

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2025

Remarks to the United States Conference of Mayors

January 17, 2025

[Prior to his remarks, the President was presented with the U.S. Conference of Mayors' Award for Distinguished Public Service.]

Hello, hello, hello.

Mayor Ginther, thank you very much—from Columbus, Ohio—for your leadership of this conference.

Please have a seat if you have one. *[Laughter]*

And thank you, Tom Cochran, for your remarkable stewardship of the U.S. Conference of Mayors for decades.

I want to give a special thanks to his wife Clarita *[Carlotta; White House correction]*, who I just met. She's running around here. Feeling—after she broke her hip. Are you doing well?

Anyway, Tom, you and I have something in common: We both married way above our station.

To my hometown mayor, John Carney—John, where are you out there?—*[applause]*—Wilmington, Delaware. Thank you, John. This guy is a true public servant. He just finished 8 years as a great Governor, and then decided to run for mayor.

A special thanks to another great friend, the mayor of my second home, Scranton, Pennsylvania, Paige Cagnetti. Paige—*[applause]*.

It's an honor to receive this award. As—I measure the significance of an award based on the character and the consequence of the organization bestowing the award. The U.S. Conference of Mayors is an organization of character and consequence.

And thanks to all of you, for your partnership in the progress we've made together these 4 years.

I must say a big reason we got so much done is because all former mayors who served in my administration: Steve Benjamin, Pete Buttigieg, Marcia Fudge, Keisha Lance Bottoms, Mitch Landrieu, Tom Vilsack, Marty Walsh.

And thanks to Tom Perez, a guy like me, who—who has—has been my point person for all of this, but he's a county guy. I—uh, that's tougher, man. *[Laughter]* I don't know, man. *[Laughter]*

This is one of the last events that I'll be doing as President. And the reason I chose to be here is because of—the first things I did as President was to speak to this conference.

You know, as many of you—maybe you weren't here then, but many of you know I started my career as a local councilman. I only ran for the Senate because it was too damn hard being a local councilman. *[Laughter]*

You know, people know where you live. *[Laughter]* They think you can solve every problem. Think you have more money than you do and more power than you do.

You're on the front lines, answering key questions of their lives: "Is my neighborhood safe?" "Is my kid going to have the good future to here in his hometown? Will there be jobs here?" So many other questions. It matters. What you do matters, matters, matters.

When we first met 4 years ago, the pandemic was raging, and our economy was reeling. Four years later, our Nation and our cities have emerged stronger than were when entered the crisis.

And I come here today for a couple reasons. First, my administration released a report summarizing the impact of our work together to invest in America.

It all started with the American Rescue Plan—one of the most significant recovery packages in our history—to get us out of the immediate crisis of the pandemic and save thousands of lives. One of the most important decisions I made was to send money directly to you—directly to you.

I've been a local official—Governors are good guys and women, when you send it to the State legislatures, they divide in up before it gets to you. It goes directly to you when I do it, so you control the outcome.

Then we passed the "Invest in America" Act that's launching a new—a new—era of American possibilities. One of the greatest modernizations of infrastructure in our history we passed: new roads, bridges, clean water, affordable high-speed internet for every American. I know each of you can list so many examples of the projects in your communities. There are thousands of them.

We also made the biggest investment in fighting climate change ever in the history of the world, not just America—[*applause*]—because of you. And I think one thing we've all changed together, when I use the word—hear "climate," I think "jobs." I think "jobs" when I hear "climate."

We're creating hundreds of thousands of good-paying clean energy jobs. We've proven you don't have to choose between protecting the environment and growing the economy. You're doing both.

And we have to keep pushing forward and push forward faster. There is no time to waste.

I've been with you and your Governors to make [in the wake of; White House correction] the devastating hurricanes and floods and tornadoes and wildfires, like the catastrophic fires in—wildfires in California. Together, we pushed Congress for extra disaster relief funding to rebuild homes and businesses across the Carolinas, to cover the full cost of replacing the collapsed Key Bridge in Baltimore, and so much more.

At the same time, we've worked with you to upgrade the power grids, plant millions of trees, and build resilient communities to withstand— withstand—extreme weather, not only build but to build back better than before—build back better.

We also made the most significant investment in science and innovation. America invented the semiconductor, and now we're bringing those chip factories back home to America where they belong.

I've stood with you in Columbus, Syracuse, Phoenix, and many more "fields of dreams," where these fabs—these massive new factories the size of several football fields—are being built and I speak—as I speak. And they're going to create at least 125,000 good-paying jobs.

And the jobs in these fabs are going to pay over \$100,000 a year, and you don't need a college degree. You don't have to move from your hometown. You can stay where you are.

If I could pause for a minute, do you know what's going to happen as well? When you build these factories, they're going to have to build more barbershops, beauty salons. I'm not joking. We're going to build grocery stores. They're going to build drugstores. It grows communities in a big way.

We will soon be the only economy in the world to have all five of the top chip companies operating in America, creating thousands of jobs.

And for the first time in decades, these new factories are producing the most advanced chips right here in America. These aren't just fabs. These investments are creating opportunities for entire communities, for small business, creating even more jobs and so much more.

I've kept my commitment to be President for all of America, whether you voted for me or not. In fact, studies show my programs have delivered more for red States than blue States.

The results are clear: 16.6 million new jobs, the lowest average unemployment rate for 50 years—in 50 years, a record 21 million new applications to start new businesses. And every one of those applications is an act of hope in your communities. Wages are up. Inflation is down.

And we passed the most significant gun safety law in 30 years.

We're slashing overdose deaths—by 26 percent last year you did it—faster than ever—and seizing record amounts of fentanyl and making lifesaving Narcan available over the counter.

Violent crime is now at a 50-year low. Because of you.

The bottom line, you've produced an incredible 4 years. So much of we got done together will take time to see and feel though. But the seeds have been planted, will grow, and they'll bloom for decades to come. And not one—none of it could have happened without all of you. I'm not—that's not hyperbole. None of it.

You know, we're not finished yet. Earlier today I announced three major priorities that mark important progress in our country.

First, after fighting Big Pharma for decades as a Senator and then Vice President and as President, we finally beat Big Pharma. Instead of paying 400 bucks a month for insulin, seniors now pay \$35 a month.

But that wasn't the only thing that happened when we passed the bill. Starting this month, the total prescription drug costs for seniors is capped at \$2,000, no matter how expensive their drugs are, even expensive cancer drugs that cost \$10-, \$12-, \$14,000, they're not going to have to pay more than \$2,000 a year.

And finally, we gave Medicare the power to negotiate lower drug prices like the VA has been able to do for veterans all along. These negotiations are being implemented in phases. The first phase negotiated a lower price for the 10 most expensive drugs for seniors, covering drugs for blood clots and so much more.

And just this morning I announced the next phase—the next 15 drugs subject to—negotiation. Drugs that will treat cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and so much more, including Ozempia—excuse me, Ozempic.

[At this point, the President gestured toward his tongue.]

[Laughter] Hard to say. *[Laughter]* But it was—it really is an incredible drug.

These reforms just don't save seniors money. They save the American taxpayer \$160 billion—*[applause]*—the taxpayer over the next decade. Why? That \$160 billion in Medicare is

saving for negotiating lower drug prices with Big Pharma doesn't have to be paid out by the Government—\$160 billion.

Second, just over 100 years ago, a pioneering group of women proposed the Equal Rights Amendment to enshrine the principles of gender equality into our Constitution. Throughout my career, I've been clear: No one—no one—no one should be discriminated against based on their sex. And in order for the amendment to be ratified, it requires three-fourths of the States to ratify it. That benchmark was passed—benchmark was passed when Virginia ratified the ERA a few years ago.

Today I affirmed the Equal Rights Amendment to have cleared all the necessary hurdles to be added to the U.S. Constitution now. *[Applause]* The Equal Rights Amendment is the law of the land now. *[Applause]* It's the 28th amendment to the Constitution now. I consulted dozens of constitutional scholars to make sure there was all within the power to do this, and the fact is, we did.

And third, our cities are places for a second chance. Earlier today I commuted the sentence of nearly 2,500 convicted nonviolent drug offenders. These individuals are serving a disproportionately long and harsh sentence compared to the sentence they would receive had they committed the crime today. After spending too long behind bars, these individuals will soon be reunited with their families and communities.

With this action, I make no—I make no apology. I've issued more individual pardons and commutations than any President in U.S. history. There is more work to do, but when we—when we allow our justice system to be placed—a place for both accountability and mercy, it strengthens our cities and our Nation as well, in my view.

Let me close with this. Serving as your President has been the honor of my life. While my term in office is ending, the work continues. Your work continues.

In my farewell address 2 days ago, I talked how each of us must be guardians of democracy to restore the strength of our institutions and democracy. The Presidency, the Congress, the courts all have minimum requirements under the law to deal with those safeguards—and a free and independent press and, yes, local governments. The strength of our institutions depends on the character of leaders like you.

In our time together, I'm forever thankful to have seen the strength—your strength and your character, and we need it now more than ever. The magic of America has been, everyone has a fair shot, everyone deserves to—to be as determined to be able to be treated with dignity. No guarantees, just a fair shot.

I've always believed America be defined in one word. I remember being on Tibetan Plateau with Xi Jinping. I've met with him for over a—90 hours alone, traveled 17,000 miles with him, very significant differences. He looked at me, and he said, "Can you define America for me?" And I said, "In one word: possibilities."

We're the only nation in the world—only nation in the world—that's come out of every crisis we ever gotten in stronger than we went in. Only one. Look at the history.

And we're the only nation in the world that believes when we act together, there's not a damn thing we can't do. Only in America, we believe anything is possible.

We just have to remember who we are. We're the United States of America. Nothing is beyond our capacity when we do it together and act together.

And God bless you all. Keep working together. We need you. We need you. We need you. We need you. And may God protect our troops. Thank you so very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:56 p.m. at the Marriott Marquis Washington, DC, hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Andrew J. Ginther of Columbus, OH, who introduced the President; Senior Adviser and Director of the Office of Public Engagement Stephen K. Benjamin, in his former capacity as mayor of Columbia, SC; Secretary of Transportation Peter P.M. Buttigieg, in his former capacity as mayor of South Bend, IN; Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Marcia L. Fudge, in her former capacity as mayor of Warrensville Heights, OH; former Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms of Atlanta, GA, in her former capacity as Director of the Office of Public Engagement; former Mayor Mitchell J. Landrieu of New Orleans, LA, in his former capacity as Senior Adviser and Infrastructure Implementation Coordinator; Secretary of Agriculture Thomas J. Vilsack, in his former capacity as mayor of Mount Pleasant, IA; former Mayor Martin J. Walsh of Boston, MA, in his former capacity as Secretary of Labor; Director of the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs Thomas E. Perez, in his former capacity as a councilmember of Montgomery County, MD; and President Xi Jinping of China.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : U.S. Conference of Mayors.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Benjamin, Steven K.; Bottoms, Keisha Lance; Buttigieg, Peter P.M.; Carney, John C.; Cochran, Carlotta; Cochran, Tom; Cognito, Paige G.; Fudge, Marcia L.; Ginther, Andrew J.; Landrieu, Mitchell J.; Perez, Thomas E.; Vilsack, Thomas J.; Walsh, Martin J.; Xi Jinping.

Subjects: Broadband and wireless technologies; China, President; Climate change; Climate resilience, improvement efforts; Crime rates; Economic improvement; Economic stimulus legislation; Gun violence, prevention efforts; Household income and wages; Inflation; Infrastructure improvements; Insulin cost controls; Job creation and growth; Manufacturing industry, domestic investment; Maryland, collapse of Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore; Medicare and Medicaid programs; Natural disasters, response and recovery efforts; Office of Intergovernmental Affairs; Office of Public Engagement; Opioid epidemic, efforts to combat; Pardons and commutations; Prescription drug costs, reduction efforts; Renewable energy sources and technologies; Secretary of Agriculture; Secretary of Housing and Urban Development; Secretary of Transportation; Semiconductor manufacturing; U.S. Conference of Mayors; Women's rights and gender equality.

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