

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024

Remarks at the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute 47th Annual Awards Gala
September 19, 2024

The President. Hello, hello, hello!

Audience member. I love you, Joe!

The President. Can you hear me—can you hear me in that other county about 8 miles away?

God love you all. Please have a seat, if you have one. *[Laughter]* Even if you don't, take somebody else's. *[Applause]*

Thank you!

Adriano, thank you for that introduction.

And thank you to our great partners in Congress—Pete and Katherine, the Chair and Whip of the House Democratic Caucus; Nanette and all of the incredible members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus.

And a special thanks to the two incredible CHC members who are retiring, Tony and Grace. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Please have a seat if you have one. You guys don't have a seat, huh? *[Laughter]* Oh, man. Well, the speech is only an hour and 20 minutes long. *[Laughter]* I just listened to a Trump speech, so—*[laughter]*.

And thank you to everyone at the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute for inspiring and empowering the next generation of leaders.

Think about it: One in four public school students are American—in America are Latino. Your future—your future—is their future, and their future is the future of America.

Ladies and gentlemen, you embody the very idea of America—the idea that we all are created equal, deserve to be treated equally throughout our lives. We've never fully lived up to that, but we've never walked away from it, either, because the leaders like all of you in this room.

We're a nation of immigrants, a nation of dreamers, a nation of freedom.

Let me start by saying it's yet another time for an important conversation. Our politics has gotten too heated. I've made clear we all have a responsibility to lower the temperature. We must firmly reject political violence. And if we're going to talk about standing against violence, we have to start by standing against all violence, by standing against the violence perpetrated against the former President in Pennsylvania and Florida.

But we also must stand against the violence that occurred in El Paso, Texas, the deadliest attack against Latinos in modern history. We have to stand against the violence in Uvalde, Texas. I spent a lot of time down there afterwards. Jill and I went there to spend hours with the families.

If you're going to be outspoken on one act of violence, don't be silent on the other. If we're going to speak about violence, we're going to speak about guns. More children in America die from gunshot wounds than any other reason in American history. Sheer cowardice to do nothing about it—it's sheer cowardice.

So, if you stand against violence in America, then join me in getting the weapons of war off their streets. The AR-15 style weapons used to shoot Donald Trump, but just was used to kill so

many others, including children. It's time to outlaw assault weapons, period. I did it once, and we should do it again.

If you want to stand against violence in America, let's start by denouncing the violence of January the 6th. Stop saying you're going to pardon insurrectionists. Start admitting their loss of the 2020 election and commit to accepting the results, which you haven't done yet, of the 2024 election.

Look, you want to lower the temperature, you've got to stop saying immigrants are poisoning the blood of America. They are the blood of America. *[Applause]* They are the blood of America.

And you stop calling immigrants "animals" and "rapists" and "murderers." You can stop spreading lies and hate, demonizing Haitian communities in Ohio. You can stop by—blaming every other American in America.

Look, folks, you can start to understand our Nation is enriched, protected, and strengthened by immigrants. Kamala and I and all of you understand that better than the other team even begins to understand it.

Look—look—at what we've achieved together. I signed into—an Executive order to allow the spouse of American citizens who have been here for 10 years or more to apply to get their green card right here in America, in the United States. You still have to fill out the paperwork and pass a strict background; just most importantly, you can keep your family here in America while you're doing that.

The average person who would benefit from our action has been living in the United States for 20 years. Their children were born here. America is their home.

Friends, this is a big deal. It's the most important—positive, important immigration action since Obama announced DACA when I was Vice President.

But, as usual, MAGA Republicans oppose it. Governors have gone to court to block it. We're going to continue to defend it. Together, we will not give up.

I also announced an executive action that speeds up work visas to help people, including "Dreamers" who graduated from U.S. colleges, to land jobs in high-demand, high-skill professions.

My administration is also expanding access to legal representation and resources for people seeking legal status. We're working with all of you to ensure folks can have access to these services, just as we work together to fix our broken immigration system. We must do it.

I took executive action to secure the border. It's working. Border encounters have dropped over 50 percent. Let me be clear: People can still receive asylum by making an appointment to arrive at a legal post of entry, and they are. But let me be clear: There is no substitute for comprehensive immigration reform—none.

Our politics once had a proud bipartisan tradition on immigrants—on immigration. More recently, things have gotten worse. Every time we got close, MAGA Republicans blocked it to make it a campaign issue. They'd rather weaponize the problem than solve it.

As President, the first bill I sent to Congress when I got elected was a comprehensive immigration reform, after working with all of you. I'll work with anyone to get it done.

The Statue of Liberty is not a relic of American history, it stands for who we are. That's who we are.

Audience member. We love you, Joe!

Audience member. Thank you, Joe!

The President. And that's what Kamala and I have stood for all across the board.

Look—look—how far we've come the past 4 years. Together, COVID no longer controls our lives. Our economy is literally the strongest in the world. Historic-low Latino unemployment. Record growth in Latino small businesses. Latino wealth has grown by 50 percent. There's more to do. But we put checks in pockets that cut Latino child poverty in half. We increased childcare subsidy funding by 50 percent, providing families with peace of mind and still growing the economy.

We're turning around Puerto Rico's economy, investing more than \$140 billion and adding 100,000 new jobs in Puerto Rico.

And the racial wealth gap in America is at its lowest level in 20 years. Inflation is down and continues to go down. And Kamala and I keep taking on corporate greed to bring down prices.

Meanwhile, Trump wants a new tax on imported foods, goods, glass—gas, clothing, and so much more. And, as experts point out, it will cost the average family another \$4,000 a year in taxes—\$4,000.

We've doubled Latino enrollment in affordable health care, expanded coverage for Dreamers. My predecessor, he says he wants to terminate—terminate—it, which would cost 45 million people their health insurance, including millions of Latinos.

He has a big idea though. He says he has a "concept of a plan." [*Laughter*] That's a—"concept of a plan" to replace the Affordable Care Act after trying to defeat it 50 times. He doesn't have any idea what the hell he's doing except trying to get rid of it.

We're putting homeownership within reach to build generational wealth, allowing Latinos to build equity in a home and generate wealth, as my family, a middle class family, did.

We're going to bring down rents, including my calling on Congress to cap rent increases at 5 percent a year so corporate landlords can't jack it up 20 and 30 percent anymore.

We're delivering affordable high-speed broadband so no child has to do their homework outside a McDonald's—in a McDonald's parking lot.

We're removing poisonous lead pipes so every child can drink clean water without fear of brain damage.

We're making the most significant investment in climate ever, including the most significant investment in climate justice ever. That includes proposing the first—the Nation's first-ever Federal heat safety standard to protect 36 million workers from extreme heat on the job, many of them Latino workers.

I'm also relieving student debt for nearly 5 million borrowers, many of whom are Latinos. And I've not stopped yet. The courts are not going to win this.

And we're investing over \$15 billion—the largest investment in history—in Hispanic-Serving Institutions. That's a fact. \$15 billion.

We also announced the first-ever White House Initiative and President's Board of Advisers for Hispanic-Serving Institutions To Advance Equity, Excellence, and Opportunity.

And to support more Dreamers in going to college, we're proposing expanding the Federal TRIO Program to provide Dreamers with critical college access services like counseling and tutoring.

I could go on, but the point is simple: Together, we're making the most significant investment in Latino communities ever, ever, ever, because of you. And my administration, along with CHC, has been on a road to communities across the country to share the good news. But there's more we have to get done.

We must pass the John Lewis Voting Right Act and the Freedom To Vote Act, stop the intimidation of Hispanic voters in Texas and elsewhere; and let's defend your freedom to choose, restore *Roe v. Wade* as the law of the land and pass comprehensive immigration reform.

We're not only going to stop extreme MAGA Republicans from cutting Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid, we'll expand and strengthen it. These programs are making the wealthy begin to pay their share, if we do it the right way. They don't pay anywhere near the percentage what everybody else pays.

We've capped the cost of insulin for seniors at \$35 a month, instead of an average of \$400 a month. And, starting in January, we're capping total drug costs for seniors at \$2,000 a year, even for expensive drugs like cancer costs of \$10-, \$12-, to \$14 [\$14,000; White House correction] a year. We're going to continue to fight to do that for every single American.

By the way, our reforms not only save lives; they're saving the average taxpayer \$160 billion because Medicare no longer has to pay exorbitant prices to Big Pharma.

There's so much more. But all of this progress is in stark contrast to Donald Trump's devastating record of—for the Latino community.

His mismanagement of the pandemic devastated the Latino community. Trump is a failed businessman who drove up Latino unemployment and decimated Latino small businesses. And his attacks on legal immigration betray what we stand for as a nation. He separated families at the border, ripping children from their parents. He banned people based on their faith.

And now Trump and extreme MAGA officials have an agenda, something they call, as you all know, Project 2025. At the top of the list, and he means it, is the deportation of over 11 million people.

They say they would use local police, the National Guard, and even the United States military to round up—round up—and rip away millions of people from their homes, families, and communities. Think about that. Mass detention camps that will tear our country apart and damage our international relations and devastate—devastate—our economy.

And as outrageous as it sounds, he wants to take away birthright citizenship: If you're born here, it doesn't mean you're automatically an America citizen. That cannot happen.

What the hell is the matter with this guy? *[Laughter]*

One of the reasons why our economy is the strongest in the world is, we've rejected xenophobia of my predecessor and leaders like him around the world. We cannot go down that road.

But that's where he wants to go: attacking voting rights, banning choice nationwide—already eliminated affirmative action. They would also decimate diversity, equity, and inclusion across American life: banning books, erasing history.

You're making history, not erasing history.

Folks, diversity is the strength of this Nation. It really is.

That's why I've kept my commitment to have the most diverse administration in American history that taps into the full talents of our Nation, including Hispanic Americans at every level of

my administration, like our incredible Cabinet members who are here tonight: Secretary—Education Secretary Cardona; Small Business Administrator Guzman.

Together, we make history. And let's finally honor the history of building the National Museum for Latino Americans on the Mall—I mean it—as well as the American Women's History Museum on the National Mall.

Folks, look, let me close with this. Jill and my ancestors were immigrants as well, years and years ago—Italian—Italy and Ireland. They came with very little but their family and their faith. And they were criticized because many of them were Catholics and weren't allowed to work—were decimated in places like Scranton, Pennsylvania—where I'm from—in the coal mines.

My family Bible, the same Bible we—my ancestors brought across the ocean sits on my table in my Oval Office. And across the room, I placed another powerful symbol for me, and from the very beginning: the bust of César Chávez. He inspired me when I first ran as a 29-year-old kid in Delaware. He was down organizing in Delaware.

My dad taught me early on about the dignity of work and the dignity of all people, like the—like the six Latino construction workers who died when the bridge collapsed in Baltimore Harbor. I met and prayed with their families. They were literally building a bridge to the American dream.

That's the American story: the Latino American story.

César Chávez's partner in the fight for dignity of work, Dolores Huerta said, "Every"—she once said, "Every minute is a chance to change the world."

I look at all of you, and I see a nation of dreamers and doers who are literally changing the world, and that's not hyperbole. You're the reason I've never been more optimistic, and I give you my word to that. We just have to remember who we are.

Ladies and gentlemen, 25 of every 100 high school students and grade school students in America are Latino—25 percent. You are the future. You are the history. You will make the history. I mean that sincerely. Think about it: 25 out of every 100 students in our schools are Latino.

We have to remember who we are. We're a nation of immigrants. That's why we're strong.

We're the United States of America, and there is nothing—nothing beyond our capacity when we decide to do something. We're the only nation in the world that's come out of every crisis stronger than we went in.

Now, with the leadership of the Latino community, it's going to happen again.

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

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

You're the best. Thank you.

Thank you.

Remember who you are. Every time I'd walk out of my Grandfather Finnegan's house in Scranton, Pennsylvania, he'd yell, "Joey, keep the faith." And my grandmother would yell, "No, Joey. Spread it." Let's spread the faith. Spread it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:33 a.m. at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Reps. Adriano D. Espaillat, in his capacity as deputy chair, Rep. Nanette Diaz Barragán, in her capacity as chair, and Rep. Tony Cárdenas, in his capacity as vice chair of

member engagement, of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus; Reps. Peter R. Aguilar, Katherine M. Clark, and Grace F. Napolitano; former President Donald J. Trump, in his capacity as the 2024 Republican Presidential nominee; former President Barack Obama; Vice President Kamala D. Harris; and Dolores C. Huerta, cofounder, United Farmworkers of America. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 20.

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Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Aguilar, Peter R.; Barragán, Nanette Diaz; Biden, Jill T.; Cárdenas, Tony; Cardona, Miguel A.; Clark, Katherine M.; Espaillat, Adriano D.; Guzman, Isabel Casillas; Harris, Kamala D.; Huerta, Dolores C.; Napolitano, Grace F.; Obama, Barack; Trump, Donald J.

Subjects: 2021 civil unrest and violence at U.S. Capitol; 2024 Presidential election; Abortion; American "melting pot"; Border security; Broadband and wireless technologies; Cancer research, prevention, and treatment; Climate change; College access, expansion efforts; Congressional Hispanic Caucus; Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute; COVID-19 pandemic; Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy; Economic improvement; Extreme heat, community protection efforts; Federal student loans, partial forgiveness; Florida, security incident at Trump International Golf Course in West Palm Beach; Gun violence, prevention efforts; Health insurance, access and availability; Hispanic-serving institutions; Hispanic-Serving Institutions, President's Board of Advisers on; Hispanic-Serving Institutions, White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity Through; Homeownership, access and affordability; Housing, affordability and access; Immigration reform; Inflation; Insulin cost controls; Lead service lines, replacement efforts; Maryland, collapse of Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore; Medicare and Medicaid programs; Pennsylvania, shooting at former President Donald J. Trump campaign rally in Butler; Poverty reduction efforts; Prescription drug costs, reduction efforts; Presidency, U.S., attempted assassination of former President Donald J. Trump; Secretary of Education; Small Business Administration; Small businesses, promotion efforts; Social Security program; Unemployment rate; Vice President; Voting rights, protection efforts; Worker protections and labor standards.

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