

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024

Remarks at a Campaign Event for Democratic Presidential Nominee Vice President Kamala D. Harris in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

September 2, 2024

The President. Hello! Hello, hello, hello! Hello, Pittsburgh!

Audience members. Thank you, Joe! Thank you, Joe! Thank you, Joe!

The President. Thank you.

Audience members. Thank you, Joe! Thank you, Joe! Thank you, Joe!

The President. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Audience members. Thank you, Joe! Thank you, Joe! Thank you, Joe!

The President. Folks, I've celebrated many Labor Days in Pittsburgh. And it's always good to be back with so many great friends, many of whom flew with me on Air Force One today—represent the unions that have been with me since the beginning of my career. They're not that old, but they—they're—[*laughter*—since I was a 29-year-old kid.

I want to thank Liz Shuler of the AFL–CIO and Kenny of the IBEW for that strong endorsement.

By the way, we have an expression in Delaware. The IBEW, when I ran for President, they're the ones that "brung me to the dance" starting off. Not a joke.

And Dave McCall and the Steelworkers. Dave, in 1972, Steelworkers were the first union to endorse a 29-year-old kid named Joe Biden who wasn't old enough to be Senator when he got elected. It mattered.

A guy named Hughie Carcella was the district president, because we used to have one of the largest labor forces in Claymont, Delaware, and north—over 4,000 workers. And it was—anyway, it all went law—it went south.

But Hughie—Hughie went to the national president, I.W. Abel, and he said he wanted me—he wanted me to get endorsed. Everybody thought it was crazy. I literally wasn't old enough to be sworn in the day I got elected. [*Laughter*]

But guess what? President Abel stuck with me.

Audience member. That's right!

The President. And they got stuck with me for the rest of their—my career. [*Laughter*]

Eric Dean and the Iron Workers. Tim Driscoll of Bricklayers. April Verrett and SEIU.

Lee Saunders of AFSCME and a great friend. Where are you, Lee?

And Jimmy Williams and the Painters and Allied Trades. And his dad. His dad is a really good man.

And Mike Coleman and the Sheet Metal Workers.

We've also got some of the best elected officials in America. Governor Josh Shapiro is doing an incredible job. And the great Lieutenant Governor Austin Davis. And one of America's best—where is Ed Gainey? Ed, you're doing a hell of a job.

And Sara Innamorato. County executive, I think, is the hardest job in American politics. Everybody knows where you live, and they think you can solve all the problems. You don't have enough money.

But I tell you one thing, I'm the first President ever—I used to be a county official when I was 26 years old, and it always bothered me that the county—the State—the Federal Government would send money to the State to be distributed to the county. What the hell is the State going to send to the county for? All the State reps need the money. *[Laughter]*

But guess what? Under my administration, it goes straight to the county.

And one of my best friends—my name is Joe Biden; I'm from Scranton, Pennsylvania. Bobby Casey has been a great friend. His dad was a great friend as well. And by the way, we grew up three blocks from one another. Three blocks. And they still worry about us not showing up. *[Laughter]*

And guess what? I was on North Washington Avenue; he was on Adams. Guess what? They've renamed North Washington Avenue down where I lived "Biden Way." *[Inaudible]* And, Bobby—Bob, we'll make sure we get—you get reelected again.

And while he couldn't be here, I want to thank his partner in the Senate, John Fetterman. If you're in a foxhole, you want Fetterman in there with you. He couldn't be here today, but guess what? He sent the best part of the family, Gisele. She's here.

Let me just say, it means so much to be with a true friend—a true friend: the Vice President and the next great President of the United States of America, Kamala Harris.

Look, folks, I come from two neighborhoods where it's not hard to say the word "union." But you know what? The fact of the matter is an awful lot of politicians have trouble saying "union." *[Inaudible]*—working people.

Guess what? I'm not one of them. Neither is Kamala. We know the simple truth: Wall Street did not build America; the middle class built America, and unions built the middle class. That's a fact.

And, by the way, that is not a slogan. That's a fact. I asked the Treasury Department to do a study, and it shows that when unions do well, all workers in America do better. That's a fact. That's a fact.

It's the biggest reason why our economy is the strongest economy in the world today without question—because of unions.

You know, my dad, like many of his generation, going into World War II, wasn't able to go to college. My dad was a really well-read guy, and he was always engaged. And he'd come home from work before he'd go back and close up the shop and—for dinner.

And the dinner was a place where we had discussions and, incidentally, ate. You know, my dad taught me—my dad would say this all the time: "Remember, Joey, a job is"—and I give you my word to this—"a job is about a lot more than a paycheck. It's about your dignity. It's about community. It's about your place in the community. And it's about being able to look your kid in the eye and say, 'Honey, it's going to be okay,' and mean it."

Well, that's why Kamala and I are so proud—so proud—of the greatest job creation record of any President in a single term in American history: 16 million new jobs so far, 800,000 manufacturing jobs.

Eight years ago, how many times you hear about we can no longer be the manufacturing capital of the world? Where the hell is that written? We are the greatest manufacturing city—or

county in the world—State in the world—[inaudible]—the world. And we're going to remain that way.

And I'll tell you something. Kamala and I are damn proud that we protected the pensions of over 1 million workers and retirees.

Remember all those years of promising we were going to do something about it? Well, damn it, we finally did it with the Butch Lewis Act. Over 52,000 workers and retirees across Pennsylvania alone are benefiting from that. Not only did we restore the full amount, we got them their back pay as well. We made them whole again.

And as I once said to Barack, "That's a big deal." [Laughter] Yes. Long story. [Laughter]

You just heard Liz and Kenny describe another big deal. Union workers are rebuilding American infrastructure and building new factories here in America.

They told me we couldn't get anything done in infrastructure. A trillion two hundred billion dollars we got done.

Remember Trump, for 4 years, promised every month "Infrastructure Week." For 4 years, he promised that. He didn't build a damn thing. Nothing. I mean it. Not—nothing.

Well, thanks to our infrastructure law, Pennsylvania, so far, has received \$17 billion—\$17 billion. Over 2,000 projects, from clean water to affordable high-speed internet for every Pennsylvanian, to projects that include \$858 million to expand the Montgomery Lock better—to accommodate bigger barges to get millions of tons of goods and—on shelves faster and more reliable and create thousands of union jobs.

I was working on the Great Lakes, and I got a call from Bobby—from Senator Casey. He's been—no bigger champion than Casey for this. You know what I call them? I call them the "Casey Locks." [Laughter] Not Goldilocks. The Casey Locks.

Bobby is also a champion of Pennsylvania's energy communities. We passed what's called the "Casey credit," available to 45 Pennsylvania counties where energy jobs such as coal—where coal mining and—had been before and disappeared, before we came to office. The "Casey credit" provides major incentives for companies to build new battery factories, wind turbines, and more to create high-paying jobs in those coal and natural gas communities.

And on top of that, there's over \$4 billion that private companies have committed to invest in clean energy and advanced manufacturing here in Pennsylvania—\$4 billion.

And guess what? With your support, I signed an Executive order to make sure large Federal construction projects all use project labor agreements.

For folks at home who may be watching this on television—know what project labor agreement is, it's when contractors, subcontractors, and unions put in place before construction begins what the rules are—before it begins.

These agreements make sure construction is top-notch, on time, on task, and by the way, on budget.

There's another big deal. "Buy American"—that's been the law since 1930. I've got to admit, I've been around—I'm only 40, but I've been around a long time. [Laughter] But I, quite frankly, until 10 years ago, wasn't aware—you know, back in the thirties, when they were trying to make sure unions could organize and businesses couldn't interfere, they put—a law was passed that said every penny the President gets from the Senate, the House, and Congress to spend on a project, he should hire an American worker and use an American product.

But past administrations—[applause]—seriously. Past administrations, including my predecessor, failed to buy American. They shipped jobs overseas where labor was cheaper and brought home the product that was more expensive.

But not anymore. Federal projects build American roads, bridges, highways, and they'll be made with American products by American workers. That's why we're creating all these—[applause]—I'm serious. It's simple and basic. That's why we're creating so many good-paying jobs.

In fact, we're requiring those kinds of projects to pay Davis-Bacon prevailing wages so they're jobs you can raise a family on.

Many of those jobs don't require a college degree. In fact, we expanded registered apprenticeships. Remember all the hell I got for doing that—we got for doing that? Well, guess what? It resulted in hiring over 1 million apprentices since we came to office.

And lots of folks don't realize getting an apprenticeship is like getting a college degree. Why? You have to train for 4 or 5 years to get that. And some of the best workers in the world are why the—why we are where we are.

You know—[applause]—when you're in Pittsburgh, you're standing with steelworkers. Let's be clear. I believe in American steel companies—American-owned-and-operated steel companies. A simple reason—it's not hyperbole—American steelworkers are the best steelworkers in the world.

And I made it clear last time I was in Pittsburgh: United States Steel, an iconic American company for more than a century, is going to remain an American company.

I remember as a young Senator why the National Labor Relations Board was sometimes so antilabor. It was set up to help labor, to be pro-labor.

Well, guess what? That's why one of the most significant things we've done, Kamala and I, is appointing a National Labor—Board—Relations Board that actually believes in unions and believes in recognizing the right to organize.

Audience member. Thank you!

The President. It's a big deal. It's a big deal. Remember—we have short memories. I'm all for forgiveness. I'm not for this: Trump appointed union busters on that Board.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. No, that's a fact. But it's real. It affects people's lives.

Are we going to let that son of a gun do that again?

Audience members. No!

The President. Folks, we've made a lot of progress, and Kamala and I are going to build on that progress, and she's going to build on it. I'll be on the sidelines, but I'll do everything I can to help.

But look, I'm not joking when I say—this is not a joke. When I said this when I was running in 2020, a lot of people didn't believe me. You did, but a lot didn't believe me. It's all at risk because of Donald Trump, literally. With a stroke of the pen, he can get rid of a lot of this.

And do you think this guy gives a damn about your pensions?

Audience members. No!

The President. No, I'm serious. Do you think he loses even an instant of sleep over it?

Audience members. No!

The President. Do you think he cares about all the work you do every day and how hard it is?

Audience members. No!

The President. Do you think he cares about good-paying jobs for hard-working people who built this economy?

Audience members. No!

The President. Hell—[*laughter*]*—he regards picket lines—he'd rather cross one than walk one.*

But I have no problem walking a picket line. Never have. Neither—nor does Kamala. We'll always walk aside—alongside you.

Union workers built this country. And, again, that's not hyperbole. That's a fact. These are—these are facts. These are not campaign slogans.

Let me close with this. Five years ago, I began my campaign for President right here in Pittsburgh. I said one of the reasons I was running was to rebuild the backbone and spine of America—the middle class and working class folks. Not a joke. Think about it. Think about it.

Well, 5 years later, we've done just that.

I'm back in Pittsburgh on Labor Day again with a simple message as we look at this election. I spelt [spent; White House correction] my whole career believing in unions. I'm not joking when I say that. I'm honored to be considered the most pro-union President ever.

And by the way, remember all the talk? "Biden got elected, and he's going to do a planned economy. We're going to collapse, and there's going to be all this caving in. Interest rates are going to go through the ceiling." Come on, man. [*Laughter*]

I'm here to tell you it's about increasing the strength of your unions, which it's all about. If you care about hard-working people, just give them a fair shot. Everyone in America deserves a fair shot. No—a fair shot.

If you care about the dignity of work—if you care about the dignity of work—and I mean it; it matters—the dignity of work, the way you're treated, the decency.

I remember when my great-grandfather was one of the—only the second Catholic elected statewide to the State senate here in Pennsylvania. And I remember they talked about when he—when they were running against him in 1906, they said, "Guess what?" They said, "He's a Molly Maguire."

You know what a Molly Maguire was? Well, those of you who don't, a Molly Maguire, back in the—in the old days, when we Irish and the Catholics came and then the Poles and others that were Catholic—when they came to the United States of America in the beginning, the 1840s and—late 1840s, they made their way down into Pennsylvania, a lot of them. And there—there's a tier in this—in the coal mines. Those guys who got there last ended up being the last people in the coal mines.

But a lot of the English owned the coal mines. And what they did was they'd really beat the hell out of the—the mostly Catholic population who was in the mines. Not a joke. Not a joke.

But there was a group. They're called the Molly Maguires. And the Molly Maguires, if they'd find out the foreman who was taking advantage of an individual—and they'd literally kill him.

Not a joke. And they'd bring his body up and put him on the doorstep of his family. Kind of crude.

But I've got to admit, they accused my great-grandfather of being Molly—he wasn't. But we were so damn disappointed. But you know—[*laughter*—I—that's a joke. That's a joke.

Look, it's about the dignity of work. It's about how you're treated.

And when I met with the IBEW when I started off this last campaign first, I said, "There's two things that—asking of me." You're—and I said: "Two things I'm asking of you. One, you've got to open up your unions to more women." Not joke. "And, two, to more minorities."

You've done both that. And guess what? Instead of having the support of 30 percent of the American people, it's now over 65 percent of the American people support the American union movement.

Look, it really is all about the dignity of work. And there's only—if you care about the dignity of work, there's only one person you have a rational choice with this time, and that's Kamala Harris. Not a—[*applause*].

Audience members. Kamala! Kamala! Kamala!

The President. Let me tell you about this woman.

Audience members. Kamala! Kamala! Kamala!

The President. I know her. I trust her. Not a joke. I trust her.

Number two, the first decision I made the nomination—as nominee in 2020 was selecting her as my Vice President. And by the way, it was the single best decision I made as President of the United States of America.

And I was watching something sent to me: When they asked Barack—they said Barack picked me as Vice President because he knew I could be President. Well, I know she'll be a good President. I know it.

I've watched her when all the experts, foreign and domestic policy, would give us advice, then we'd sit alone in a room, and she has a backbone like a ramrod. And she has the moral compass of a saint. This woman knows what she's doing.

Folks, I promise you, if you elect Kamala Harris as President, it will be the best decision you will have ever made.

And Kamala believes, as I do, that unions are the spine of this economy. She'll be a historic pro-union President.

So, folks, we've got one more job to do together.

Let me ask you: Are you ready to fight?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Are you ready to win?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Are you ready to elect Kamala Harris our next President of the United States of America? [*Applause*]

And, in the process, are you ready to make Donald Trump a loser again?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. I've never been more optimistic about America's future. We have to remember who we are. We're the United States of America. There's nothing, nothing—I mean this from the bottom of my heart—there's nothing beyond our capacity—nothing—when we do it together.

And that means elect my friend, our great Vice President, President of the United States. Kamala Harris.

[At this point, Vice President Harris made remarks.]

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:26 p.m. at the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 5. In his remarks, he referred to Elizabeth H. Shuler, president, AFL–CIO; Kenneth W. Cooper, international president, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers; David McCall, international president, United Steelworkers; Eric M. Dean, general president, International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental, and Reinforcing Iron Workers; Timothy J. Driscoll, president, International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers; April Verrett, president, Service Employees International Union (SEIU); Lee Saunders, president, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME); James A. Williams, Jr., general president, and James A. Williams, Sr., general president emeritus, International Union of Painters and Allied Trades; Michael Coleman, general president, International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail, and Transportation (SMART) Workers; Mayor Edward C. Gainey of Pittsburgh, PA; County Executive Sara G. Innamorato of Allegheny County, PA; Gisele Fetterman, wife of Sen. John K. Fetterman; and former Presidents Barack Obama and Donald J. Trump. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 3 and also included the remarks of Vice President Harris.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Campaign event for Democratic Presidential nominee Vice President Kamala D. Harris in Pittsburg, PA.

Locations: Pittsburg, PA.

Names: Casey, Robert P., Jr.; Coleman, Michael ; Cooper, Kenneth W.; Davis, Austin A.; Dean, Eric M.; Driscoll, Timothy J.; Fetterman, Gisele; Fetterman, John K.; Gainey, Edward C.; Harris, Kamala D.; Innamorato, Sara G.; McCall, David; Obama, Barack; Saunders, Lee; Shapiro, Joshua D.; Shuler, Elizabeth H.; Trump, Donald J.; Verrett, April; Williams, James A., Jr.; Williams, James A., Sr.

Subjects: 2024 Presidential election; America Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL–CIO); American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME); Apprenticeship programs and job training; Broadband and wireless technologies; Economic improvement; Infrastructure improvements; International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental, and Reinforcing Iron Workers Union; International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail, and Transportation Workers (SMART); International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW); International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers; International Union of Painters and Allied Trades; Job creation and growth; Labor Day; Labor movement and organized labor; Manufacturing industry, domestic investment; National Labor Relations Board; Pennsylvania, Democratic Party event; Pennsylvania, Governor; Pennsylvania, Lieutenant Governor; Pennsylvania, President's visit; Pensions and retirement accounts, strengthening efforts; Renewable energy sources and technologies; Service Employees International Union (SEIU); United Steelworkers; Vice President.

DCPD Number: DCPD202400742.