

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

**Remarks on Signing an Executive Order on Workforce Development Strengthening Efforts in Ann Arbor, Michigan**

*September 6, 2024*

*The President.* Hello, everybody! By the way—by the way, I want you to know——

*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.* Well, thank—thank you.

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

*The President.* I want to thank the Coasties. You know, the Coast Guard, they're deployed more places around the world than any other branch, and you play with a good outfit, pal.

*United Association Local 190 second-year apprentice Andrew Escobedo.* [Laughter] Yes, sir. Thank you so much.

*The President.* Thank you.

*Mr. Escobedo.* Thank you. I appreciate it, sir. Thank you so much. Thank you.

*The President.* Hello, Ann Arbor!

Thanks for that introduction. You know, going from the Coast Guard to the Plumbers and Pipefitters is a good move—[laughter]—because they know how to ball—both know how to—sit down, if you have seats. [Laughter]

I said that about 8 months ago. I said, "Sit down." They didn't have any seats. And they said, "See, he's too damn old." [Laughter]

Look, your general president, Mark McManus, where—where—Mark, you're sitting behind me somewhere, isn't he? See, he didn't run, did he?

*United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters General President Mark McManus.* Right over here!

*The President.* All right. I just was—I was teasing.

And Local 190 president, Dan—you're sitting next to him? Where is Dan?

*Audience member.* There he goes.

*The President.* Danny, you're allowed to be up with us, you know, man? I—you're trying to avoid us. I get it. [Laughter]

Look, Plumbers and Pipefitters have been with me since the beginning. For my whole career, I've either been too young or too old—never in between. [Laughter] I got elected when I was 29 years old in a right-to-work State called Delaware that we changed. And guess what? Plumbers and Pipefitters are the fourth union to ever endorse me when I was a 29-year-old kid running for the Senate.

Mark flew over from Washington with me on Air Force One, along with the great national labor leaders: Brent Booker of the Laborers; Brent, thank—Sean McGarvey, Building Trades; Gwen Mills, UNITE HERE. There you are.

Well, by the way, we talk—we were talking about—Gwen and I, on the plane; she flew out with me—you know, I've heard the word—my dad used the word, more than any other adjective, "dignity." All these workers bust their neck. They provide our ability to sleep and walk and work and do anything. And they deserve to be treated with dignity. And that's exactly what she's doing.

And Kenny Cooper, IBEW. Oh, I tell you what, man, Kenny was the first one to stand up for me in 2020. He came out, and he said he was going to be for me. And he brought his union along, and it changed everything. Kenny, you're not only a great labor leader, you're a good personal friend. Thank you. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Not that it matters to you, but it mattered a hell of a lot to me, the first union to ever endorse me as a 29-year-old kid—when I got elected, I wasn't old enough to be sworn in; I had to wait 17 days to be eligible. *[Laughter]* But guess what? This guy was a—up with an outfit called United Steelworkers—the first union to endorse me—the first union.

I remember when they brought me to see I.W. Abel, who was then president. And I could see him looking at the local rep from Delaware; he was going, "Are you sure about this kid?" *[Laughter]* And you did it, man. Thank you. And we're going to make sure steelworkers are the steel backbone of this country for a long, long time to come.

Folks, what a great way to cap off a Labor Day week—to be a proud union State of Michigan. Michigan, Michigan, Michigan. I mean it.

It's always great to be with a dear friend, Debbie Dingell, who's a great, great personal friend. Debbie—when you're in a fight, you want Debbie on your side. And thank God she's been on mine. Thank you, Debbie.

We're joined by other members and great Congress delegate—Haley, who has been there and one of the most enthusiastic people I know. Haley, stand up. Stand up, kid.

And Shri, who is doing an incredible job. Where is Shri? Shri's out there somewhere. There he is. Come on. Stand up, man. Because, otherwise, they'll think your son is a Congressman.

There are also two members of my cabinet here today: Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg and Acting Labor Secretary Julie Su.

You know, when Marty——

*[At this point, the President imitated a Boston accent.]*

——left—you know Marty? Used to be Labor Secretary? Marty—he's a—I tell you, he's in a comfortable place. He's with guys running around smashing each other with hockey sticks. *[Laughter]*

But I tell you what, I think we've changed the Labor Department. They are—they understand the word "labor" means "union." They make this administration the most pro-union administration in the history of the United States of America, period. That's why we're growing. It is.

Look, a lot of politicians have a trouble saying the word "union." It ain't "worker"; it's "union"—union. Kamala and I know how to say the word and back to—look, we know a simple truth: Wall Street did not build America, the middle class built America.

When I started saying this years ago, the press looked at me like I was nuts. But guess what? I may be nuts, but I'm right. *[Laughter]*

Not only did the middle class build America, you built the middle class. That's a fact. Labor and unions built the middle class.

When I was Vice President, then I became President, I got a little heat because I was so, quote, "pro-union." In fact, I asked the Treasury Department to do a study, and it shows that when union workers do well, every worker in America does better. Everybody does better.

And by the way, it's the biggest reason why our economy is the strongest economy in the entire damn world. And that's not hyperbole; that's a fact.

It will all come down to something my dad taught me, and I mean this sincerely. My dad ran an automobile agency in his last 20 years. And he'd come home for dinner before he went back and shut things down. Didn't own it; he was a manager. And he'd always—we—our dinner table was a place we had conversation and, incidentally, ate.

And my dad had an expression. He'd say, "Joey, a job"—and I mean—give you my word to this. He'd say: "A job is about a lot more than a paycheck. It's about your dignity. It's about your place in your community. It's about being able to look your child in the eye and say, 'Honey, it's going to be okay,' and mean it." I mean it. It's not a joke.

The guys on the other team don't know what the hell it's all about. They don't understand the word "dignity."

A good job, a job you can raise your family on, a job you can get without losing—leaving your hometown, and without a college degree. I don't know how many times I've traveled across this country as a Senator for 374 years. *[Laughter]* Actually, only—I'm only 40, but I was there 36 years. *[Laughter]*

But look, I'm serious. As I travel the country, how many times did I hear—and all the rest of you here, labor people working in other parts of the country—where: "Mom, Dad, I can't stay. There's no jobs for me here. You've got a job, Mom and Dad, but there's no place for me." How many times did people have to say that and move? Look at how many communities have been abandoned, left behind, whether they are red or blue, Democrat or Republican.

A good union job—a good job in a union is building a future worthy of your dreams.

My vision has always been—and I mean this sincerely, since I was a young Senator—to grow our economy from the middle out and the bottom up instead of the top down. Not a whole lot ever trickled down on my dad's kitchen table. Not a whole lot ever had.

We put workers first. We invest in all of America and all Americans. And when we do that, we do well. Everybody in America deserves one thing: a fighting chance. Just a chance; no guarantee—a chance, a fighting chance.

And that's why Kamala and I are so proud of our record: the greatest job creation record of any single Presidential term in American history, because of you.

Earlier today we learned the economy created another 142,000 jobs last month. That's 42 straight months in a row, every single month, increasing jobs to a total of 16 million new jobs since we took office. A fact. And they told us we couldn't do it. Over 1.6 million jobs in construction and manufacturing.

Where in the hell is it written that America can't lead the world again in manufacturing? We are leading the world in manufacturing, and we'll continue to.

Unemployment is down. Wages are up. Inflation is way down and continues to come down. I predict it's going to come down this month a little more. And just last year, we added 250 [250,000; White House correction] new energy jobs, clean energy jobs growing twice as fast as any other sector in the economy—clean energy.

I know that other team doesn't think there's any such thing as global warming. Well, I'd like to put the other—that other nominee for President, the former President—I'd like to put him in the middle of Arizona for a while. *[Laughter]*

Clean energy workers are joining unions at the highest level in history, double—double—any other portion of the workforce. I've said it before: When I think "climate," I think jobs—good-paying, union jobs.

I tried for years, and one of the first things I did when I was—became President was protecting the pensions of 1 million union workers and retirees—when I signed the Butch Lewis Act—Butch Lewis. So far, over 62,000 workers and retirees across Michigan are benefiting from that signing.

*Audience members.* Yes, I am.

*The President.* Before we acted, workers faced cuts in their pension. Now they're not only restoring the full amount of the pensions, but they're getting backpay as well.

Where I come from, my family—we're making them whole again.

It's a big deal, but let's be clear. Every Democrat in the Michigan delegation voted to protect those pensions, led by Debbie and others. But hear me now: Every single Republican in your delegation voted against protecting those pensions.

*Audience members.* Boo!

*The President.* Every single one. No, I'm serious. Not a joke. Every one.

I've been around a long time in politics. It used to be Democrats and Republicans—we'd argue like hell, but we'd work out compromises. But every one.

And Vice President Harris had to cast the tiebreaking vote in the United States Senate to make this pension bill real. Folks, I've been talking about it a while, but we followed up with another big deal, as Barack used to kid me about. I call it "Investing in America" agenda. It's a simple proposition that includes our law, rebuilding America's infrastructure, and fixing, as your Governor says, "the damn roads."

My predecessor, who is seeking office again, promised "Infrastructure Week" every week in the 4 years he was President, and he never built a damn thing. Not one thing. Not a joke. Not one.

Well, Kamala and I have made sure Michigan received so far—so far—ten billion nine hundred million dollars for 2,000 projects so far: roads, bridges, removing lead pipes from homes and schools, clean drinking water, delivering affordable high-speed internet to every Michigander. And the number is still growing. We're just getting started.

That bill I got passed, and said they—"Biden couldn't do it," guess what? A trillion three hundred billion dollars over 10 years. And we reduced the budget at the same time.

And guess what? With your support, I signed an Executive order to make sure that the most—the most—the largest Federal construction projects that are being built in America are built with project labor agreements. You all know what that is.

But for folks at home who don't know what a project labor agreement is, it's the contractor, the subcontractor, and the unions put in place the conditions for the construction before it begins—before it begins. And these agreements make sure construction is top-notch, on time, on task, and on budget.

It's a big deal for big projects, like Soo Locks in Upper—in the Upper Peninsula that your two great Senators, Debbie and Gary Peters, were instrumental in delivering.

We're investing \$693 million to build better locks, accommodate bigger shipping vessels, carry more products to market, get them there cheaper. And throughout the Great Lakes, it's already created hundreds of jobs—hundreds of union jobs—with more to come.

But here's another big deal. "Buy American" has been the law of the land since the thirties when the Republicans at the time, under Roosevelt, were trying to break unions and allow the companies to come in and crush them—prevent them happening. They passed laws relating to union movements and how they could be—how—how they could not be interfered with.

Well, but it also had a provision in it no one paid much attention to—that every penny a President is authorized to spend on any project that the Congress gives the money for has to go to doing two things: hiring an American worker and using American product. Only time you could do—not use an American product or an American worker is when there was not one available or they didn't have the particular product.

Well, guess what? Guess what? It was honored in the alternative. Only about 20 percent of all the money we spent went to hiring union labor—or excuse me, forget union—hiring American labor and hiring—using American products.

Past administrations, including my predecessor, failed to buy American. You know why? They went overseas for cheaper labor. They supported companies sending—no, I'm not joking. Think about it.

*Audience member.* Bullshit!

*The President.* Well, you said it better than I can. [*Laughter*]

But here's the deal. They did. They sent it overseas because labor was cheaper, and they'd import the product. Not anymore. Not on my watch. Not on Kamala's watch, either. We buy American.

And we're making sure Federal projects [projects; White House correction] building American roads, bridges, highways will be made with American projects, built by American workers, creating a good living and American jobs.

In fact, I'm requiring many of these kinds of projects to pay Davis-Bacon prevailing wage, increasing pay for 1 million workers over time. And many of these jobs don't require a college degree.

In fact, Kamala and I expanded registered apprenticeships. Remember when the companies said, "We'll take care of the apprenticeship program"? As they say in southern—"You done good with that, didn't you?" [*Laughter*]

Registered apprenticeships, resulting in the hiring over—just since we did it—remember all the heat we got for doing it? Well, guess what? Hiring over 1 million apprentices since I—we came into office—1 million just since we came into office.

A lot of folks who aren't in the industry don't realize that apprenticeship is like earning a college degree. For real. Some of you apprentices have to journeymen—have to be journeymen for 4 to 5 years. You get paid to learn a trade. And you're the single best workers in the world—not a joke—like Andrew and his fellow plumbers and pipefitters. Not a joke. It's not a joke.

You know, when I—we invented the computer chip, about the size of the little—tip of my little finger, which we—we invented it. We modernized it. We did all the work. And guess what? Other teams started to export them overseas because labor was cheaper to build them—make them.

Well, we ended up with a situation where I decided I was going to go start off—I went to—people thought—even some of my staff thought I was crazy. I said, "I'm going to South Korea, and I'm going to talk to them about it," because they were making a whole hell of a lot of these computer chips.

And I met with Samsung. They ended up investing over \$20 billion—\$15 billion in the United States to build the fabs, the—first, to construct the facility. A lot of work there. A lot of prevailing wage that went for construction work. And then the so-called fabs, they're about as big as a football field. Not a joke. And they—in fact, where you actually make the computers. You don't need a college degree, and the average salary is over \$102,000 a year.

Well, guess what? So I asked Samsung why were they coming to the—by the way, it's well over \$50 billion being invested from—coming from abroad. I said, "Why are you coming back to the United States?" Said, "Simple reason." Not a joke. It's from the president—the chairman of the board of Samsung. "Because you have the most qualified workers in the world." No joke. That's real. Not a joke. "And it's the safest place in the world for me to invest my money."

But here's the deal, guys. We're not going to see it for a little bit because it takes time to build those factories. None of them are open yet. But there are going to be millions of people working in those factories.

And guess what? Once that starts, they're going to create entire communities around them. When you build a factory that has 500,000 people working in that factory and they're making good money, guess what? You end up building drugstores, movie theaters, supermarkets. You end up building communities around it.

*Audience member.* Small businesses.

*The President.* Small—no, I really mean it. And by the way, 50 percent of all the business in America is small business—small business.

So, look—and Kamala and I have come in—we always believed that the National Labor Relations Board should be pro-labor. Well, that's why one of the most significant things we've done is appointing a National—National Labor Relations Board members who actually believe in unions and the right to negotiate.

Look what's changed. When Trump was President, he appointed union busters—union busters—in that organization that's designed to promote unions.

And by the way, you think he has any damn idea what we do?

*Audience members.* No!

*The President.* No, no. I'm not being a wise guy. I mean, I wonder whether he has any notion—any notion—what a hard day's work is.

*Audience member.* No!

*The President.* I mean, all he did was lose his father's money. *[Laughter]* And then get in trouble and have to owe a lot of the other people money. *[Laughter]* And then borrow a lot of money and give tax cuts to the superwealthy and end up with the largest debt any President has left behind in 4 years.

He has an incredible record. *[Laughter]* An incredible record. *[Laughter]* Oh, you think I'm kidding? Look at the numbers, man. *[Laughter]*

And by the way, he—*[laughter]*—he and a guy who was maybe the worst Republican President ever, before him, ended up with—he's the only one, other than that Republican President, who when he came to office had more jobs than when he left office—lost jobs.

Look, Kamala and I are focused on what Michigan is known for as well: the auto industry. I got through—I got through school my dad managing an automobile dealership. That's how I got through school.

I was proud to be the first President to walk the picket line and to do it with the UAW——walk the picket line with UAW workers here in Michigan. And Kamala walked it as well.

But Trump—Trump—would much rather cross the picket line than walk one.

*Audience members.* Boo!

*The President.* Look, UAW's historic wage increases have led to virtually every automaker across the country to raise wages as well.

They're not only unions with recent hard-working success. From the SEIU to the writers and actors, dockworkers, health care workers, baristas, warehouse workers, and so many more, we've made a lot of progress, but we still have more to do. That's why we're here today.

In a few minutes, I'm going to sign another groundbreaking Executive order. It's called for—it's called the "Good Jobs" Executive order. For the first time in our history, the official policy of a Presidential administration is to specify a clear list of higher labor standards for jobs created through my "Investing in America" agenda.

And here's why my—what my Executive order will do. For jobs created using Federal dollars, "Good Jobs" Executive order will call on the Federal agency to protect the workers—the power of the workers to encourage the free and fair choice to join a union.

My Executive order goes on to call on Federal agencies to include high labor standards in grants that we give, prioritizing projects that pay wages you can raise a family on and provide benefits like childcare.

Right now Davis-Bacon prevailing wage only applies to construction jobs, and construction jobs are booming. My Executive order, though, promotes Federal policies to raise wages beyond construction, all across the manufacturing sector, because manufacturing is booming.

My Executive order will also strengthen the pipeline to good jobs. It will promote policies to create more registered apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships, and other job training programs that don't require a college degree, that put young people on a pathway to getting the skills for good-paying union jobs.

And finally, my "Good Jobs" Executive order will level the playing field for underserved communities, ensure everyone—everyone—gets a fair shot at a job. That means elevating the best practices to prevent discrimination and bias in hiring, protect the safety of workers. It all matters.

Kamala and I are going to hold Federal agencies accountable by creating a Task Force led by the Secretary of Labor and by the Director of the National Labor—the National Economic Council to make sure we fully implement this new job order—create—create jobs Executive order, excuse me.

The ideas are—are just paid—common sense. Economists have long believed that these good-job standards produce more opportunities and better outcomes for workers and more predictable outcomes for businesses as well. It turned out to be a win-win situation for everyone, including business.

In fact, Presidents in both parties have recognized this. Prevailing wage laws date back to President Hoover. Registered apprenticeships date back to Franklin Roosevelt. But too many

Presidents, like my predecessor, have looked the other way as companies trample on the rights of workers while cashing in their big Government checks. But not anymore.

With today's Executive order, Kamala and I are setting a policy across the board to—in the support of good-jobs standards. And from this point onwards, any President who disagrees with that is going to have to say so out loud, say it to your face, and repeal that order, and I want to see them try to do it.

Let me close with this. In 2020, I said one of the reasons I was running was to rebuild the backbone of America: the middle class. Nearly 4 years later, we've done just that. In thousands of cities and towns across the country, we're seeing the great American comeback story.

My predecessor believes America is a failing nation. He's a failing President and a failing man. He's wrong. America isn't failing, we're winning.

We're the indispensable—we are the indispensable nation in the world. We're the nation of dreamers and doers that led to the greatest advances in human history over the last 200 years. That's who we are.

But my predecessor doesn't get it. He refused to visit an American cemetery in France that I was just near because, according to his own Chief of Staff, a four-star Marine general, Trump said those servicemen buried there are "suckers" and "losers."

*Audience members.* Boo!

*The President.* My son died because of a year in Iraq. I'm just happy—and I mean this from the bottom of my heart—I'm glad I wasn't there, because I think I would have done something. No, I think you would have too. They're heroes.

He's the sucker. He's the loser, with the way he talks about it.

*Audience member.* Thank you, Joe!

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

*The President.* I'm sorry—I'm sorry to get emotional about that, but I—but I miss him. He was the attorney general of the State of Delaware and volunteered to go for—anyway.

Our servicemen and veterans are heroes. And you, the American worker, are heroes in this comeback story. You're the reason for the comeback story.

Because of you, all those who came before, we're the only nation that's always emerged, every single time—check it out—always emerged in American history—we've always come out of a crisis stronger than we went in—stronger than we went in.

Because of you—and I mean it from the bottom of my heart—I've never been more optimistic about America's future. We just have to remember who we are. We're the United States of America. There is nothing—nothing, nothing, nothing—beyond our capacity when we work together and when we fight—when we fight.

I'm now going to go over and sign that "Good Jobs" Executive order. And keep it going, guys. You're saving the country.

God bless you all, and God bless America.

*[The President signed the Executive order titled "Investing in America and Investing in American Workers."]*

Hey, guys. Every time I'd walk out of my Grandfather Finnegan's house up in Scranton, Pennsylvania—true story—he'd yell, "Joey, keep the faith." My Grandmother Finnegan would come out and say, "No, Joey, spread it."

Spread the faith, guys. Let's go.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:49 p.m. at the UA Local 190 Scott W. Klapper Training Center. In his remarks, he referred to Daniel Jagosz, president, United Association of Plumbers, Pipefitters, Service Technicians, and Gas Distribution (UA) Local 190; Brent Booker, general president, Laborers' International Union of North America; Sean McGarvey, president, North America's Building Trades Unions (NABTU); Gwen Mills, international president, UNITE HERE; Kenneth W. Cooper, international president, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW); David McCall, international president, United Steelworkers; Reps. Deborah A. Dingell, Haley Stevens, and Shri Thanedar; Neil Thanedar, son of Rep. Thanedar; former Secretary of Labor Martin J. Walsh; former President Barack Obama; Gov. Gretchen E. Whitmer of Michigan; Sen. Deborah A. Stabenow; Lee Jae-yong, vice chairman, Samsung Electronics Co., Ltd.; Lauren McFerran, Chairman, David M. Prouty and Gwynn A. Wilcox, members, and Jennifer A. Abruzzo, General Counsel, National Labor Relations Board; National Economic Council Director Lael Brainard; and former White House Chief of Staff John F. Kelly. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 9.

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