

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024

Remarks at a Laborers' International Union of North America Get-Out-the-Vote Kickoff Event in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

October 26, 2024

The President. Whoa! Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Hello, LiUNA! It's good to be almost home. *[Laughter]* Well, God love you. I tell you what.

You know, you guys build bridges, and you can't be in a better city. There are more bridges in this city than any city in America. *[Laughter]*

Look, folks, you know, we've been through a lot together. And I want to thank—I want to thank you for that introduction. It's over the top, but I want to tell you, if I didn't have my views about union movement, my Grandfather Finnegan from Scranton would come down and kick my rear end. *[Laughter]* It's real simple.

Look, folks, you know, I want to—Brent, thank you for all you've done. And, Phil, I—and a big hello to my good friend, John Fetterman. John was here. I know he—*[applause]*—you had to be sitting down because I didn't—if I didn't see you, I'd get worried, John. *[Laughter]*

I want you to know, if you've got to be in a foxhole, man, you want this sucker with you. *[Laughter]* You want him with you.

And look—and, Chris—where's Chris? Chris—there you go, Chris. Congratulations, Chris. Thank you very much.

And you know, you've not only led the union movement, you built the middle class.

You know, all kidding aside, you know, when I started saying this years ago, people thought—looked at me like I was nuts.

There used to be a—it was a law that was passed in the thirties and—early thirties by Roosevelt, making it easier or fairer for unions to be able to organize because of strong opposition to organized labor. But there's a provision in that law that no President really paid much attention to. And to be honest with you, I didn't realize until about 14 years ago that it existed.

It not only says how—they can't block unions by doing—they still try to do unfair things. They can only block it. But this goes on to say any money appropriated by the United States Congress given to the President to build something or to spend it must be spent with American labor and American products.

Well, guess what? I'm the first President who said that means I mean it. That's why there's so much of an incredible growth. We've hired more people in a 4-year period than any President has in American history.

And by the way, you've heard me say it a hundred times; I'm going to say it a thousand more times, as long as I have a breath: You know, Wall Street didn't build America. The middle class built America, and you built the middle class. That's a fact. You built it. That's not a joke. There would be no middle class without you.

And, folk, look, the fact is that my dad—my dad never went to college, but my dad was a hard-working guy. And my dad used to have an expression. He'd say, "Joey, a job is about a lot more than a paycheck." He meant—I'm serious—our dinner table was a place we had conversation and, incidentally, ate. My dad would say: "Joey, a job is about a lot more than a

paycheck. It's about your dignity. It's about respect. It's about your place in the community. It's about how people treat you and look at you. And everybody"—and he meant it—"everybody determines—is entitled to be treated with dignity."

Well, that's what unions—you've done. You've raised people's expectations. You've given them pride. You've given them a reason for being. You've changed. And all the apprenticeships—remember how, when I got elected President, they were going to—business was going to help us, they were going to provide apprenticeships? Give me a break. *[Laughter]* Give me a break. Businesses—anyway. *[Laughter]* I don't want to get going here.

But look, the—you know, 10 days—10 days.

Now, I know I look like I'm only 40—*[laughter]*.

Audience member. Forty-six!

The President. But I'm—46, I'll take that. I'll—*[laughter]*—I'd take 66. *[Laughter]*

But all kidding aside, you know, this is the most important election of our lifetime, no matter how young or old you are. Not a joke. It's not hyperbole. This is not Democrat, Republican. This is decency versus a lack of decency. This is about character, this election.

And, folks, you know—I've got to choose my words here. *[Laughter]* The choice couldn't be clearer. The choice couldn't be more stark.

I am a President, as was pointed out by my buddy, that I walked the picket line. Well, so has Kamala walked the picket line.

You know, not only—the only picket line Trump ever looks at is one he can, in fact, cross the picket line. Not walk it. Cross it.

Name me something he's ever done—one single thing—name me one single thing, as a private entrepreneur or as a candidate, he's ever done for American labor.

Audience member. *[Inaudible]*

The President. Name me—no, I'm not—no, I'm being deadly earnest, because this is—I mean, this even—shouldn't even be close—but he wins, everything you talked about, he said he wants to get rid of. Not one thing you talked about did he support. Not one thing. Not a single thing.

You know, even the—anyway—*[laughter]*.

Audience member. We're not going to let him win!

The President. Well, you can't let him win. By the way, look, guys, the Presidential historians tell us that the most consequential thing the President can possess is character.

By character, we mean that—will they stand up? Will they stand up? Are they going to tell you the truth? Are they going to tell you when they disagree? When they agree, are they going to fight for you? Character. Just plain old character, like you do when we were kids.

You knew the kids in the neighborhood who had character and didn't have character. You knew who you could count on and couldn't count on, man or woman.

I mean, seriously, think about it. This is pretty basic stuff. It's about decency. It's about honor.

And look, I'm going to just say it—and the most controversial thing I may have said—Trump has no character. He's not demonstrated it. Whether he was having the people working—you know, I mean—anyway, I won't—I shouldn't get going. *[Laughter]*

But you know—but he—the thing he—he doesn't give a damn about union workers or any workers for that matter. He views unions as getting in the way of the accumulation of wealth for individuals. That's what he views it as.

Folks, it's in labor's interest to defeat Donald Trump more than any other race you've been in and as long as any one of you have been alive.

You know, I've given my heart and soul to labor my whole career as President, because it wasn't hard. It was just where I was raised, who I was with, what I've seen. You know, everybody deserves a shot, man—just a shot. No guarantee. Everybody deserves a shot as close to a level playing field as you can make it.

And the last thing we need is for Trump to get elected to take away all the things we've done. How many of you have pensions now, again? How many of you have—your families have pensions? They opposed it.

I mean, just go down the list of all the things that really matter to a family—to a hard-working family.

Look, you—organized labor—are his worst nightmare, but you're also the best thing that ever happened to the American economy. We've got a lot more work to do, Kamala and I—Kamala—Kamala does. A lot more work to do, but let me tell you what: We're the envy of the world. We have the best economy in the world because of you. *[Applause]* Lot more to do.

But here's the deal, guys, from my—where I stand—my standpoint: You fight for ordinary people, like the neighborhood I grew up in, the people I grew up with in Claymont, Delaware; Scranton, Pennsylvania; Wilmington, Delaware—people who just—just want a shot. They're not asking for a favor. They just want an even shot. And he only knows—we're all about lifting people up. Think about it.

I'm—I've never been this direct, but I tell you what, he's about making sure he pushes people down. He thinks the way you get ahead is to push people down. But you get ahead—I was—we were talking on the way up here. You know, when I got—when I made the commitment that I'd only hire American workers and use American products, well, I was told that that—and labor began to flourish, et cetera—I asked the Treasury Department to do a study. When union workers—not labor; union—when unions do better, what does it do for the rest of the economy? Everybody does better. Everybody's wages come up. Everybody. Everybody. You're his worst nightmare.

Now, like I said, you know, we've worked together for a long time. Like I said, I know I only look like I'm 40, but I've been doing this for about 500 years—*[laughter]*—and we've asked a lot of each other. But what I'm not asking of you is something that is not in your interest. I'm going to ask you one more thing: Don't do it for me. Do it for your kids. Do it for your family. Do it for your grandkids. Do it for your neighbors. Do it for people you know, people who need a helping hand.

Donald Trump is a loser. A loser—*[applause]*—he's a loser as a candidate, and more importantly, in my view—and I'm just going to say it straight up—he's a loser as a man. He's a loser as a man.

We fought too hard for the gains we've made for the people we grew up with, neighborhoods we come from, and I know who was standing next to me the last 4 years: Kamala Harris.

Let me tell you something, folks, I picked her because she has a backbone like a ramrod. She doesn't bend. I'm serious. She has a backbone like a ramrod.

And, folks, look, as I said, I'm from Scranton, and—a place where we stand up for one another in my neighborhood. So, please, follow your gut. Do what's right. Do what's the right thing to do for everybody, the people you grew up with, the people you work with, the people you love.

Our kids—make sure they—kids have to have access to a good education. This guy wants to literally do away with the Department of Education—do away with it. We've been fighting like hell to—anyway.

You know, your parents, all of you, you need health care, access to health care, affordable health care. We finally got it. We finally moved—we have more health care now than we ever had in American history. He's tried 51 times to eliminate the health care bill—51 times.

Look, you know, what's the right thing to do for the people you grew up with, the people you work with, your neighbors, and I—you know, we've got to give—and one of the things I'd hope we've figured out—and not all the guys agreed to this initially—there's not a damn thing that I could do that my sister couldn't do as well or better.

My sister is my best friend and my life. We're 3 years apart, 2 years apart in school. She graduated honors, taking the same exact courses I had at Delaware, and I graduated. She managed every one of my campaigns. She jumps in a fight when someone's in trouble. We're taught, like you guys, you see someone taken advantage of—what do you do? You're told to get involved, get engaged even when you're a kid, jump into the fight.

Well, look, folks, the fact is that we're finally, finally getting to the point where women are beginning to have a shot, a fair shot—a fair shot. Like I said, they can do anything any man can do, including being President of the United States of America.

Look, I'm trying to be a good boy here. *[Laughter]* There's never been, in my view, a clearer choice, as a student of history, someone who has known more world leaders than any living President—than any President ever has. I know them well, the good and the bad. The fact of the matter is that the—we know how important this election is.

It's because of you we've created more jobs than any time in history. We have "Made in America"—become the—what is the standard now, not the exception.

Remember what corporations used to do under him? That was they'd send the job overseas to the cheapest labor they could find and then bring the product back home.

Well, when I went overseas and I talked with the South Koreans first about the CHIPS Act, I said, "Look, you guys are"—we invented the chip. We made sure it worked—those—smaller than the end of his little finger. And guess what? They decided to invest \$15 billion.

I came back, and I said, "Why did you come when I talked to Samsung?" He said, "Because you're the most qualified workers in the world." You guys are not only the best in America, you're the best in the world—that's not a joke—the single best in the world.

And I asked why—so what—you know how much—remember we were—I was being criticized about how Biden was going to plan the economy too much and the Government is going to be too involved? Well, guess what? We brought off the sidelines in private investment \$1 trillion in investment.

Remember, when we got elected, we were told there's going to be a recession? No one's talking about recession on our watch. I'm serious.

So, folks, look, I'm trying to be good. *[Laughter]* But look, I know how damn hard you fought for the gains we have. I know how damn hard you work for your fellow colleagues. I know how you stuck together. And I know how you reach down to help people.

You know, I—and I know you know that without the shot of a decent wage, without the shot of access to health care—basic health care—without the shot of being able to retire on something, to have something to look forward to, we're in trouble. Well, you guaranteed that's not going to happen anymore in America.

We've got more to do. We've got to make housing more affordable. We've got to—and we've got to give people a break to start their first homes. We've got to give people a break to get going.

That's all in play. And if Kamala wins, it's going to happen. It's going to happen.

But, folks, you know the fact is that I—I don't—I don't think it's exaggeration. I can think of no man who has thought less of the average working person in America than this guy did, whether he was making sure that people worked overtime without getting paid on his gardens down in Mar-a-Lago or whether it's what he passed. He's created the largest deficit of any President in 4 years in American history.

You know what he wants to do now? He wants—he caused a—he provided a \$2 trillion tax cut for the superwealthy, creating a gigantic deficit. You know what he's proposing now? A \$5 trillion tax cut for the same people.

The leading economists in the world got together and concluded that if Trump fulfilled his obligation—his request that he wants for the economy, that we'd be in a recession. We'd lose thousands of jobs—millions of jobs.

So you've got to promise you'll tell my wife I behaved—[laughter]—that I didn't say all that I think. But you know in your gut, man—you know in your gut how important this is. You know it.

If everything we've worked for—everything you've allowed to happen, he has literally spoken out and said he's opposed to. And his new great—the wealthiest man in the world is now his ally, right? Well, that wealthiest man in the world turned out to be an illegal worker here when he was here. No, I'm serious. He was supposed to be in school when he came on a student visa. He wasn't in school. He was violating the law. And he's talking about all these illegals coming our way.

Folks—and by the way, on that score, what we've done, even though he wouldn't allow the most important legislation to pass, which fixed the border—the problem at the border, we have fewer people crossing the border illegally now—or crossing the border, period, than any time since his third year as President of the United States. It matters.

Relationships matter, and relationships with foreign leaders matter. Trust for foreign leaders matter, and we built that trust.

So, anyway, guys, please—please, please, please—go the extra step. Call the people you know who may be undecided. Tell them, please—please—give us a chance. Give labor the chance to really, really blossom in a way that it has never had ever before, even in the Roosevelt years. You're changing the world. You're changing the world.

And, folks, we're the best country by far. We're the greatest country in the history of the world.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:23 p.m. at the Laborers' International Union of North America Local 1058. In his remarks, he referred to Brent Booker, general president, Laborers' International Union of North America (LiUNA), who introduced the President; Philip Ameris, president of the executive board, Pennsylvania Laborers' Union; Sen. John K. Fetterman; Rep. Christopher R. Deluzio; Vice President Kamala D. Harris, in her capacity as the 2024 Democratic Presidential nominee; former President Donald J. Trump, in his capacity as the 2024 Republican Presidential

nominee; Lee Jae-yong, vice chairman, Samsung Electronics Co., Ltd.; and entrepreneur Elon R. Musk. He also referred to his sister Valerie Biden Owens. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 28.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Laborers' International Union of North America get-out-the-vote kickoff event in Pittsburgh, PA.

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