

# [***Biden visits his Pennsylvania hometown to call for more taxes on the rich and cast Trump as elitist***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BTK-D7W1-JC5B-G01X-00000-00&context=1516831)

The Associated Press

April 17, 2024 Wednesday 12:56 AM GMT

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**Section:** BUSINESS NEWS; DOMESTIC NEWS; POLITICAL NEWS; STATE AND REGIONAL

**Length:** 1191 words

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**Dateline:** SCRANTON, Pa.

**Body**

SCRANTON, Pa. — President Joe Biden made a nostalgic return to the house where he grew up in working-class [*Scranton*](https://apnews.com/article/biden-taxes-2024-election-trump-11a48ecc31a99c2720897abc6b022d39) on Tuesday, kicking off three days of campaigning across Pennsylvania by calling for higher taxes on the rich and casting Donald Trump as an out-of-touch elitist.

When the Democratic president wasn't trying to blunt the populist appeal of his Republican predecessor's comeback bid, he appeared to savor his trip down memory lane. He lingered longer than expected at his childhood home, where an American flag waved softly in the wind on the front porch and neighbors crowded the sidewalk under flowering trees and a pale blue sky. The president later posed for photos with children, some wearing school uniforms, in the backyard.

Biden is looking to gain ground in a key battleground state while Trump spends much of the week in a New York City courtroom for [*his first criminal trial*](https://apnews.com/article/trump-hush-money-criminal-trial-new-york-dd1a8dcc063b7ad0fbe14af6e8724c2f). Biden heads to Pittsburgh on Wednesday and Philadelphia on Thursday, but he started his travels in Scranton, which has long played [*a starring role*](https://apnews.com/article/election-2020-joe-biden-donald-trump-pennsylvania-elections-48ecc3dfb11a91020aef5dc3fb8d22de) in his political autobiography.

On Tuesday, the city of 75,000 provided a backdrop for Biden's efforts to reframe the conversation around the economy, which has left many Americans feeling sour about their financial situations at a time of [*stubborn inflation and elevated interest rates*](https://apnews.com/article/inflation-prices-rates-economy-federal-reserve-biden-f02b969d1b44a7ccb0385be03f766de0) despite low unemployment.

The president said he wanted to make the tax code fairer, keeping more money in Americans' pockets, while criticizing Trump, a billionaire himself, as a tool of wealthy interests.

“When I look at the economy, I don’t look at it through the eyes of Mar-a-Lago. I look at it through the eyes of Scranton," Biden said, contrasting his hometown with the Florida estate where Trump lives.

Biden has proposed a 25% percent minimum tax rate for billionaires. He added that taxes are “how we invest in the country.”

“Scranton values or Mar-a-Lago values," Biden said. "These are the competing visions for our economy that raise questions of fundamental fairness at the heart of this campaign.” He spoke at a community center from a stage flanked by a banner reading “Tax Fairness for All Americans.”

The president said decades of Republicans policies that cut taxes for the wealthy with the idea of stimulating the economy “failed America, and Donald Trump embodies that failure." He scoffed that Trump's background taught him little more than “the best way to get rich is to inherit it,” and he jabbed at the sharp fall in market value of the former president's social media platform, Truth Social.

"If Trump’s stock in Truth Social, his company, drops any lower, he might do better under my tax plan than his,” Biden quipped.

Michael Whatley, chair of the Republican National Committee, blamed Biden for inflation in a statement about his trip.

“It’s no wonder why Pennsylvanians will vote to make America affordable again and elect President Trump in November,” he said.

Near the end of Biden's speech, he sharply criticized Trump for reportedly calling veterans who died in combat [*“suckers and losers."*](https://apnews.com/article/election-2020-ap-top-news-politics-b823f2c285641a4a09a96a0b195636ed) He said the comments, which Trump has denied, were “disqualifying,” adding, "Thank God I wasn’t standing next to him.”

Later in the day, Biden spoke at a training session for grassroots organizers at a union hall, telling attendees: "We have to win. It gets down to old-fashioned ***politics***. It gets down to knocking on doors.”

Throughout the multiple stops, there were paeans to Biden's roots in this town, where crowds lined the streets to cheer his motorcade. Trump flags were rare, and there was only a smattering of protests against Biden's support for Israel's military operations in Gaza.

“Joe Biden has never forgotten where he’s from,” Scranton Mayor Paige Cognetti said before Biden’s speech at the community center. Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro echoed the idea, saying, “This is a guy who has never forgotten the people he grew up with.”

“They’re the people on his mind, and they’re the people in his heart,” Shapiro said.

When Biden took the stage at the community center, the crowd chanted “four more years" before he started speaking. Biden smiled and joked, “I think I should go home now." Then he quickly added, "except I am already home.”

Biden grew up in Scranton’s Green Ridge neighborhood until his father struggled to find work and moved the family to Delaware when the future president was 10.

Although Delaware eventually became the launching pad for Biden’s political career, he often returned to Scranton, including visiting his childhood home on Election Day 2020.

During that campaign, Biden described the presidential campaign as [*“Scranton versus Park Avenue.”*](https://apnews.com/article/election-2020-wisconsin-pennsylvania-joe-biden-new-york-75cdea45883d7dc2f7a5a9699fa5b173) His reelection team is framing this year’s race in a similar way, releasing [*a video*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hn3uH-db1R0) that calls for promoting the middle class and features interviews with his cousin, a grade school classmate and a county commissioner.

Christopher Borick, director of the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion, described Scranton as a “mythical place in political culture" that will provide a test for Biden's political appeal.

“It’s an area that, on paper, aligns perfectly with the populist gains of the Republican Party during the Trump era," Borick said.

However, Biden won the city and the surrounding county in 2020. If Biden is able to carry Scranton and similar places again this year, as well as limit Trump's winning margins in rural areas, he may be able to secure another victory in Pennsylvania.

Sam DeMarco, chair of the Republican Party in Allegheny County, where Pittsburgh is located, said “across the board, it costs more to live today than it did when Joe Biden came to office.”

“These are the things that families feel,” he said. “And a scripted appearance by the president is not going to change that.”

As president, Trump signed into law in 2017 a series of tax breaks that [*disproportionately benefit the rich*](https://apnews.com/article/north-america-donald-trump-ap-top-news-laws-politics-14611d629c8b4e86818a39df96b86e5f). Many of the cuts expire at the end of 2025, and Biden wants to keep a majority of them to fulfill his promise that no one earning less than $400,000 will pay more taxes.

However, he also wants to raise $4.9 trillion in revenue over 10 years with higher taxes on the wealthy and corporations. His platform includes a “billionaire’s tax,” which would set a minimum rate of 25% on the income of the richest Americans.

Biden's Pennsylvania swing overlaps with the start of Trump's first criminal trial, presenting an opportunity and a challenge for Democrats.

Trump is defending himself against criminal charges for [*a scheme to suppress allegations of affairs*](https://apnews.com/article/trump-hush-money-criminal-trial-manhattan-1afaeefc09b1d4c152b0bf6e8242d72b) with a porn actor and a Playboy model. Biden's team has quietly embraced the contrast of the former president sequestered in a courtroom while the current president has free rein to focus on economic issues that are top of mind for voters.

However, the juxtaposition becomes less helpful if Trump soaks up the country’s attention during the first-ever criminal trial of a former president.

Biden didn't mention Trump's legal problems. Instead, he told the community center crowd that he learned in Scranton that “money doesn't determine your worth.”

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Associated Press writers Josh Boak and Will Weissert contributed to this report from Washington.

**Load-Date:** April 16, 2024

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