

*Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024*

**Remarks at the "Investing in America" Content Series Kickoff Event and an Exchange With Reporters**

*September 3, 2024*

*Office of Public Engagement Director Stephen K. Benjamin.* Thank you all so much for being here. We're so delighted to speak to you today and to hear your stories.

It's my pleasure to start the first of what will be many conversations just like this led by our President. It's also my honor today to have the opportunity to introduce President Biden to you. He's put investing in America at the forefront of his administration since day one.

So, with that, I'd like to turn it over to our President, Joe Biden.

*The President.* Well, thank you, Mayor, for that introduction. And a special thanks to all of you for joining us. Mayor Woodfin, Chairwoman Flores, Cecilia, as well as Jackie, it's good to have you all. You've all been incredible partners in the progress we've made together, which, quite frankly, is why we're meeting today.

Four years ago, when I came to office, the pandemic was raging and our economy was reeling. Four years later, we still have more to do, but we had one of the most extraordinary periods of progress ever in the history of this country.

COVID no longer controls our lives. We've gone from economic crisis to the strongest economy in the world, literally: a record 16 million new jobs; record small-business growth; record stock market; record-high 401(k)s; wages are up; inflation is down—way down and continuing to come down; and the smallest racial wealth gap in 20 years.

I signed historic laws modernizing our infrastructure; bringing new chip factories back to the United States—we invented those chips; lowering prescription drug prices and lowering them significantly; fighting the climate crisis and gun violence; and so much more.

But the bottom line is, thousands of cities and towns all across America are seeing the great American comeback story—whether they're in red States or blue—all part of what we're calling an "Invest [Investing; White House correction] in America" agenda.

It's about seeking my commitment—speaking to the commitment I made as President to be President for all Americans, whether you voted for me or not, whether you're in a red State or a blue State. And it's what being highlighted—we're doing that today to highlight and show we're just—we're just getting started.

In the weeks ahead, I'll talk with Americans all across the country about the progress we're seeing in their communities: roads and bridges being built, lead pipes being removed from homes and schools, seniors saving significant money on prescription drug prices.

And through the "Investing in America" agenda, we planted the seeds for a better future, and now those seeds are finally beginning to sprout. As a result, we're on the cusp of incredible progress and prosperity for the decade to come.

That's why we're going to talk—what we're going to talk about today: the stories about people whose lives are better and the future that we can be proud of.

We're proving once again what I've always believed: We're the only nation in the world that's come out of every crisis we've faced stronger than when we entered that crisis.

We just have to remember who we are. We're the United States of America, and nothing is beyond our capacity when we do it together.

So I'm going stop there, and I'm going to turn it over to Mayor Benjamin—who I just saw recently, by the way—to get the conversation going.

And by the way, Mr. Mayor, congratulations on that beautiful young child of yours. That's really—you're a lucky man. You tell me, she's—is she already a supporter?

*Mayor Randall L. Woodfin of Birmingham, Alabama.* Yes, she's a supporter, sir. Thank you, Mr. President. *[Laughter]*

*The President.* Well, God love you. And—but really, God love your wife. *[Laughter]*

*Mayor Woodfin.* Yes, sir.

*The President.* Any rate, fire away.

*Director Benjamin.* Go ahead, Randall. Mayor Woodfin, go ahead and why don't you share with us your Birmingham story.

*Mayor Woodfin.* Well, listen, first let—would say we're very, very thankful to you, Mr. President, and the—and your entire administration, which has allowed us as a city and a government to truly focus on putting people first.

You know, over the last 4 years, as you stated, there has been an upswing. For us, wages, income, and employment have been on the rise in Birmingham. The average income has increased by more than \$10,000, and we've exceeded prepandemic employment by over 17,000 jobs.

So Birmingham is seeing job creation. We're seeing growth in innovative industries and opportunity. And I can say, without a doubt, that that is directly related to the Biden administration and your investments and support.

We're also tracking along national trends as it relates to small-business growth and expansion. We even created an Office of Business Diversity and Opportunity to be intentionally focused on minority- and women-owned businesses.

And so, again, thank you to your administration. Our ARPA investment has stood up a COVID-relief forgivable loan program, where literally 9 out of every 10 recipients was either a Black- or woman-owned business.

And so, again, driving what your administration has allowed us to accomplish, designating—city of Birmingham being allowed to be designated as a tech hub has strengthened our recruitment efforts related to enhancing our innovation economy.

There are a couple other notes I want to make. One is that as part of your administration's Good Job Challenge, we are training and placing up to 1,000 residents in health care careers.

In addition to that, as the State of Alabama is the epicenter of the automotive industry, we're seeing a boost because of your Inflation Reduction Act. And because of those same investments in electric and batteries. In 2023, Alabama became the number-one exporter of motor vehicles in the U.S., which we shipped more than 11 billion in automotive—automotobiles [automobiles; White House correction].

These investments, Mr. President, helped us train workers right here in the city limits of Birmingham for more advanced manufacturing jobs.

So it doesn't matter—through small businesses, clean energy, advanced manufacturing, and health care, our residents see more and more that they don't have to leave their hometown, their city limits to get a good job, because they can get one right here.

And for us, in closing, that really means that the people of Birmingham are excited: excited for a brighter future; excited to see themselves in it, their families; and, for us, a great city. So we truly thank you.

*The President.* Well, Mayor, tell me, you know, up in North Birmingham, which is, I think, primarily a minority community, what are you doing up there to revitalize things?

*Mayor Woodfin.* So, North Birmingham, first of all, it's kind of personal to me. I actually spent my first 11 years of life living in North Birmingham and went to North Birmingham Elementary.

But this area has been historically disadvantaged. It is 100-percent minority—Black. We're talking about low employment, as well as fewer resources for its residents. And so we are so excited to receive a \$20 million grant as part of the Distressed Area Recompete Pilot Program for this area.

And so, in this North Birmingham footprint, it is going to allow us to catalyze economic growth. We call it Reinvest Birmingham. This initiative—a little bit more detail—will allow us to rebuild something that's so important to all communities, our North Birmingham Library. And at this actual place, it affords us to create opportunity for learning and careers, as well as seeing a new workforce training site connected to this library for investments in entrepreneurship.

And my favorite part, because it's part of the national conversation, it is a childcare facility. Look——

*The President.* All right.

*Mayor Woodfin.* So that's it, Mr. President. It's a—it's a game changer for us.

*Director Benjamin.* Fantastic.

*The President.* Well, I tell you what, I can see Frederick Douglass's book behind you. He's proud of you right now and your library.

Well, look——

*Mayor Woodfin.* [Laughter] Yes, sir.

*The President.* Boss.

*Director Benjamin.* Sure. So thank you so much, Mayor Woodfin, for your leadership.

Now I have the chance to call on Ms. Jackie Trapp from Muskego, Wisconsin, to share her story with the president.

*Muskego, WI, resident Jackie Trapp.* Thank you, Mr. Mayor and Mr. President. I'm Jackie Trapp, a former social studies teacher turned family caregiver. And in 2015, I was diagnosed with an incurable cancer, multiple myeloma.

Both the cancer and the chemotherapy caused blood clots, heart attacks, and strokes, so I'll likely be on the critical blood thinner Xarelto for the rest of my life. The new negotiated price of Xarelto, because of the Inflation Reduction Act, is a tremendous win for countless patients like me who rely on this previously cost-prohibitive medication to live.

Prior to the Inflation Reduction Act, my out-of-pocket drug costs ranged from \$15- to over \$21,000 a year every year for 9 years. My energy to fight my cancer was diverted to finding ways to fund my prescriptions. It became my latest occupation, really.

*Director Benjamin.* Wow.

[*At this point, the President coughed.*]

*The President.* Excuse me.

*Ms. Trapp.* But on New Year's Day, when everybody was ringing in the New Year, I actually celebrated my first fill of prescriptions, knowing that the \$3,300 I paid was going to be my total for the year.

In 2025, that cap drops to \$2,000, and I won't have to come up with tens of thousands of dollars every year anymore for my medication.

Before the Inflation Reduction Act, my husband and I used our savings; I navigated grants, took out home loans; we sold vehicles; and we sold furnishings and cut out all but the essentials just to meet my copays. Ordinary things like dinner out, catching a movie, or exchanging gifts had pretty much ceased, and I thought no one would ever take on Big Pharma as they held patients like me hostage with monopolies over my essential drugs.

So I cannot overstate my gratitude for this law, especially to you, President Biden. Thank you so, so much for looking out for patients like me.

*The President.* I have one important question. What's your dog's name?

*Ms. Trapp.* [*Laughter*] My dog is Jake.

*The President.* Jake. [*Laughter*] Well, I tell you what——

*Ms. Trapp.* Jake, the dog.

*The President.* Look, you know, I want people to understand that I've been having this run-in with Big Pharma for a long time. We finally beat them.

And the Xarelto you're taking—were—taking, it used to cost \$517. It's now \$197 for people on Medicare. And the idea that you were paying as much—I mean, the Inflation Reduction Act, \$2,000 out-of-pocket annual cap for Medicare prescription drugs. And it's just got to be a life-changer.

You know, the mental impact of having to figure, "If I don't take these drugs, my life is literally at stake," and having to figure out, "How in God's name—how in God's name—can we get the money to do it?"

I'm so proud of you. Presumptuous of me to say that; I've never met you personally. [*Laughter*] But I really am. I'm proud as hell of you.

*Ms. Trapp.* Thank you.

*The President.* You're just a real fighter, and you look great. I hope it's—I hope you feel as good as you look.

*Ms. Trapp.* Well, I am so grateful. I can't even overstate that. Really, thank you. This opportunity to thank you means quite a bit to me.

*The President.* Well, all of you got to come to the White—I'm not going to be in the White House much longer, but you've got to come and see me. I want to see you all.

*Ms. Trapp.* [*Inaudible*] [*Laughter*]

*The President.* All right? Well, Mr. Mayor.

*Director Benjamin.* Well, we'll get—we'll figure that out, boss. We'll figure that out. [Laughter] Thank you so much for your courage, Ms. Trapp, and—and keep on fighting.

*Ms. Trapp.* Thank you.

*Director Benjamin.* Now I have the honor of calling on Chairwoman Amelia Flores to share her story. Madam Chair.

*Chairwoman Amelia Flores of the Colorado River Indian Tribes. Kwichkamaduun, Mr. President.* It's an honor to be here with you today. My name is Amelia Flores, and I am the Chairwoman of the Colorado River Indian Tribes, also known as CRIT. And I'm very proud to be the first woman elected to lead our Tribe. We broke the glass ceiling on December 5, 2020.

And I've seen firsthand how poor infrastructure—be it water, schools, broadband, our roads—has impacted my Tribe.

For an example, during my first few months on the job, our Tribal utility director came to me with some bad news: We did—we needed a new well. And I knew our Tribal budget was already taxed to the breaking point, and there was no way we could have pulled this off until you passed the ARPA and bipartisan infrastructure law.

ARPA helped us fix the broken well, and BIL provided more than \$7 million to build new wells and improve our distribution system.

Phase one is completed. The well is once again serving 1,850 homes and businesses. And when we complete phase two, the new well and distribution system will be able to deliver safe and reliable water to more than 1,000 additional homes and businesses in our community.

This project will allow us to address the housing shortage on our reservation. That means more families can live together on our Tribal land. It helps our businesses and our economy grow. Together, that strengthens our culture and, most importantly, our sovereignty.

The well and water treatment plant will have a long-term impact in our community, and I am grateful for your leadership in making that all happen, Mr. President.

*The President.* Well, I'm grateful to you. And by the way, I learned a long time ago from a friend of mine from Hawaii, a senior Senator when I got elected as a—30-year-old kid to the Senate. He said: "Joe, it's Indian Nations. Indian Nations." And that's exactly how you're handling it. That's how it's treated. And the sovereignty is real. And you need the help. You need the help.

And I—let me ask you a question, Chairwoman.

*Chairwoman Flores.* Sure.

*The President.* How are these investments helping your community see a brighter future for themselves and their families? Is there anything just beyond the water? Is it the mere fact that the water is there; that's why everybody's excited? Or it's that you're able to begin to fashion your own destiny a little bit?

*Chairwoman Flores.* Well, thank you, Mr. President, for that question. And certainly, with the monies that have come from ARPA and the bipartisan law, it allows for more people to return back to the reservation, because many of our Tribal members leave the reservation to find work. And when they leave, they oftentimes take their families with them.

And then eventually, 20, 30 years after, they want to come back home, and that's hard because we don't have the housing or the infrastructure for them to come back. And we haven't been able to do that for them.

So, with this project, with the new wells and upcoming water treatment system, we will have cleaner and safer water. We now have the infrastructure we need to build for housing for our people, and we can build up our community. We'll have more families here, and that really changes things up for us and gives us hope.

And yes, we're the Tribes with the water. We have senior water rights on the Lower Colorado River Basin. And we have the largest water right.

Thank you.

*The President.* I know you do, and it's about time everybody recognized it.

And we just had a photograph up on the other board here while you were talking about how beautiful the countryside is. It's a magnificent area.

So thank you, and you're doing a great job. Thank you very much.

*Ms. Flores.* Thank you. Thank you, and God bless you.

*The President.* Thank you.

*Director Benjamin.* Thank you.

Well, now it's our honor, we have Ms. Cecilia Moy Yep from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, here to share her story. Please, Ms. Moy Yep. Please.

*Philadelphia, PA, resident Cecilia Moy Yep.* Thank you. My name is Cecilia Moy Yep. In 1966, I was a widow with three small children living in Chinatown, Philadelphia. I was at a public meeting when I found out that the church and school my children went to was going to be demolished for a Federal highway program.

The church was the heart and lifeblood of the community, so I got involved. I formed a grassroots organization to fight against the highway. We organized. We picketed. We protested. But we did have some success because we were successful in protecting the school and the church from being demolished.

But despite our efforts, the Vine Street Expressway was still built through the heart of Chinatown. And even over the years, many of my neighbors and I were forced out of our houses because of other transportation projects.

The Vine Street Expressway created a physical divide that made Chinatown less safe. It made our air quality worse. The construction displaced so many people from our community. But from the very beginning, we tried to get the highway capped to improve safety and to reconnect Chinatown, but there was never funding to make it happen.

But now, after 50 years of organizing, thanks to you and your administration for their investment in the Chinatown Stitch project, this dream will finally become a reality.

Our community has been asking for this for decades, and it would never have happened without your funding. Thank you so much for delivering, Mr. President, for our community.

*The President.* Cecilia, I know your community pretty well. I live down the road in Delaware. [Laughter] And I-95 went through my community, and it—not where I live, but in West—the western part of the city. And it divided entire communities. It's four lanes across, and we've been fighting for a long time. We finally got commitments—we got the money.

For example, you're going to get—you're going to share a now \$159 million—\$159 million—from the Inflation Reduction Act. And the China [Chinatown; White House correction] Stitch project is going to reconnect Philadelphia Chinatown, which was divided in construction back in the sixties with the Vine Street Expressway.

*Ms. Yep.* Yes.

*The President.* That project will cover 2.5 blocks of expressway with public green space, achieving the goal that you've been fighting for for nearly 60 years.

I know you're only 62 years old, but you've been fighting a long time.

*Ms. Yep.* I wish. I wish. *[Laughter]*

*The President.* The Department of Transportation experts are—signed a grant agreement in January. The project is going to take a while to get done, but it will—we expect it to begin full born—full blown in 2028 and be completed by—in early '31. So it's going to take a little time, but it's going to be complete. It's going to be done. The money is there and——

*Ms. Yep.* I hope I'm still alive to see it. *[Laughter]*

*The President.* You'll be alive. You'll be—God love you.

*Ms. Yep.* But it's something the—yes, it's something the community has wanted for a long, long time. And this will give our community, families, and children the peace of mind knowing that people can be safe going to school and to work.

It means a lot to know that the Federal Government listened to us and is helping us to build a brighter future for families right here in Chinatown.

*The President.* Well, all——

*Ms. Yep.* Thank you, Mr. President.

*The President.* All over the country, we're doing this.

And by the way, there's a photograph of you with a shovel in your hand—*[laughter]*—up on the board here and a hard hat on, celebrating the turn of the spade to this getting going. And what I don't want you to do: I don't want you working beyond 5 o'clock at night, though. Okay?

*[Laughter]* You've got to promise me you'll be home. *[Laughter]*

*Ms. Yep.* That's hard, because when you're doing community work, it's always at night.

*The President.* I—that's true. Well, God love you.

*Ms. Yep.* Thank you.

*The President.* Cecilia, I'm so, so proud of you.

*Ms. Yep.* Thank you.

*The President.* I really am so proud of you. Presumptuous of me to say that, but I am.

Well, thank you all very much. This just—all the families deserve to have things that we shared today, not just the four and their community: peace of mind, having clean and safe water, affordable medicine to stay healthy, safe roads and bridges to connect communities rather than divide them, and so much more.

All Americans deserve a future worthy of their dreams. And that future, we're building today. And we're doing it, and we're able to afford to do it. Turning setbacks into comebacks, that's what America does.

And I want to thank you for what you're doing. And I'm excited—excited—about sharing your investment stories with all of America, seeing more of them in the weeks and months ahead to let people know we can do anything in America. We really can.

And we can afford to do it. Instead of giving billion-dollar tax—trillion-dollar tax cuts to the superwealthy, let them start paying their fair share. Let them make sure we get—make—look, all people want in America is just a shot, just a chance, just to be treated fairly and equally.

And that's what you all are doing. That's what you're all a part of. And I hope I get to see you all in person one of these days. So thank you, thank you, thank you.

God bless you all.

*Ms. Yep.* Thank you, Mr. President.

*The President.* Thank you.

May God protect our troops.

### *Israel-Hamas Cease-Fire and Hostage Release Negotiations*

*Q.* Any progress on the cease-fire deal today?

*Q.* Mr. President, what more should Netanyahu be doing, sir?

*[Several reporters spoke at once.]*

*The President.* The answer to all your questions is whatever you want to hear.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:26 p.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Kendra Woodfin, wife of Mayor Woodfin, and their daughter Love. Ms. Trapp referred to her husband Doug Trapp. Chairwoman Flores referred to Denton Scott, director of utilities, Colorado River Indian Tribes. A reporter referred to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel. Director Benjamin joined the President in the South Court Auditorium, with Mayor Woodfin, Ms. Trapp, Chairwoman Flores, and Ms. Yep participating via videoconference. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 4.

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