

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

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

*November 2, 2024*

*The President.* Oh. Thank you, thank you, thank you. *[Applause]* It's great to be home.

I know all of you folks in this area know when we say "it's good to be home," a lot of us mean it because we have family and our roots are here.

And I my—I told my granddaughter my deceased son Beau, who was a decorated Army veteran—anyway—and an attorney general of the State of Delaware—his daughter, who is a sophomore at the University of Pennsylvania, said: "Pop, you're heading to Scranton. Can I come?" I wanted you to meet her.

This is Natalie. She's the love of my life and the life of my love. And I tell you what, man—and she's probably heard so many stories about Scranton growing up that she—she said, "Can I come?" She has been here before with me—been here before. But we're not going to get to go to North Washington Avenue this time, okay? *[Laughter]*

*Natalie P. Biden.* Okay.

*The President.* Folks, look, you know, I know a lot of you know folks who used to live in Scranton or don't live here anymore, but still talk about home all the time, because a lot of them had a leave for—like my dad did when coal was dying back in the late forties and the fifties. He moved back to Delaware.

My Grandfather Biden, who died 6 days before I was born in Mercy Hospital in 1942—200 years ago. *[Laughter]*

But you know, Scranton is—Scranton becomes part of your heart. It crawls into your heart. And it's real. And it's not hyperbole. It's not a joke. It's real.

And my relatives are here right now, the Finnegan. And there's—you know, I—my only regret every time I come home is that I'm—my mom's not with me. My mom, Catherine Eugenia Finnegan Biden, one of five children. Four—she had four brothers. No one screwed around, man. *[Laughter]*

And—but anyway, I just—I'm so proud to be back, and I'm so proud that we finally were able, as Doug pointed out, to begin to build back better in a big way. We are. Scranton is coming back.

No—and by the way, you know, we've been through a lot together. Not only have you been my allies, the labor, you've been my friends. Carpenters were the first outfit to endorse me in Delaware as a 1972—as a 29-year-old kid running for the United States Senate. And as they say, you guys "brung me home." *[Laughter]*

I want to thank Doug, who's been a great, great, great ally. You've always had my back, and I think I can honestly say I've had yours as well. *[Inaudible]*

You understand—you understand what my dad taught me, and he used to say at his dinner table, I swear to God. He'd say: "Joey, a job is about a lot more than a paycheck. It's about your dignity. It's about respect. It's about the way you're treated in the community. It's about how you're able to look your kid in the eye and say, 'Honey, it's going to be okay.'" He meant it. He meant it. And that's it.

Three days to election day, and the stakes couldn't be higher. The choice couldn't be clearer.

A lot of politicians have trouble with saying the word "union," but I'm not one of them.

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

*The President.* And by the way, neither is Kamala. I wouldn't have chosen her Vice President if she had that trouble.

You know, I'm proud to have been the first President who walked the picket line. What—Kamala—[*applause*]. I've walked many picket lines, but I didn't realize—when I walked it as President, they said, "You're doing that?" I said, "Yes, damn right I am." [*Laughter*] Well, Kamala walked as well.

But the other guy, every picket line he sees he wants to cross. No, you—I hope—

*Audience member.* Trump's a scab!

*The President.* Well, let me tell you something. You know, here's what we—we know that he doesn't. Wall Street didn't—you've heard me say this a thousand times—and I mean it—my whole career. Wall Street didn't build America. The middle class built America, and unions built the middle class. Period. I mean it.

There would be no middle class without labor. That's the God's truth.

That's why Kamala and I so proud of the greatest job creation record of any single Presidential term in American history—nearly 16 million new jobs so far, 900,000 construction jobs, and we're just getting started, for real.

And these are good-paying jobs, my dad would say, that provide dignity. You can raise a family on. You can do what—you don't have to need a college degree to do it and—but if you want to send your kids to college, you can afford to do it.

Look, folks, one of the things that Kamala and I are proudest of is the work we've done to protect pensions in this country. We're damn proud to have protected pensions for millions and millions of union workers.

And I have—when I signed and—remember all the crap I got about saying not to do it? The Butch Lewis Act. And guess what? You all have pensions that are guaranteed. You're getting reimbursed as well.

Including the American Rescue—not one—not one—not one Republican, Democrat, or—in the House or the Senate voted for it—not one—not a single one.

And yesterday, at the Sprinkler and Fitter—the Sprinkler Fitters in Philly, I awarded Rita Lewis, Butch Lewis' widow, the Presidential Citizens Medal. You know, Butch's work in our Nation—he was—it's the highest honor you can give a civilian, posthumously.

To see her yesterday to talk about Butch's story, I was reminded how ordinary people do the most extraordinary things in this country. Butch was a decorated war hero. Couldn't have been a—could have been a professional baseball player. He was, in fact, recruited, but he devoted himself to labor.

When his pension got cut, he devoted his life to righting the wrong. And so far, a million union workers have had their pensions restored and protected, including backpay. And we did that together.

Because of the people in this room, a strong labor force all over the country exists. But guess what? Guess what? These other guys want to take it away. And not a—it's not a joke.

Look, folks, if you move—let's be clear about what the stakes are. I come here today not just because of all the work we've done together as unions, but to talk about what's a stake for all of us: your mothers; your fathers; your sisters; your brothers; your friends; the kids you grew up with, whether it was in Minooka or Scranton or wherever it was; the folks you went to school with, who aren't members of a union, don't belong to a trade and find themselves in a circumstance of just struggling to get by.

This other guy doesn't care about us. Just look at what his MAGA friends are saying about health care. They want to get rid of the Affordable Care Act.

Now, you guys have pensions and you have protection because you're members—union members, and we fought like hell to make sure it gets stronger. But there are 40 million people in this country in the Affordable Care Act. Another 100 million people have health care because they have preexisting conditions. Trump wants to take it away.

I'm not—this is not personal. This is just the facts. Facts. He wants to take away the Affordable Health Care Act. But that would have a devastating impact on the kids you grew up with, the people you grew up with.

Don't forget where you came from. Don't forget who you're with. *[Applause]* I mean it. I'm not joking. I am not joking.

Think of all the people who need that health care. Their only way to get health care, they'd lose it. Lose it. Some of your cousins, your brothers, the kids you went to grade school with, all the people who are struggling to make it—they'd lose it.

He also wants to eliminate the Department of Education. How can you lead the world if we don't have the best educated public in the world, the best schools in the world?

Trump and Republicans want to get rid of the CHIPS and Science Act. Well, this bill was signed—I worked like hell to get that done. I wrote that sucker. *[Applause]* Whoa, whoa, wait, wait. No, it's not like—because where I come from, the neighborhoods I grew up in.

Look, folks, we invented that computer chip, smaller than the tip of my little finger. And it's—it requires every—the reason we had that recession back early on—guess what? You find out that cars need 300 of those little chips. You find out that everything from nuclear weapons to—everything we need from the watches to refrigerators, they need those chips.

We invented them. We made them better, and we lost them because they went overseas with the other guys because it was cheaper labor. Cheaper labor—that's why they went to—there.

And guess what? I remember the look of my family—and I see one of my directors here as well, the Scranton girl. You know, when I went to my staff, I said, "I'm going to go to South Korea." They said, "What the hell are you going to South Korea for?" I said, "I'm going to get the chip industry to come here, come back home." They said, "Not going to happen."

Well, I went with—I met with President Moon, and I met with Samsung—the leaders. Talked them into investing over \$15 billion and coming back here and investing.

Guess what? Guess what? I asked, "Why?" You know what they said? Not a joke. They said—you guys underestimate yourself. They said, "Because you have the most skilled workers in the world in America." And—*[applause]*. No, no, no—I'm—this is just the facts, man. "And secondly, because it's the safest place in the world to be."

Look, it's going to——

*Audience member.* Thank you, Joe!

*The President.* Well, thank—*[applause]*.

But, folks, the country owes you. Think about it. It's going to mean tens of thousands of jobs—first of all, constructing the factories, all those carpenter jobs. And guess what? And then, when they're open—these are like—they call them "fabs." These great, big—they're as big as football fields. If you have—you've not seen them, they're just going to—just starting to get built—as big as football fields.

You know what the average salary is? One hundred and four thousand dollars. And you don't need a college degree.

Give—I'll give you an example. An example is Micron up in Syracuse, where they're building one of those fabs. Investing—and they're building, they're investing—Micron—investing \$100 billion to build them. It's the kind of investment that won't—won't just lift up labor, it's going to lift up everybody. It's going to grow the economy.

They want to get rid of it. They want to get rid of it. They wanted to get rid of that. Look, why? Cheaper labor overseas, man. Cheaper labor.

There's one more thing Trump and his Republican friends want to do. They want another giant tax cut for the wealthy.

Now, I know some of you guys are tempted to think it's macho guys—I'll tell you what, man, when I was in Scranton, I used to—we used to have a little trouble going down the Plot once in a while—[*laughter*]*—from Green Ridge. But I'm serious, these are the kind of guys you'd like to smack in the ass. [Laughter]*

By the way, I'm serious. Think about it. My son gave his life for this country. He was attorney general of the State of Delaware. He volunteered to go to Iraq for a year. Came back with stage-4 glioblastoma.

When I was over there recently, in Paris celebrating the invasion—the day—the D-Day, and a general—a four-star general said Trump wouldn't go to one of the cemeteries because they were "suckers" and "losers."

They're the guys you grew up with you want—I'm not joking. You know, I don't want to get started. [*Laughter*]

But, folks, look, the reason I accidentally got involved in politics was because we moved to Delaware, which was a—civil rights was a big issue. We were a slave State early on. Go back to where I was.

And what happened was, I got involved because my dad used to say: "Everyone is entitled to a shot, man. No guarantees, just a shot. Just an even shot." Well, what are these guys doing now?

You know, we fought like hell for our pensions, right? You got it done, right? Well, guess what? For your cousins, your uncles, your aunts, the people who aren't—are middle class folks who are just busting their necks, guess what? What's their pension, their Social Security?

He wants to cut Social Security. Not a joke. Not a joke. That is a pension for the vast majority of the American people. They broke their neck their whole lives paying their Social Security, from the first paycheck they got as a kid went into Social Security. They want to cut it. Why? Why? They want to pay for a new tax cut.

He talks about, he cuts—cuts for the middle class. How many of you guys make less than 400,000 bucks a year? Raise your hand. [*Laughter*] Well, I'm serious. Think about it. Think about this. That's what they're talking about doing.

Because, guess what? He's the first President other than Hoover—Herbert Hoover who came into office and left with fewer jobs than when he came into office. He left the largest deficit any

President has in recent history because of a \$2 trillion tax cut, which you got virtually nothing from—virtually nothing from.

You know what the average billionaire—there are a thousand billionaires in America. Do you know how much the average tax they pay—Federal? Eight-point-two percent. Raise your hand if you'd trade places with that tax cut. *[Laughter]* No, I'm serious.

And think of how many people in this country depend on Medicare. It's an add-on for you all, because you busted your neck and we organized. But he wants to cut back on Medicare. What are we talking about? This is what your friends you grew up with are looking at.

Trump thinks tax cuts for the rich folks are more important than protecting Social Security and Medicare. You know, that's how we take care of folks who we grew up with. We fight for the things that they—he—that they're going to take away if in fact he wins.

I'm not making this stuff up. I swear to God. Check it out. I don't care if you're thinking of voting for Trump or you're a Republican, just check it out what they want to do and what they don't want to do.

Look, we've made a lot of progress, and Kamala will build on that progress. You know, we've asked a lot of each other, unions and I—unions and me. And I ask you one more thing. I'm asking you for your support for Kamala and for Tim Walz. I'm not just asking it for me. I mean, I'm going to be gone. I'm asking you to do something for yourself and the families, for the people you grew up with, the neighborhoods you come from. That's what the hell we're about.

You didn't leave anybody behind when you're in grade school or high school. You didn't walk away when they were attacked. You stepped up.

Well, guess what? We didn't have a lot of money. We grew up a typical middle class family—I guess, technically, a slightly lower middle class. We moved to Delaware. We lived in a three-bedroom, split-level home with four kids and a grandpop.

Well, guess what, man? We didn't think we were poor, but we didn't have anything left over at the end of the day.

My dad used to say the measure of whether you can make it or not is did we have anything after all the bills are paid, is there a little bit left over? But our family stuck together. We looked out for each other. We believed in giving everyone just a fair shot. That's all. Just a shot: a decent chance to get a good education, to have health care so they can sleep at night and not have to roll in—I remember that small house we lived—it wasn't a bad house. It was a newly built home. It was a building in suburbia. And my bed was up against the headboard of my mom and dad's bed.

I remember my dad being so restless one night. I said, "What's the matter?" My mom said: "We just lost his—he just lost his pension, honey. Just lost his pension."

How many people you know lie in bed awake, wondering if they really get sick, what happens to them? They going to have to sell their home? Are they're going to have to make a change? What are they going to have to do?

Look, that's what's at stake in this election. So I'm asking you to do—I'm asking you to talk to your friends and your family, union members, and brothers and sisters. Hit the phones. Knock on doors. Talk to people in your neighborhoods, your old neighborhoods. Let them know how important this election is.

I have vast disagreements with Trump and his personality, and I'm not get—not even talking about that. What will happen? What will happen if you trade in my administration for his? No, I'm not—I'm not joking. I'm not—I'm nothing special.

*Audience member.* Sure you are!

*The President.* No, no, no.

*Audience member.* Yes, you are, Joe! [*Applause*]

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

*The President.* Well, folks——

*Audience member.* We love you, Joe!

*The President.* Well, thank you.

Well, look, folks—so I guess what I'm saying—I'm keeping it too long standing. But, folks, I think we've worked with each other like hell to secure the unions' vote, to secure the unions' rights, to secure everything from your health care to pensions to your right to work to pay—the whole range of things. We've stuck together, and you've done it. You've done it.

Labor is better off today than they've ever been since the nineteen—early thirties. I'm serious. [*Applause*] Because—but no, because of you.

But you have another power I think you underestimate. You have the power to help all those folks you grew up with who aren't members of unions, who didn't get a chance to go to college, didn't—aren't doing well, to help them out, because all the things that they rely on, from Social Security to Medicare to the ACA to access to education to good schools to teachers being paid, all of it depends on this—outcome of this election.

It's not—to use a fancy word, it's not hyperbole to suggest this is the most important election any of us have ever voted in. More is at stake in the direction of this country than ever before.

And I promise you, you may have difficulty—you may have disagreed with some of the things in the Harris-Walz administration, but I wouldn't have picked her if I didn't think she had the exact view I do about hard-working people. I'm serious.

And so, look, folks, we need to elect Kamala as President. Let's remember, as I said, American labor built this country. Let's remember who we are. We're good, decent, honorable people, where we believe in honesty, decency, treating everyone with respect. We believe character is not only how we conduct our lives but how we expect other persons—those that lead us to have character.

I'm telling you, Kamala Harris has character to lead this Nation. So let's remember who the hell we are. I really mean this.

This election is more consequential than any in anyone's lifetime in this room. And don't leave behind the people you grew up with. Don't leave them behind. They may not be part of the unions and have the protection we've been able to get, but let's make sure—let's make sure—they at least keep the Affordable Care Act. Let's make sure we keep the Department of Education. Let's make sure we continue to invest in them, provide access to them.

How in the hell can we be the—and by the way, one last thing, and it's going to sound self-serving, but I—the only advantage of being the oldest SOB to ever had this job—[*laughter*—is I've known every major world leader. I've known—have more experience with dealing with world leaders than any President has in American history.

And guess what? They're looking at this election—or if we don't lead the world, who does? Who do we look to to lead the world? Do we do this "America first" stuff all over again and walk away?

Folks, we're the United States of America. There's nothing beyond our capacity—nothing, nothing—if we work together.

So I ask you, please, not only—I know you're going to vote—get out the vote—to people. Again, go back to the people you grew up with, go back to the people you know. Let them know how important it is.

It's not about personalities. It's about judgment. It's about honor. It's about dignity. It's about respect.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:23 p.m. at the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America Local 445 union hall. In his remarks, he referred to Vice President Kamala D. Harris; former President Donald J. Trump, in his capacity as the 2024 Republican Presidential nominee; Douglas J. McCarron, general president, United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America; former President Moon Jae-in of South Korea; Lee Jae-yong, vice chairman, Samsung Electronics Co., Ltd.; former White House Chief of Staff John F. Kelly; and Gov. Timothy J. Walz of Minnesota, in his capacity as the 2024 Democratic Vice Presidential nominee. He also referred to his sister Valerie Biden Owens and brothers Francis W. and James B. Biden. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 4.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Campaign event for Democratic Presidential Nominee Vice President Kamala D. Harris in Scranton, PA.

*Locations:* Scranton, PA.

*Names:* Biden Owens, Valerie; Biden, Francis W.; Biden, James B.; Biden, Natalie P.; Harris, Kamala D.; Kelly, John F.; Lee Jae-yong; Lewis, Rita; McCarron, Douglas J.; Moon Jae-in; Trump, Donald J.; Walz, Timothy J.

*Subjects:* 2024 Presidential election; Federal deficit and debt; Health insurance, access and availability; Job creation and growth; Labor movement and organized labor; Manufacturing industry, domestic investment; Medicare and Medicaid programs; Minnesota, Governor; Pennsylvania, Democratic Party event; Pennsylvania, President's visit; Pensions and retirement accounts, strengthening efforts; Presidential Citizens Medal; Semiconductor manufacturing; Social Security program; Tax Code reform; United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America; Vice President; Voter participation.

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