

BRIEFING ROOM

Remarks by President Biden at a Reception for the Democratic National Committee

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THE PRESIDENT: Well, first of all, I want to thank the kids. Thank you.

The card — you know what it says? It says, “Strong, kind, courageous. You lift up and have what it takes to be a great leader.” Then when you open it up inside, it says, “So proud of you and all the ways that make the world a better place to be.” You guys are really nice to give me that card. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

And by the way, I want to thank Henry for opening his home. Henry has been my friend for a long time. And the thing about Henry, he does what he says. Whatever he says, he does. And I appreciate it very much.

And, Mr. Mayor, thank you. I — we have a similar background, except I didn’t get arrested. (Laughter.) I got stopped a couple of times, but I — (laughter) — talked my way out of it. Only time I almost got arrested was I was trying to go see Nelson Mandela in South — in —

MAYOR ADAMS: South Africa.

THE PRESIDENT: — in South Africa and — and when I was at a Civil Rights march. That was the only two times. But I didn’t get arrested. They I didn’t think I was worth it. (Laughter.)

And I want to thank you all. Look, you know, this is not about whether I should be reelected. This is about whether or not we're going to win this off-year election. There's so darn much at stake.

I'm going to be short, because you're all standing; I'm not going to spend a lot of time. But let me just say a few things.

I agree with what the mayor said: We're at an inflection point in American history. What happens, Charlie, in the next two to three years is going to determine what this country looks like 30 years from now. Not — it's not hyperbole. That's a fact. There's so much at stake.

But the way I look at it is there's such an enormous, enormous, enormous opportunity. We're the only country in the world that's come out of crisis stronger than we've gone into it before it occurred. Strong — I'm not joking about this. I genuinely mean it.

And one of the things I knew, because I was Vice President for a long time — eight years — I knew — there's not a world leader I haven't met and don't know, just because of the nature of my job. And they're — you know, they're looking to America because it all depends on us.

I knew we were consequential. But I never realized until I became President — not a joke. It's not about me; it's about who we are as a people. I walk into a room and everything stops. I give you my word. Not because of Joe Biden. I mean it sincerely: because I'm President of the United States of America. Everything stops. Every world leader stops, Charlie, no matter who it is.

When I went to the first G7 meeting of the major economies in the world in England right — in February, after we got elected, I said, "America is back." And they looked at me and said, starting with Macron, "For how long?" (Laughter.) No, but think about it. Think about what I mean about an inflection point. "For how long?" They see everything.

Imagine — imagine if we got — turned on the television when we left here and found out that — or tomorrow morning — and found out that a group of 500 to 1,000 people broke down the doors of the British Parliament to try to overturn the election of the Prime Minister and killed a couple of cops in the process. Imagine what we'd think. Not a joke. Not a joke.

(Addressing an audience member.) How're you doing, man?

Not a joke. And so, that's kind of where we are. And we have such an enormous opportunity, though. We have such an enormous opportunity.

We're the only country in the world not based on geography, ethnicity, or anything else. We're the only country in the world based on an idea. Not a joke. Think about it. The only one in the world based on an idea. "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men and women are created equal endowed by their Creator," et cetera.

We've never lived up to it. But until the last guy, we've never walked away from it. We've never walked away from it before. And it means so damn much to the rest of the world. And it means so much to the American people.

I know I got criticized for the speech I made in Philadelphia. But guess what? You can't claim to be a democrat with a small "d" if you — if you celebrate violence against the government. You can't — no, you can't — (applause). You can't — you can't do it when, in fact, you engage in the kind of activities that are being engaged in.

So, here's what I did. When I — when I got elected, I decided I was going to try to change the — some of the fundamentals that we were dealing with.

And by the way, everybody says, you know, "Congratulations," though was pretty low bar to get over, you know. (Laughter.) But — but it left a whole hell of a lot of serious problems — a lot of serious problems.

Our institutions — think about it. When is the last time any of you can ever remember, no matter how old you are, when the institutions were in jeopardy — literally in jeopardy; when the American people wonder whether the courts could function; whether or not the Congress has any authority and what kind of authority it has; and the presidency — what's it all about? Is it about self-interest or is it about something beyond that?

And so, we started off and we passed the first Recovery Act. It was of enormous consequence. It's the reason why the mayor was able to keep cops on the beat, why you have ambulances, why you have all the things that we needed to do just to keep the country functioning.

And we didn't get one single Republican vote for it — not one single person voted for it at all.

We found ourselves in a situation where, after that, we decided what we're going to do is we're going to try to make it so that instead of just — I'm not a big trickle-down guy. A lot of you do very, very well. And you should do well. You deserve to do well. But I want to build this economy from the middle out and the bottom up, because when that happens — (applause). No, I mean it. When that happens, everybody does well. The wealthy do very, very well, and everybody does well.

But that's what we have — we have to begin to build confidence again, build confidence in the country — build confidence. And it's got to touch everybody. You can't walk away. And that's why, for example, when — I got some votes — I got 15 or so votes for the Re- — for the infrastructure bill.

You know, we used to invest 2 percent of our GDP in research and development. It got down to seven tenths of 1 percent. No wonder the rest of the world is ready to pass us by. Not a joke. Think about it. You're all — a lot of you are businessmen. Think about it.

I remember when — remember I got in trouble when I landed as Vice President at LaGuardia. And there was a sign at the top of the steps that they — going to the ticket counter, where the escalator — saying it'd be fixed by April in four months. This is the United States of America, for God's sake. What the hell are we doing? What have we become? Why do we think anything is not within our grasp?

So what we're doing is we're fundamentally changing. We're investing a billion 200 mill- — excuse me — a trillion 200 billion dollars to make us, once again, the leading economy in the world as it relates to our infrastructure. (Applause.)

But what it means — it's not just the infrastructure. We concluded that no child — these beautiful children, they should not be in a situation where 400,000 schools and — and daycare centers — you can't drink the water out of the fountain because of lead pipes. Think about that. Think about that.

We found ourselves in a circumstance where — I won't go on — go on too

long. But the generic point is we decided we're going to take hold. We're going to change things. And then I worked like hell to get the — you know, this legislation we call the Inflation Reduction Act.

Well, what that's all about is focusing on the things that are going to determine our economy. You know, we're in a situation where we decided we're going to not ignore the energy crisis. I've flown over more burned-down America, literally to the ground, in helicopters with governors than the entire state of New Jersey, every single inch. Not a joke. Never happened before.

Look what's happening now. Does anybody think we — global warming is not real? Does anybody — except our Republican friends? I'm not joking. No, I genuinely mean it. Think about it.

We've had, as we Catholics say, a bit of an epiphany here. People have figured it out. And so, we have money in there for climate change — \$368 billion. But it does — (applause) — over the next 10 years.

Because if we don't lead the world, who is going to do it? If we don't do it, what the hell happens? Where do we go? How do we — how do we transit all this?

And literally — literally, not figuratively — literally, it's the single greatest existential threat humanity has faced. It's more than a couple of hydrogen bombs, man. Not a joke. And you see what's happening right now across — around the world.

In addition to that, we decided that people should have healthcare and we should make sure that people — so we were able to provide for \$2,400 for a family of four under — if they didn't have insurance through the Affordable Care Act. Saved a whole lot of people.

We reduced child poverty by one quarter by having the Child — the Child Care Tax Credit, helping most people. (Applause.)

But my point is — my point is we did these and a lot of other things in this legislation which really mattered. And it changed the lives of people. But they're still in trouble. We still have inflation. We — although gas prices are down.

You know, by the way, in some states — in nine states now, you can buy gas for under two — under three bucks. Okay? We're down to \$3.47. (Applause.)

But my generic point is this, that you have, you know, a situation where we — you know, gun violence. The first major gun violence piece of legislation passed in a long time. We got it passed. We took on the NRA, and we beat them. And guess what? I'm going to ban assault weapons, I promise you. (Applause.) Not a joke. Not a joke. I did it once before. I did it once before.

And, by the way, more kids are getting killed on the street as I speak than the mass shootings that take place around the country in terms of the — the major issues.

So, folks, there's a lot. You know, and then you have the issue — the very issue of the right to vote and who determines the win- — who the winner is. That's why you hear these guys going out, intimidating the hell out of local officials who count the vote and declare who won and who lost. There's a lot at stake here. A whole lot at stake.

And so, what we did was we decided that — and there's a mild issue of choice out there. It's — it's interesting that, you know, you had the — Alito saying that, "Well, women..." — I got to — got to get the exact — well, I won't go through the exact quote, but, "Women have a right to show up and vote. They can change things." He ain't seen nothing yet. (Applause.) No, no, I — mark my words. It wasn't just Tennessee. Think about it. Think about it.

But it's about freedom. It's not just about choice. It's not just about choice. Roe was a balance, and it was there for over — almost 50 years. But now, mark my words, they're going after gay rights, LGBTQ. They're — it's going to — I guarantee you, promise you.

They're also going after everything from that to dealing with whether or not you're going to be able to do things that — well, any rate, it's just be basic — (laughter) — no, no, if I'm — contraception.

There used to be *Griswold vs. Connecticut*. Even in the privacy of your own bedroom, you couldn't make a decision. There's active discussions ma- — going on now. With the people running for — and look at the people running for the House and Senate now. Look at who they are.

And when I talk about the MAGA crowd, I'm not just talking about Trump. There — I've never saw a party so intimidated before.

I promised I'd never name — give the names, and I never will, but there are six Republican senators who came to me, said, "I know you're right, Joe, but I just can't vote with you because I'll get defeated in the primary." Not a lot of political courage, but it's a reality. It's a reality.

And so, I guess what I'm trying to say is we've done a lot of really consequential things for people, but we've got a long, long way to go.

We're also in a situation where — you know, we have a circumstance where, you know, when we passed the Recovery Act, we ended up being able — there were 2 million people in America had gotten a vaccination. We have over 230 million people are vaccinated. (Applause.)

But, by the way, if you haven't gotten the booster, get it. There's a lot of people — there's not — the pandemic is, quote, "over," as I got criticized for saying. But it basically is not where it was.

But guess what? The — over 65 to 80 percent of the people who died of the 5,000 dy- — dying never got their shot, never got their booster shot. And it can be — save lives.

We're in a situation where, you know, the American people don't agree on a whole lot of things, but they do agree on basic fundamental freedoms.

And, folks, you know, we're finding a situation where — you know, the CHIPS and Science Act. As I said, we used to invest 2 percent of our GDP in research and development. Now it's seven tenths of 1 percent. This kicks it back up to 1 percent, but we got to get competing again. We got to remember who the devil we are, the United States of America. We've been the fount of most change that's taken place around the world.

That's why I changed — I committed that I was going to do something about cancer. And I will — we will do something about cancer because (inaudible). (Applause.) Not a joke.

And we changed the circumstance in which the research and development is

going to take place. We find — I got my Republican — the one thing I get everybody to agree on in the — in the House and Senate, Charlie, is cancer. It's something that Democrats and Republicans agree on.

(An audience member's cellphone rings.)

That's probably Trump calling again. (Laughter.)

But all — but all kidding aside, we're in a situation where, you know, we — we passed the PACT Act. Everybody says, "What's that all about?" Well, I made a commitment a long time ago. And I made a commitment that we're going to make sure — and my State of the Union — we're going to — four things we'd agree on.

One is take care of our veterans. Well, guess what? Thousands of them — thousands of them are exposed to burn pits. I was in and out of Afghanistan and Iraq over 38 times when I was Vice President. My son lived in a — it's not about my son, but my son lived less than, as I used to talk about it, 300 yards from his hooch, where he slept at night in Iraq for a year — 10-foot — 8-, 9-, 10-foot pit, the size of a football field, filled with everything from jet fuel to human waste, everything in there. Just like you saw what happened in 9/11 with the — all those firefighters who went in.

And so we finally got it passed, but it was close call whether Republicans were going to support it. But it's going to — we have — I think we all — we have a lot of obligations and only one truly sacred obligation: prepare those we send to war and prepare — take care of them and their families when they come home. That's a sacred obligation. (Applause.) We're finally meeting that obligation.

So, look, you know, as I said, gas prices are down a buck 30. They're going down even further — the Inflation Reduction Act. We finally took on Pharma. And I know a lot of you how — may be invested in Pharma. We finally took them on. And we finally beat them. We beat them flat out. (Applause.)

Here's the deal: The idea that we are in a situation where we are — we're finally allowing Medicare to negotiate certain drug prices. We have the highest drug prices of any nation in the world — in the world. And, you know, we find ourselves in a situation where it's awful hard to overcome the

limitations that exist.

But, you know, what? We also — you know, the whole idea. And all — we did all this — and I’m going to end — we did all this at the same time.

We cut the deficit by \$350 billion in my first year. And this year, we cut the deficit, by the end of the fiscal year, 1 trillion 500 billion dollars. (Applause.)

By the way, that — that’s not hyperbole. That’s — that’s a fact. And so, you know, we find ourselves in circumstances where — this is a point I should make at the beginning. My dad used to have an expression. He’d say, “Joey, don’t compare me to the Almighty. Compare me to the alternative.”
(Laughter.)

Think about what the alternative is. Can any one of you name what the Republican platform is, going into this off-year election?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Being against you. Being against everything you do.

THE PRESIDENT: That’s right. And by the way —

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Being against gays. Being against immigrants.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: They don’t have a single policy.

THE PRESIDENT: But here’s what they do — but they have announced what the — the number one objective of the Minority Leader is to do away with Inflation Reduction Act, which means raising prices for drugs, for everything. Okay? Number one.

Number two, yes, you have (inaudible) Scott, who heads up the Republican reelect campaign for the Senate. And you know what he says? Every five years, Social Security, Medicare, and Medicare — Medicaid should be in the ballot. If it’s not affirmatively revote — voted, it’s out of existence.

And then along comes the senator from Wisconsin. He said, “No, that should be every year.”

Not — I mean, this is not — I mean, would you believe this? And the vast majority of people who rely on Social Security, they paid for it. They paid for

it. And they want to — this is literally not a joke what they're proposing.

I won't go through the whole platform because it's — it's all the same thing, but here's the end of the — and, you know, and then you have Lindsey Graham — as my mother would say, "God love him." (Laughter.)

You got Lindsey Graham talking about nationalizing the — the decision to overrule Roe, make it a national policy. Well, the only good news is I'm still President for two more years. They can do it, and I'll veto it. (Applause.) But really and truly.

And, folks, look, you know, we — you know, we — we got a lot more to do. And I'll end with this: You know, I think we should pass the so-called DISCLOSE Act, which is coming up. The billions of dollars — literally over billions of dollars in hidden money. You can contribute, but you got to say who's contributing, because there's a significant influx of money coming from foreign sources into these elections right now.

And secondly, I think — you know, we're going to make sure we get the assault weapons ban passed.

And there's no reason why — we've shown that if you send a kid to school — not — not to daycare, to school — at age three and four and five, you increased by 56 percent the likelihood they'll go all the way through, all 12 years, and go beyond.

The idea that we — if we — one of the reasons we led the world for so long: At the turn of the 20th century, we were the only nation in the world that had 12 years of free education for everyone — everyone. But the rest of the world has caught up and passed us.

And so the idea — and we can afford it — that we don't start — and we find — you know — you know all the statistics; I won't bore you with them. But if you come from a broken home, where a mom is an addict or a dad is in trouble or whatever, you know, you end up — the child in that home — and there are very few books in those homes, if any. Well, guess what? The child hears from — coming from that family, a million fewer words spoken before they get to first grade. What the hell do you expect them to have? But if you send them to school — not daycare, school — it increases exponentially the prospects of them succeeding.

And so, there's so much we can do, and we can afford to do it. And we can afford to do it well.

I'm not even talking — I haven't gotten into foreign policy, because find me a country, other than Russia and China, that thinks that Trump is someone they should be hanging out with. (Laughter.) No, I'm not joking. Think — think about where we are. Think about where we are.

And so, folks, I just think there's enormous opportunities — enormous opportunities. But this isn't about 2024. This about 2022 — 2022. (Applause.)

If we lose this election, if we don't — if we lose control of the House and Senate, we have a different world. I'll be spending all my time with the veto pen, but it won't be a lot of initiatives.

So, thank you for all you've done. Thank you for what you continue to do.

There was much more I planned on saying, but you've been standing much too long. (Laughter.) And so I'm going to — as my mother would say, "Hush up, Joey. Time to stop."

So, thank you all very much for listening. (Applause.)

7:41 P.M. EDT