

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

**Remarks on the Death of Former President Jimmy Carter and an Exchange With Reporters in Christiansted, United States Virgin Islands**

*December 29, 2024*

*The President.* Sorry to keep you waiting, folks. I was on the phone with the family.

Jilly, come on up here.

You know, this is a sad day, but it brings back an incredible amount of good memories.

Today America—and the world, in my view—lost a remarkable leader. He was a statesman and a humanitarian. And Jill and I lost a dear friend. I've been hanging out with Jimmy Carter for over 50 years, it dawned on me. And I had countless conversations over those years.

And I always would be proud to say that—he used to kid me about it—that I was the first national figure to endorse him in 1976 when he ran for President. And there was an overwhelming reason for it: his character.

What I find extraordinary about Jimmy Carter, though, is that millions of people all around the world—all over the world—feel they lost a friend as well, even though they had never met him. And that's because Jimmy Carter lived a life measured not by words, but by his deeds.

Just look at his life—his life's work. He worked to eradicate disease not at home—not just at home, but around the world. He forged peace; advanced civil rights, human rights; promoted free and fair elections around the world. He built housing and homeless—for the homeless with his own hands. And his compassion and moral clarity lifted people up and changed lives and saved lives all over the globe.

Jimmy Carter was just as courageous in his battle against cancer as he was in everything in his life. Cancer was a common bond between our two families, as with many other families.

And our son Beau died—when he died, Jimmy and Rosalynn were there to help us heal. Jimmy knew the ravages of the disease too well. He lost his father, his brother, his sisters to this terrible disease.

So when Jimmy was diagnosed, we did our best to comfort him. We met with him down in Plains. We met with—anyway. We talked and shared our beliefs that, as a nation, we have the talent—we have the talent—and the resources to one day end cancer as we know it if we make the investments. He believed that like I do.

I'll always cherish having seen Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter together. Theirs was a love affair of the ages. While we'll miss them both dearly, we do take some solace—and our kids were saying it—that they're united once again and are going to remain forever in each—in our hearts. But they're together again.

The entire Carter family: On behalf of the world, the whole Nation, we send our whole heartfelt sympathies and gratitude—our gratitude for sharing President Carter with us for so many years.

You know, Jimmy Carter stands up as a model of what it means to live a life of meaning and purpose; a life of principle, faith, and humility. He—his life dedicated to others.

You know, he was like my dad. He thought that—he'd say: "Joey, a job is about a lot more than a paycheck. It's about dignity—your dignity. It's about being able to look your kid in the eye and say, 'Honey, everything is going to be okay.'"

He believed as I do and many of you do that that's absolutely possible. It's within our grasp to do that. It's not that hard.

In his life, he served the Nation in the Navy. He led the State of Georgia. He became President and a beloved statesman all over the world.

But to know his core, you need to know he never stopped being a Sunday school teacher at that Baptist Church in Plains, Georgia.

In today's world, some look at Jimmy Carter and see a man of a bygone era, with honesty and character, faith and humility. It mattered. But I don't believe it's a bygone era.

I see a man not only of our times, but for all times. Someone who embodied the most fundamental human values we can never let slip away, although sometimes it seems like it is. We may never see his like again. We'd all do well to try to be a little more like Jimmy Carter.

You know, my mom—you've heard me say this before—used to say, "Bravery lives in every heart, and someday it will be summoned." Every time it was summoned, he stepped up—every time—politically, personally, morally.

And you know, everything—the one thing I admired most about him: He thought and believed—and he really did believe this, and I do as well—that everybody deserves an even shot. No guarantees, just a shot. Everybody deserves a shot. And you know, I—he gave an awful lot of people a chance.

So, as I said, I was an admirer. I consider myself a friend. Kept in touch with him. And it's something—I was going to tell you a story his son told me, but that would be inappropriate. Maybe he should—he'll tell you. But—about—he—I think he's happy. I think he's happy with Rosalynn.

So—

### *Death of Former President Carter*

*Q.* Mr. President, as you think about your post-Presidency, is there anything about Jimmy Carter's time after leaving office that inspires you for the years ahead?

*The President.* Yes. Never give up hope. Never give up hope. I mean it from the bottom of my heart.

So much negativism out there. I know you're tired of hearing me say it over the last 4 years. But, folks, there's nothing beyond our capacity. Nothing beyond our capacity if we do it together, and I mean it. I mean it—that he believed it.

### *The President's Memories of Former President Carter*

*Q.* Sir, what is your fondest memory of Jimmy Carter?

*The President.* I have a number of them. I guess maybe my fondest memory of Jimmy Carter was when he grabbed me by the arm and said, "I need you to help me with my campaign." And I said, "I've only been around a couple years, Mr. Governor." He said, "No, it will make a difference." I said, "I'm not sure it will." He said, "No, it will."

When I endorsed him for President, I told him why I was endorsing him and that it was not only his policies, but his character, his decency, the honor he communicated to everyone.

And—but he was also very, very—he and Rosalynn were very kind to Jill and me when we lost our son Beau. They were there for us.

And—I don't know. It's a—I think that what Jimmy Carter is an example of is just simple decency—simple decency. And I think that's what the rest of the world looks to America for.

*The President's Communications With the Carter Family*

*Q.* So what members of the family have you spoken to?

*The President.* I think I've spoken to all the children. There may be some I—who I just got off the phone with. I think there were—how many on the phone. But I think—and I've spoken to some of the friends of the family. They're helping with the services.

And my team is working with his family and others to see to it that he is remembered appropriately here in the United States and around the world. There's a process going—we're going through that will take a little time. It's—to set up this—I announced earlier today we're going to do a major service in Washington, DC, on behalf of him. That's a formal procedure that's underway. So I'm sure we'll be talking a lot to the family between now and then.

My main contact is Chip.

*Lessons From Former President Carter for President-Elect Donald J. Trump*

*Q.* Is there any lessons that you want President Trump to take from President Carter?

*The President.* Decency. Decency. Decency. Everybody deserves a shot. Everybody.

Can you imagine Jimmy Carter walking by someone who needed something and just keep walking? Can you imagine Jimmy Carter referring to someone by the way they look or the way they talk? I can't. I can't.

You know, I think the end of the deal here is that one of the reasons why we're looked to by the rest of the world—for the bulk of our—our nationhood, we've laid out what our values are. We said what we believe. It's not just in the Declaration—"We hold these truths to be self-evident"—but there's a feeling. The rest of the world looks to us—looks to us. And he was worth looking to.

So thank you very much. Appreciate it.

[*At this point, the President left the podium. As he exited, he spoke as follows.*]

Sorry for—[*inaudible*]. Took a while to connect the whole family in one call.

*Q.* No worries. Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:23 p.m. at the Company House Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to John W. "Jack" Carter, James E. "Chip" Carter III, Donnel J. Carter, and Amy L. Carter, children of former President Carter. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 30.

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