

*Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023*

**Remarks in an Exchange With Reporters Prior to Departure for Covington,  
Kentucky**

*January 4, 2023*

*House of Representatives Vote for Speaker/Infrastructure*

*Q.* Mr. President, what do you make of the fight for Speaker right now?

*The President.* With regards to the fight over Speaker, I—that's not my province. I just think it's a little embarrassing it's taken so long in the way they're dealing with one another. And the rest of the world is looking. And they're looking at, you know, can we get our act together?

And—but I—what I'm focused on is getting things done. And one of the things I'm going down to Kentucky and Ohio today is to demonstrate we can get things done. We passed an enormous bill bipartisanly, and it works. And we're starting off—the first major initiative we're announcing today is a billion dollars.

And this is—we can't be the number-one economy in the world unless you have the number-one infrastructure in the world.

*Q.* Who do you think is going to——

*Q.* [*Inaudible*]—the priority in Congress——

*The President's Reelection Plans*

*Q.* When should we anticipate an announcement on your reelection?

*The President.* In time.

*Q.* Mr. President——

*Infrastructure Investment*

*Q.* In time? And why is it so important to go to Kentucky today?

*The President.* Why is it so important?

*Q.* Yes.

*The President.* We worked like hell to get the most significant infrastructure bill in our history of the United States, other than the Eisenhower Interstate Highway System.

And we're about to change—look, I think our administration has begun to move the economy in the direction where we're investing in America again. We're the leading economy in the world. How can you remain the leading economy in the world absent having the greatest infrastructure in the world? And it's just the beginning.

*House of Representatives Vote for Speaker*

*Q.* And how worried would you be if the stalemate in the House goes on after today about the ability of Congress and you to govern?

*The President.* Well, not me. Congress to govern. Congress.

*Q.* Mr. President——

*Death of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI*

*Q.* On Pope Benedict. Pope Benedict.

*Q.* Mr. President, one more.

*Q.* What did he mean—what did Pope Benedict mean to you as a Catholic?

*The President.* Well, I had an opportunity to spend some time with Pope Benedict, a couple hours. And he was a great—and it reminded me of going back to theology class.

*Q.* Mr. President——

*The President.* We spoke about Aquinas and about "Summa Theologica," about the whole litany. I found him to be relaxing and very rational.

And he was a more conservative view within the Catholic realm than I have and vis-a-vis Pope—the present Pope, in terms of his philosophy, his view. But I admired him. I thought he was a fine man.

*Q.* You're not attending his funeral tomorrow though. Why?

*The President.* No. Well, why do you think?

*Q.* Well, that's what you tell me.

*The President.* You know why. I can't——

*Q.* You can tell me, sir.

*The President.* No, the reason I'm not attending the funeral tomorrow is because it takes an entourage of a thousand people to show up—not literally. But we would move everything in the wrong direction.

I inquired about that. And they're—people are sending mostly their apostolic delegates, their—the folks in Rome. That's what we're going to do. We would just get in the way.

But I've made my views known. I'm—at any rate, I think he was a fine man.

*Q.* Thank you, sir.

#### *House of Representatives Vote for Speaker*

*Q.* [Inaudible] Does any part of you—well, first of all, who do you think the Speaker is going to be?

*The President.* I have no idea.

*Q.* Okay. Is any part of you enjoying seeing the other party having such a hard time right now?

*The President.* No. And I really mean it. Look, how do you think this looks to the rest of the world? We're finally coming out of—you know, the first time we're really getting through the whole issue relating to January 6. Things are settling out. Well now, for the first time in a hundred years, we can't move?

I mean—I really mean it. I know you know international relations. It's not a good look. It's not a good thing. It's the United States of America. And I hope they get their act together.

*Q.* Mr. President——

*Q.* And what's going to happen if there is no Speaker for a week, sir, a month? What's the impact?

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:58 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House prior to boarding Marine One. In his remarks, he referred to Pope Francis.

*Categories:* Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters, White House.

*Locations:* Washington, DC.

*Names:* Benedict XVI, Pope Emeritus; Francis, Pope.

*Subjects:* 2021 civil unrest and violence at U.S. Capitol; Bipartisanship; Deaths, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI; Holy See (Vatican City), Pope Emeritus, death; Infrastructure improvements; News media, Presidential interviews; Speaker of the House of Representatives

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