

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

## **Remarks Honoring the 2024 National Basketball Association Champion Boston Celtics**

*November 21, 2024*

*The President.* Well, welcome to the White House. I don't know—know any of these guys behind me, but they just showed up. I don't know where the hell they came from. [*Laughter*]

Twenty-twenty-four NBA champions: the Bols—you're Celtics, right?—[*laughter*—the Boston Celtics. Not just any champion but the winningest franchise in league history, and now with a record 18 titles.

Please have a seat, if you have one. You don't have to keep standing. You may stand to stay warm, but—[*laughter*].

Let me just say, all of you may not know this, but my Secret Service name is "Celtic"—[*laughter*—for real—because I'm Irish. Everybody behind me is Irish in their heart.

I feel a special pride in this trophy. From this old Irish Celtic to all you Celtics, congratulations. Congratulations to the team ownership, players, coaches, staff, and family members, along with diehard fans, like the Governor—Gov, stand—where are you, Gov? Where's the Governor? That's it. There you go, Gov.

The mayor, Madam Mayor, stand up. Where are you? All right.

And, Members of Congress, stand up. All the Members of Congress from the—not just Massachusetts, but all of—you've got half the damn Congress here. [*Laughter*]

You all know what the great Red Auerbach said? He said: "Celtics aren't just a basketball team. They're a way of life." "They're a way of life."

Passion. Loyalty. A first team mentally. Full of heart, guts, and faith. We see it from you, the ownership group, the executives, the coaches—especially Coach Joe. I used to like Joe—[*applause*—Joe is the youngest head coach to win a title since the great Bill Russell. I told him I used to be the youngest; now I'm the oldest. I liked being the youngest better. [*Laughter*]

Together, you guys built one of the deepest teams of all time: incredible players, led by Jayson and Jaylen and Derrick and Jrue, Big Al.

I know it wasn't easy. You came close more than once. But you put in the work. You clocked one of the greatest seasons ever: 64 wins, the best record in the league last year; more points per possession than any team in NBA history. Ruled the playoffs, beating the Heat in five, the Cavs in five, and the Pacers in four. Then you dominated Dallas on both ends of the floor. And now that 18th championship banner hangs in the rafters.

And, with the start of the new season, you're hungry for more.

A total team effort that you show off the court as well, working across Boston through your foundations to fight injustice, to expand education, to register voters, to deliver health care to infants and moms, and so much more. It matters, what you do. It really, genuinely matters.

So let me close with this. Something—I thought I knew a lot about this, but I was surprised to learn this today. I didn't realize that in 1963, President John F. Kennedy welcomed the Boston Celtics as the first NBA champions to visit the White House ever—first time. It's part of that wonderful tradition, celebrating the power of sports to bring people together. It's a tradition that I've honored—I've had the honor to continue.

No matter the sport, what these champions all have in common are core values, and I mean this sincerely: hard work, teamwork, respect, the knowledge that no one of us is ever as good as all of us can be when we're together; that when we get knocked down, we get back up. As my dad would say: "Just get up, Joe. Get up."

Character to keep going and keep the faith, that's the Celtic way of life. That's sports. And that's America.

As we celebrate Thanksgiving next week, that value set is something truly to be grateful for in America. We just have to remember who we are. We are the United States of America, and there's nothing—nothing—beyond our capacity when we do it together. And I mean that for certain.

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

Now I'm going to turn this over to Wyc. He has a 40-minute speech for you. But it—really, Wyc, thank you. Congratulations, man. You've got a hell of a ball club.

*Owner Wyc Grousbeck.* Thank you, sir.

*The President.* Thank you.

*Mr. Grousbeck.* Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, Celtic. [*Laughter*] Thank you very much, Celtic—I—excuse me, Mr. President—[*laughter*]—for welcoming us here today.

And, on behalf of all the Boston Celtics, we want to thank you for your ongoing service to this country.

I'd also like to extend my thanks to our Massachusetts Senators. I see my friend Senator Markey, Senator Warren. Thank you, Governor Healey. Thank you, Mayor Wu. Thank you with our—for our Massachusetts Representatives who are here and the hundreds of guests in attendance. Your support means a great deal to all of us.

Joining me today are my wife Emilia; my comanaging partners, Bob Epstein and Steve Pagliuca, with Judy Pagliuca and Esta Epstein; and other members of ownership.

And now I'd like to again present to you the world champion players of the Boston Celtics.

*The President.* [*Inaudible*]

*Mr. Grousbeck.* I'd also like to present to you our team president, Rich Gotham; our president of basketball, Brad Stevens; and our head coach, Joe Mazzulla.

We are here celebrating our 18th world championship. Every day, those of us at the Celtics wake up and try to honor the great Celtics who came before us, and that's why it has been particularly a pleasure and a thrill and an honor to raise banner 17 in 2008 and banner 18 this year in 2024.

We hope to demonstrate through what we do not only how to win basketball games on the court, but how to make a difference and achieve your dreams. We're trying to show the people of the world that with, as you referenced, the teamwork, hard work, mutual respect, and integrity, you can achieve anything.

We try to take that principle into not only our basketball games, but into the community. This group supports meaningfully close to 2,000 charities a year in the Boston community and nationally and internationally. So thank you all for doing that.

Thank you once again, Mr. President. And I would now like to introduce two of our great Celtics champions, Jayson Tatum and Derrick White, to present you with some gifts for the team. Thank you very much, sir. Thank you.

*Forward-guard Jayson Tatum.* Here you go, Mr. President.

*The President.* I'll be damned, man.

[*At this point, the President was presented with a Boston Celtics jersey.*]

*Mr. Tatum.* Let's turn it around.

*The President.* I'm going to put this on. [*Laughter*]

Well, thank you.

*Mr. Tatum.* Absolutely.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:29 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Jaylen Brown, forward, Jrue Holiday and Derrick White, guards, and Al Horford, center-forward, Boston Celtics. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 22.

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