

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

**Remarks at a Thanksgiving Meal With Servicemembers and Military Families at United States Coast Guard Sector New York in Staten Island, New York**  
*November 25, 2024*

*The Frist Lady.* Hi. Hello. Please. Please. [*Laughter*]

So thank you, Captain Andrechik. It's been the honor of this military mom's life to serve as your First Lady and to meet with military families through my joining families—Joining Forces initiative.

You've trusted me with your stories and your challenges: PCSing every few years, transferring IEPs across State lines, spouses struggling to keep careers. I'm proud that in Joe's administration, we've made it easier for spouses to bring their careers with them when they move, and we're making sure that kids with disabilities have the support they need at their new schools.

As Coasties split their days between waves and land, you find home in the little moments: in bear hugs and big smiles on little faces, in the people whose love warms you even on the coldest days, the bonds built on shore and the ones forged on water. That's what "friendsgiving" is about: the families you create together.

And, Robert, for years—for 4 years now, you and your team have been extraordinary partners, serving this beautiful meal with love. Joe and I look forward to this celebration every year, and we're so grateful for everything you've done.

And you know the best thing? It sounds just like home. [*Laughter*]

With all my heart, thank you for your service and your sacrifice.

Now please welcome a Coast Guard spouse and someone who works every day to make this community stronger, Jaime.

*Coast Guard Spouses Club of Sector New York Vice President Jaime Billert.* Thank you.

Oh. Well, thank you, Dr. Biden. And thank you for helping host this year's "friendsgiving" for our Sector New York and local unit Coast Guard families.

*The Frist Lady.* Thank you.

*Ms. Billert.* Good evening, everyone. [*Laughter*]

It's an honor and a pleasure to share this experience with you and give thanks to the service of our members and, importantly, the service of our families.

We all make sacrifices as Coast Guard families. And while these sacrifices are unique to each of us, they are all made in the best interest of our families for a better quality of life, a better opportunity for resources, accommodations, education, and experiences.

To the tables tonight and Thursday who are missing someone irreplaceable, the community around you sees your sacrifice and knows it firsthand. As the President and Dr. Biden have said through their Joining Forces initiative, we may stand and wait, but we do not stand and wait alone.

So it is an honor to give thanks to the service of our families tonight.

Sector New York and local unit Coast Guard families, it is my privilege to introduce to you our President, Mr. Joe Biden.

*The President.* Hello, Sector New York.

And by the way, kids can scream and cry and holler. We're Bidens; we're used to it. [Laughter] Kids rule in our house.

Well, thank you all very, very much.

You know, I was thinking—I hadn't planned on saying this, but I was thinking about this when I was coming up. I was a pretty good football player in high school in my—I was a—I had it pretty good, and I had an opportunity to go and play in—but my quarterback, who was All-State as well, he came along, and he ended up being a quarterback for the Coast Guard Academy. In 1912, but anyway. [Laughter] When we graduated. [Laughter]

But you know, you're an incredible group. Coasties are incredible. I've had the opportunity to do the commencement speech at the Academy a number of years, and you're incredible. I mean, I really mean it.

No branch in the military is stationed in more places than all of you. You're there for everything.

And, folks, you know, I know you're hungry, so I won't speak very long. [Laughter] I want to—but just thank you, thank you, thank you for all you do and continue to do.

The Coast Guard motto: "Always ready." Over the last years, those words took on a sense of truth that they hadn't had in a long while. When Iran sent weapons to the Houthis, you teamed up with the Navy, and you intercepted them.

When the Baltimore bridge collapsed, which is—I spent a lot of time there—you arrived within minutes to help reopen the port in record time. People thought it was going to take forever and ever. You did it in record time.

When Hurricane Helene hit the coast—shore, you rushed to the front lines of search-and-rescue missions all up and down the coast. When Hurricane Milton hit less than 2 weeks later, you stepped up again to help your fellow Americans.

And I also want to note that every day here in New York, you keep this port secure and the people safe, and the world knows it. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

And by the way, simply put, we owe you, and we owe your families. And with all due respect to those of you wearing uniform, we don't thank your families enough. You know, it's—and your kids, I want to thank them as well. Not a joke. I mean this from the bottom my heart.

You know how excited—people think, "God, you get to be—go stationed around the world; isn't that wonderful?" And then you tell—you have—your daughter is a junior in high school about to go to the junior prom. You say: "I've got great news. We're leaving." [Laughter] "You're going to go to another school."

I really mean it. Thank you, thank you, thank you. We underestimate the impact that they all provide for you to be able to do your job.

And, folks, you know, I often say it: As a nation, we have only one sacred obligation, and that's to care for those we send into harm's way and care for them when they come home and make sure their families are taken care of before and after. I mean that sincerely.

We had a son who was military, who passed and—because of—anyway. He was a major in the United States military—in the United States Army. And you know, it's—you can see it every day.

So thank you, thank you, thank you. And I promise you, every day we'll keep striving to live up to the obligation we have.

And I'm anxious to—I may not eat. I may come around to the table and meet all your kids, because everybody knows I like kids better than people. *[Laughter]* Anyway.

Thank you, really, from the bottom of my heart. And the families, thank you, thank you, thank you. Not a joke. I mean it from the bottom of my heart. Thank you for all the sacrifices you make.

So have a good meal. And we've got a great chef, by the way. He's the best in the world. *[Laughter]*

Well, thank you. I'll see you again.

*The First Lady.* The pastor is going to speak.

*The President.* The bad news is, I'm going to end up feeding you.

Pastor.

*Coast Guard Chaplain Lieutenant Commander Joseph L. Roach, USCG.* Thank you, sir.

*The President.* Say an extra prayer for me, will you? *[Laughter]*

*Lt. Cmdr. Roach.* Yes, Mr. President. I'll say an extra prayer for you. *[Laughter]*

*[At this point, Lt. Cmdr. Roach said a prayer, and the dinner continued. Later, the President made additional remarks as follows.]*

*The President.* Hello, hello, hello. I've just been told I've been fired. *[Laughter]*

What they do when they tell us—they set a time we're going—how long we're going to be somewhere, and then what they do is they close all the roads—the Secret Service does. And if you want to lose all support for you—the Coast Guard and no one will ever vote for me again, I'd better get the hell out of here. *[Laughter]*

Well, thank you, thank you, thank you. From the bottom of my heart, thank you for your service. Thank you. I really—I really mean it. Thank you.

Appreciate it.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 6:15 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to chef Robert Irvine. The First Lady referred to Capt. Jonathan Andrechik, USCG, sector commander, U.S. Coast Guard Sector New York. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 26.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Thanksgiving meal with servicemembers and military families at U.S. Coast Guard Sector New York in Staten Island, NY.

*Locations:* Staten Island, NY.

*Names:* Biden, Jill T.; Billert, Jaime; Irvine, Robert; Roach, Joseph L.

*Subjects:* Coast Guard, U.S.; Maryland, collapse of Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore; Military families; Natural disasters, Hurricane Helene; Natural disasters, Hurricane Milton; New York, President's visit; New York, U.S. Coast Guard Sector New York in Staten Island; Thanksgiving; U.S. servicemembers, service and dedication.

*DCPD Number:* DCPD202401032.