

Joseph R. Biden (b. 1942) is an American Democratic politician. He has served as Vice President from 2009 to 2017 and as President of the United States since 2021. The speech was given in front of an important historic building. It was televised during prime time two months before the midterm elections in 2022.

Joe Biden

Remarks by President Biden on the Continued Battle for the Soul of the Nation

My fellow Americans, please, if you have a seat, take it. I speak to you tonight from sacred ground in America: Independence Hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

This is where America made its Declaration of Independence to the world more than two centuries ago with an idea, unique among nations, that in America, we're all created equal.

5 This is where the United States Constitution was written and debated.

This is where we set in motion the most extraordinary experiment of self-government the world has ever known with three simple words: "We, the People."¹ "We, the People."

10 These two documents and the ideas they embody – equality and democracy – are the rock upon which this nation is built. They are how we became the greatest nation on Earth. They are why, for more than two centuries, America has been a beacon to the world.

But as I stand here tonight, equality and democracy are under assault. We do ourselves no favor to pretend otherwise.

15 So tonight, I have come to this place where it all began to speak as plainly as I can to the nation about the threats we face, about the power we have in our own hands to meet these threats, and about the incredible future that lies in front of us if only we choose it.

We must never forget: We, the people, are the true heirs of the American experiment that began more than two centuries ago.

20 We, the people, have burning inside each of us the flame of liberty that was lit here at Independence Hall – a flame that lit our way through abolition, the Civil War, Suffrage, the Great Depression, world wars, Civil Rights².

¹ *We the people*: the first words of the Constitution of the United States of America

² *abolition...Civil Rights*: events in American history

That sacred flame still burns now in our time as we build an America that is more prosperous, free, and just.

That is the work of my presidency, a mission I believe in with my whole soul.

But first, we must be honest with each other and with ourselves.

Too much of what's happening in our country today is not normal.

25 Donald Trump and the MAGA³ Republicans represent an extremism that threatens the very foundations of our republic.

Now, I want to be very clear – very clear up front: Not every Republican, not even the majority of Republicans, are MAGA Republicans. Not every Republican embraces their extreme ideology.

I know because I've been able to work with these mainstream Republicans.

30 But there is no question that the Republican Party today is dominated, driven, and intimidated by Donald Trump and the MAGA Republicans, and that is a threat to this country.

These are hard things.

But I'm an American President – not the President of red America or blue America⁴, but of all America.

35 And I believe it is my duty – my duty to level with you, to tell the truth no matter how difficult, no matter how painful.

And here, in my view, is what is true: MAGA Republicans do not respect the Constitution. They do not believe in the rule of law. They do not recognize the will of the people.

40 They refuse to accept the results of a free election. And they're working right now, as I speak, in state after state to give power to decide elections in America to partisans and cronies, empowering election deniers to undermine democracy itself.

MAGA forces are determined to take this country backwards – backwards to an America where there is no right to choose, no right to privacy, no right to contraception, no right to marry who you love.

They promote authoritarian leaders, and they fan the flames of political violence that are a threat to our personal rights, to the pursuit of justice, to the rule of law, to the very soul of this country.

45 They look at the mob that stormed the United States Capitol on January 6th⁵ – brutally attacking law enforcement – not as insurrectionists who placed a dagger to the throat of our democracy, but they look at them as patriots.

And they see their MAGA failure to stop a peaceful transfer of power after the 2020 election as preparation for the 2022 and 2024 elections.

50 They tried everything last time to nullify the votes of 81 million people. This time, they're determined to succeed in thwarting the will of the people. [...]

³ abbreviation for *Make America Great Again*. A slogan used by Trump in the 2016 presidential campaign

⁴ *red America...blue America*: Republican and Democratic America, respectively

⁵ *Jan 6th*: attempt to prevent Joe Biden from becoming president

For a long time, we've told ourselves that American democracy is guaranteed, but it's not.

We have to defend it, protect it, stand up for it – each and every one of us.

55 That's why tonight I'm asking our nation to come together, unite behind the single purpose of defending our democracy regardless of your ideology.

We're all called, by duty and conscience, to confront extremists who will put their own pursuit of power above all else.

60 Democrats, independents, mainstream Republicans: We must be stronger, more determined, and more committed to saving American democracy than MAGA Republicans are to – to destroying American democracy.

We, the people, will not let anyone or anything tear us apart. Today, there are dangers around us we cannot allow to prevail. We hear – you've heard it – more and more talk about violence as an acceptable political tool in this country. It's not. It can never be an acceptable tool.

So I want to say this plain and simple: There is no place for political violence in America. Period. None. Ever.

65 We saw law enforcement brutally attacked on January the 6th. We've seen election officials, poll workers – many of them volunteers of both parties – subjected to intimidation and death threats. And – can you believe it? – FBI agents just doing their job as directed, facing threats to their own lives from their own fellow citizens.

70 On top of that, there are public figures – today, yesterday, and the day before – predicting and all but calling for mass violence and rioting in the streets.

This is inflammatory. It's dangerous. It's against the rule of law. And we, the people, must say: This is not who we are. [...]

MAGA Republicans look at America and see carnage and darkness and despair. They spread fear and lies – lies told for profit and power.

75 But I see a very different America – an America with an unlimited future, an America that is about to take off. I hope you see it as well. Just look around.

I believed we could lift America from the depths of COVID, so we passed the largest economic recovery package since Franklin Delano Roosevelt⁶. And today, America's economy is faster, stronger than any other advanced nation in the world. We have more to go.

80 I believed we could build a better America, so we passed the biggest infrastructure investment since President Dwight D. Eisenhower⁷. And we've now embarked on a decade of rebuilding the nation's roads, bridges, highways, ports, water systems, high-speed Internet, railroads.

I believed we could make America safer, so we passed the most significant gun safety law since President Clinton⁸.

⁶ *Franklin Delano Roosevelt*: (1882-1945) American president 1933-1945

⁷ *President Dwight D. Eisenhower*: (1890-1969) American president 1953-1961

⁸ *President Clinton*: William Jefferson Clinton (b.1946) American president 1993-2001

85 I believed we could go from being the highest cost of prescriptions in the world to making prescription drugs and healthcare more affordable, so we passed the most significant healthcare reforms since President Obama⁹ signed the Affordable Care Act¹⁰.

And I believed we could create – we could create a clean energy future and save the planet, so we passed the most important climate initiative ever, ever, ever.

90 The cynics and the critics tell us nothing can get done, but they are wrong. There is not a single thing America cannot do – not a single thing beyond our capacity if we do it together.

It's never easy. But we're proving that in America, no matter how long the road, progress does come.

95 Look, I know the last year – few years have been tough. But today, COVID no longer controls our lives. More Americans are working than ever. Businesses are growing. Our schools are open. Millions of Americans have been lifted out of poverty. Millions of veterans once exposed to toxic burn pits¹¹ will now get what they deserve for their families and the compensation.

American manufacturing has come alive across the Heartland¹², and the future will be made in America no matter what the white supremacists and the extremists say.

100 I made a bet on you, the American people, and that bet is paying off. Proving that from darkness – the darkness of Charlottesville¹³, of COVID, of gun violence, of insurrection – we can see the light. Light is now visible.

Light that will guide us forward not only in words, but in actions – actions for you, for your children, for your grandchildren, for America.

105 Even in this moment, with all the challenges we face, I give you my word as a Biden: I've never been more optimistic about America's future. Not because of me, but because of who you are.

We're going to end cancer as we know it. Mark my words.

We are going to create millions of new jobs in a clean energy economy.

We're going to think big. We're going to make the 21st century another American century because the world needs us to.

110 That's where we need to focus our energy – not in the past, not on divisive culture wars, not on the politics of grievance, but on a future we can build together. [...]

My fellow Americans, America is an idea – the most powerful idea in the history of the world. And it beats in the hearts of the people of this country. It beats in all of our hearts. It unites America. It is the American creed.

⁹ *President Obama*: (b.1961) American president 2009-2017

¹⁰ *Affordable Care Act*: national healthcare act, 2010

¹¹ *burn pits*: area on a military base where toxic materials are burned

¹² The American Midwest

¹³ in 2017 a white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, resulted in riots

115 The idea that America guarantees that everyone be treated with dignity. It gives hate no safe harbor. It installs in everyone the belief that no matter where you start in life, there's nothing you can't achieve.

That's who we are. That's what we stand for. That's what we believe. And that is precisely what we are doing: opening doors, creating new possibilities, focusing on the future. And we're only just beginning.

Our task is to make our nation free and fair, just and strong, noble and whole.

120 And this work is the work of democracy – the work of this generation. It is the work of our time, for all time.

We can't afford to have – leave anyone on the sidelines. We need everyone to do their part. So speak up. Speak out. Get engaged. Vote, vote, vote.

125 And if we all do our duty – if we do our duty in 2022 and beyond, then ages still to come will say we – all of us here – we kept the faith. We preserved democracy. We heeded not our worst instincts but our better angels. And we proved that, for all its imperfections, America is still the beacon to the world, an ideal to be realized, a promise to be kept.

There is nothing more important, nothing more sacred, nothing more American. That's our soul. That's who we truly are. And that's who must – we must always be.

130 And I have no doubt – none – that this is who we will be and that we'll come together as a nation. That we'll secure our democracy. That for the next 200 years, we'll have what we had the past 200 years: the greatest nation on the face of the Earth.

We just need to remember who we are. We are the United States of America. The United States of America.

135 And may God protect our nation. And may God protect all those who stand watch over our democracy. God bless you all. Democracy. Thank you.

(2022)