

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024

Remarks at a Dinner of Gratitude for Members and Supporters of the Administration

November 22, 2024

The President. Good evening, everyone. Good evening, good evening, good evening.

If you have a seat, please take it. But don't jump in the pool. [*Laughter*]

Jill and I are hosting this dinner tonight for a very simple reason: to say thank you—thank you—to so many dear friends.

We began this journey to redeem the soul of the Nation and to find the light in the darkness. Jill and I never could have gotten to where the White House has become without you. And we never could have gotten as much done as we did without you. And that's not hyperbole. I mean it from the bottom of my heart.

Maybe the most important thing you've done is lend your name, your reputation, your character to this effort. It's more than just saying, "We're for that administration." You put yourself on the line. And we'll never forget. We're incredibly grateful.

One thing I've always believed about public service and especially the Presidency is the importance of asking ourselves, "Have we left the country in better shape than we found it?" And tonight I can say with all my heart the answer to that question is a resounding yes, because of you. Because of you.

Kamala and I promised we'd have an administration that looks like America, that taps into the full talents of our Nation. I look out at so many of you—our Cabinet members, our White House staff—who poured their heart and soul into their work. And I want to thank their families for the sacrifices they made to allow that to happen.

I believe we can be proud we're leaving America in a better place today than when we came into office 4 years ago. This country was living through the worst pandemic we'd seen in over a hundred years. Our economy was in a tailspin. We had just witnessed something we thought we'd never, ever see in America: a violent insurrection on January the 6th. And so much more.

We've come a long way since then. We've passed historic legislation, often with some bipartisan support: laws that are literally going to change America not just now, but for decades and decades to come.

I know I've only been around a few days, a few years. [*Laughter*] I can't believe how long it's been. [*Laughter*] But I fully believe America is better positioned to lead the world today than any point in my 50 years of public service.

If you'll hold a second, as I say to my colleagues around the world when we meet, "If not America leading the world, who leads the world?" I mean that literally. Think about that question. Who would lead the world if we did not step up?

That's because of you—and I mean this seriously—sincerely—because of the incredible work you've done. You should be so proud of the work you've done. You should never forget all you've done for your country.

And I'm so proud we can say we've done all this with a deep belief in the core values of America: that all of us—all of us—are created equal; that everyone should be given a fair shot; that hate should have no safe harbor in America.

We've stuck to our principles, set a high standard for character and integrity in public life.

And I must say, I follow that standard because I had no choice. I'm Jill Biden's husband. [Laughter] That's the title I'm most proud of. Jill is the rock of our family. She has been one of the—I think, one of the finest First Ladies in history, in my view.

And those who you know Jill, you know I'm going to catch hell for saying that. "Joe, don't do that in public. Don't say that." [Laughter] Jilly, I love you, kid. I love you.

Let me close with this. It will surprise none of you that I'm going to quote an Irish poet. [Laughter] William Butler Yeats wrote, "Think where man's glory most begins and ends and say my glory was I had such friends." Thank you, thank you, thank you.

As I look out over such friends, serving as President of the United States has been the honor of my life. But while our time in office is coming to an end, our cause endures.

That's because of the history of the journey of America. America, the America of our dreams is calling us to stay engaged, to never give up, to keep going, to keep the faith.

I know I will, and I know you will.

We just have to remember who in God's name we are. We're the United States of America. And there is nothing, nothing beyond our capacity when we do it together.

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

Please enjoy the dinner. Thank you, thank you.

[At this point, the dinner continued, followed by a musical performance featuring "the President's Own" U.S. Marine Band Chamber Orchestra, the U.S. Army Chorus, Strings, and Herald Trumpets, the U.S. Navy Sea Chanters, and the U.S. Air Force Singing Sergeants and Strolling Strings. Then, the First Lady made remarks as follows.]

The First Lady. Wow. [Laughter] This is so spectacular. That incredible performance, the fountain, these views of the house and the Washington Monument, and all of you.

It's hard to believe that we're in the final moments of this extraordinary journey together. Some of you have worked with us over the past 4 years. Some of you have been in our lives for decades.

The President. Forty years! [Laughter]

The First Lady. You've seen us through our proudest, mountaintop moments and helped us achieve them. And you've been with [by; White House correction] our side through the hard times and everything in between.

We've reached higher, moved further, became stronger because we did it together.

It is the honor of our lives to serve as your First Family, and we couldn't have done it without you. Time and time again, you've opened up your homes to us and carried us forward with your kindness. Tonight Joe and I have opened our home to celebrate you, the friends who grew into family.

May we cherish the journey we've been on together and treasure the bonds that we will always share.

Now, this celebration is only possible because of our social secretary, Carlos Elizondo, as well as Bryan Rafanelli, who put this magnificent tent event together. Thank you, Bryan. I think you're over here somewhere. Thank you to your and you—you and your teams. Thank you for creating magic.

And, wow—to "the President's Own" Marine Band and all of our military band members—[*applause*]*—yes, thank you. Your music doesn't just fill a space; you create something new, a place within us and among us where we feel more alive and more complete.*

As a military—[*laughter*]*—as a military mom, you make me proud. Thank you. You make your Commander in Chief proud as well. And we deeply appreciate you and your families for your service.*

So, finally, I want to talk about the person who brought all of us together: Joe. [*Laughter*]

Throughout your life in public service, you've put people at the center, so it's never a surprise to see people gather around you.

Four years ago, you set out to restore the soul of the Nation. That was never just a sound bite, it was your drumbeat. Your wisdom and steady hand lifted our country out of a pandemic, set our economy on solid ground, and fortified our hope for what is possible. You led with an unshakable belief in the goodness of the American people and guided us on a new and brighter course.

All the while, you continued to be a brother, an uncle, a friend, a partner, and a father and grandfather whose devotion can be measured by the calls that you fit in between bilateral meetings and security briefings, just when you check—you want to check in with everyone in our family and say, "I love you."

What I've watched you do for more than 40 years is extraordinary. What you've done over the last 4 years—[*applause*]*—Joe, what you've done over the last 4 years is breathtaking.*

Here, Joe.

[*The First Lady handed the President a glass.*]

Oh, here. [*Laughter*] He has a ginger ale. [*Laughter*]

Please join me in raising a glass to your President, my husband and hero, Joe Biden.

[*The First Lady offered a toast.*]

The President. Can I say something?

The First Lady. Okay. Wait a minute. I have something more to say. [*Laughter*] Wait, drink.

And now please stay and enjoy more of the beautiful music and the stunning views and head out to the dance floor.

So——

The President. I want to say something.

The First Lady. ——we're going to have a dance.

The President. I know. I want to say——

The First Lady. Oh, he wants to say something. Hold on.

Participant. Thank you, Joe!

The President. Folks—[*applause*]. No. No, really, thank you.

The thing that I want to say to so many of you who I've come to know well is, you've not only helped me politically and help our family, but when things have really gone bad—when we lost our son, when we lost—the accident and all, you were there. You're always there, reaching

out in ways that I—you've made me promise, some of you, that I wouldn't say what you've done. But just incredible things you've done—incredible things you've done for the—our family.

And they're the things that really matter to me more than anything else. It's not just you're supporters and you've helped us win, but you're there when things really went bad. Like a lot of families, I was lucky. I had strong family around me.

I think of all the people who have lost family members in accidents and war and the like that—they have nobody. They just walk alone. But you were always there with me.

And I know some of you have been through really tough times yourselves, and you know what it means. You know what it means.

And I just want to say thank you, thank you, thank you.

There's another Irish poet who once said—[laughter]—that history teaches us not to hope on this side of the grave, but then, once in a lifetime, a longed-for tidal wave of justice rises up and hope and history rhyme.

You're making hope and history rhyme.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:26 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Vice President Kamala D. Harris . The First Lady referred to Bryan Rafanelli, chief creative officer, Rafanelli Events. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 25. Portions of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

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