everything from next-generation cancer science innovations to cutting-edge research in cancer disparities and new efforts on childhood cancers.

We're also focused on helping fence-line communities facing disproportionate cancer rates—in some areas—[applause]—in some areas, facing 15 percent to 20 percent higher rates, like Cancer Alley here in Louisiana or, equally as dangerous, Route 9 in the United—in the State of Delaware. We had the highest cancer research—cancer rate in any State in the Nation until 2010.

There's so much we're doing. It matters. It matters a lot. What matters most is not giving up hope.

Let me close with this. You've heard me say it over and over. America can be defined by one word. I spent a lot of time with Xi Jinping, and I was—they tape everything we say. I spent over 80 hours with him alone over 17,000 miles in China. I mean, we were in Tibet—near Tibet, and he asked me can I define America for him. And this is a true story. I said, "Yes, in one word: possibilities."

We believe anything is possible in America. Anything we set our mind to is possible. We are the land of possibilities. That's who we are. And that's what you're doing here at Tulane.

There's still more to do, but we know we can do it. We just have to remember who we are. We're the United States of America. The—I mean this from the bottom of my heart. We're the United States, and there's nothing—nothing we—beyond our capacity when we work together.

So it's all about working together and sharing data, sharing information. I'm going to be moving on from here to other places as well to make more of these announcements, but we're on the verge. We're in the beginning to fundamentally change how we deal with this dreaded disease.

And before I leave, I want to say when I—my daughter was here—our daughter was here for a—for 4 years at Tulane. She loved it. And I want to tell you, there was a—another mayor named Landrieu—not the son—at the time. And Mom is with him. Mom, I love you. *[Laughter]* She's a—*[applause]*—Mrs. Landrieu is one of the finest women I've ever known in my life. I love you, Mom. Keep me in your prayers. Thank you.

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

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:38 p.m. in the Goldring-Woldenberg Business Complex. In his remarks, he referred to Brig. Gen. Andrée G. "Ana" Carter, USA; Democratic National Committee Senior Adviser Cedric L. Richmond, in his former capacity as Director of the White House Office of Public Engagement; former Senior Adviser to the President for Infrastructure Coordination Mitchell J. Landrieu, his sister former Sen. Mary L. Landrieu, and their mother Verna Satterlee Landrieu; former Sen. John B. Breux; Office of Science and Technology Policy Director Arati Prabhakar; Renee Wegrzyn, Director, Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health (ARPA-H); Deputy Assistant to the President for the Cancer Moonshot Danielle Carnival; and President Xi Jinping of China. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 14 and also included the remarks of First Lady Jill T. Biden and J. Quincy Brown, associate professor of biomedical engineering, Tulane University School of Medicine.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Cancer prevention, detection, and treatment at Tulane University in New Orleans, LA.

Locations: New Orleans, LA.

Names: Biden Jill T.; Biden, Ashley B.; Breaux, John B.; Brown, J. Quincy; Carnival, Danielle; Carter, Andrée G. "Ana"; Carter, Troy A., Sr.; Edwards, John Bel; Fitts, Michael A.; Landrieu, Mary L.; Landrieu, Mitchell J.; Landrieu, Verna Satterlee; Obama, Barack; Prabhakar, Arati; Richmond, Cedric L.; Richmond, Cedric L., Jr.; Wegrzyn, Renee; Xi Jinping; Young, Shalanda D.

Subjects: Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health (ARPA-H); Cancer research, prevention, and treatment; China, President; Deputy Assistant to the President for the Cancer Moonshot; Louisiana, President's visit; Louisiana, Tulane University in New Orleans; Office of Management and Budget; Office of Science and Technology Policy; Research and development.

DCPD Number: DCPD202400691.