*The President.* Thank you all very, very much. Thank you, please. Thank you so much. Madam Speaker, Madam Vice President, and our First Lady and Second Gentleman, Members of Congress and the Cabinet, Justices of the Supreme Court, my fellow Americans: Last year, COVID-19 kept us apart. This year, we're finally together again.

Tonight we meet as Democrats, Republicans, and Independents, but most importantly, as Americans with a duty to one another, to America, to the American people, and to the Constitution, and an unwavering resolve that freedom will always triumph over tyranny.

Six—[*applause*]—thank you. Six days ago, Russia's Vladimir Putin sought to shake the very foundations of the free world, thinking he could make it bend to his menacing ways. But he badly miscalculated. He thought he could roll into Ukraine and the world would roll over. Instead, he met with a wall of strength he never anticipated or imagined. He met the Ukrainian people.

From President Zelenskiy, their—to every Ukrainian, their fearlessness, their courage, their determination literally inspires the world. Groups of citizens blocking tanks with their bodies. Everyone from students to retirees, to teachers turned soldiers defending their homeland. And in this struggle—President Zelenskiy said in his speech to the European Parliament, "Light will win over darkness."

The Ukrainian Ambassador to the United States is here tonight sitting with the First Lady. Let each of us, if you're able to stand, stand and send an unmistakable signal to the world and Ukraine. Thank you. Thank you, thank you, thank you. She's bright, she's strong, and she's resolved. Yes. We, the United States of America, stand with the Ukrainian people.

Throughout our history, we've learned this lesson: When dictators do not pay a price for their aggression, they cause more chaos; they keep moving; and the costs, the threats to the America—and America, to the world keeps rising. That's why the NATO alliance was created: to secure peace and stability in Europe after World War II. The United States is a member, along with 29 other nations. It matters. American diplomacy matters. American resolve matters.

Putin's latest attack on Ukraine was premeditated and totally unprovoked. He rejected repeated—repeated—efforts at diplomacy. He thought the West and NATO wouldn't respond. He thought he could divide us at home, in this Chamber, in this Nation. He thought he could divide us in Europe as well.

But Putin was wrong. We are ready. We are united. And that's what we did: We stayed united. We prepared extensively and carefully. We spent months building coalitions of other freedom-loving nations in Europe and the Americas to—from America to the Asian and African continents to confront Putin.

Like many of you, I spent countless hours unifying our European allies. We shared with the world in advance what we knew Putin was planning and precisely how he would try to falsify and justify his aggression. We countered Russia's lies with the truth. And now—now that he's acted, the free world is holding him accountable, along with 27 members of the European Union—including France, Germany, Italy—as well as countries like the United Kingdom, Canada, Japan, Korea, Australia, New Zealand, and many others—even Switzerland—are inflicting pain on Russia and supporting the people of Ukraine. Putin is now isolated from the world more than he has ever been.

Together, along with our allies, we are right now enforcing powerful economic sanctions. We're cutting off Russia's largest banks from the international financial system; preventing Russia's Central Bank from defending the Russian ruble, making Putin's $630 billion war fund worthless. We're choking Russia's access to technology that will sap its economic strength and weaken its military for years to come.

Tonight I say to the Russian oligarchs and the corrupt leaders who have bilked billions of dollars off this violent regime: No more. The United States—[*applause*]—I mean it. The United States Department of Justice is assembling a dedicated task force to go after the crimes of the Russian oligarchs.

We're joining with European allies to find and seize their yachts, their luxury apartments, their private jets. We're coming for your ill-begotten gains. And tonight I'm announcing that we will join our allies in closing off American air space to all Russian flights, further isolating Russia and adding an additional squeeze on their economy.

He has no idea what's coming. The ruble has already lost 30 percent of its value, the Russian stock market has lost 40 percent of its value, and trading remains suspended. The Russian economy is reeling, and Putin alone is the one to blame.

Together with our allies, we're providing support to the Ukrainians in their fight for freedom: military assistance, economic assistance, humanitarian assistance. We're giving more than a billion dollars in direct assistance to Ukraine. And we'll continue to aid the Ukrainian people as they defend their country and help ease their suffering.

But let me be clear: Our Forces are not engaged and will not engage in the conflict with Russian forces in Ukraine. Our Forces are not going to Europe to fight [in]\* Ukraine but to defend our NATO allies in the event that Putin decides to keep moving west. For that purpose, we have mobilized American ground forces, air squadrons, ship deployments to protect NATO countries, including Poland, Romania, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. And as I've made crystal clear, the United States and our allies will defend every inch of territory that is NATO territory with the full force of our collective power—every single inch.

And we're clear eyed. The Ukrainians are fighting back with pure courage. But the next few days, weeks, and months will be hard on them. Putin has unleashed violence and chaos. But while he may make gains on the battlefield, he'll pay a continuing high price over the long run. And a pound of Ukrainian people—the proud, proud people—pound for pound, ready to fight with every inch ofenergy they have. They've known 30 years of independence—have repeatedly shown that they will not tolerate anyone who tries to take their country backwards.

To all Americans, I'll be honest with you, as I've always promised I would be. A Russian dictator invading a foreign country has costs around the world. And I'm taking robust action to make sure the pain of our sanctions is targeted at Russian economy and that we use every tool at our disposal to protect American businesses and consumers.

Tonight I can announce the United States has worked with 30 other countries to release 60 million barrels of oil from reserves around the world. America will lead that effort, releasing 30 million barrels of our own Strategic Petroleum Reserve. And we stand ready to do more if necessary, united with our allies.

These steps will help blunt gas prices here at home. But I know news about what's happening can seem alarming to all Americans. But I want you to know: We're going to be okay. We're going to be okay.

When the history of this era is written, Putin's war on Ukraine will have left Russia weaker and the rest of the world stronger.

While it shouldn't have taken something so terrible for people around the world to see what's at stake, now everyone sees it clearly. We see the unity among leaders of nations, a more unified Europe, a more unified West. We see unity among the people who are gathering in cities in large crowds around the world, even in Russia, to demonstrate their support for the people of Ukraine.

In the battle between democracy and autocracies, democracies are rising to the moment, and the world is clearly choosing the side of peace and security. This is the real test, and it's going to take time. So let us continue to draw inspiration from the iron will of the Ukrainian people.

To our fellow Ukrainian Americans who forged a deep bond that connects our two nations: We stand with you. We stand with you. Putin may circle Kiev with tanks, but he'll never gain the hearts and souls of the Uranian [Ukrainian]\* people. He'll never extinguish their love of freedom. And he will never, never weaken the resolve of the free world.

We meet tonight in an America that has lived through 2 of the hardest years this Nation has ever faced. The pandemic has been punishing. And so many families are living paycheck to paycheck, struggling to keep up with the rising cost of food, gas, housing, and so much more.

I understand, like many of you did. My dad had to leave his home in Scranton, Pennsylvania, to find work. So, like many of you, I grew up in a family when the price of food went up, it was felt throughout the family; it had an impact. That's why one of the first things I did as President was fight to pass the American Rescue Plan, because people were hurting. We needed to act, and we did.

Few pieces of legislation have done more at a critical moment in our history to lift us out of a crisis. It fueled our efforts to vaccinate the Nation and combat COVID-19. It delivered immediate economic relief to tens of millions of Americans. It helped put food on the table. Remember those long lines of cars waiting for hours just to get a box of food put in their trunk? It cut the cost of health care insurance. And as my dad used to say, it gave the people "just a little bit of breathing room."

And unlike the $2 trillion tax cut passed in the previous administration that benefited the top 1 percent of Americans, the American Rescue Plan——

*Audience members.* Boo!

*The President.* ——the American Rescue Plan helped working people and left no one behind. And, folks—and it worked. It worked. It worked and created jobs, lots of jobs. In fact, our economy created over 6.5 million new jobs just last year, more jobs in 1 year than ever before in the history of the United States of America. The economy grew at a rate of 5.7 last year, the strongest growth rate in 40 years and the first step in bringing fundamental change to our economy that hasn't worked for working people in this Nation for too long.

For the past 40 years, we were told that tax breaks for those at the top and benefits would trickle down and everyone would benefit. But that trickle-down theory led to a weaker economic growth, lower wages, bigger deficits, and a widening gap between the top and everyone else in the—in nearly a century.

Look, Vice President Harris and I ran for office—and I realize we have fundamental disagreements on this—but ran for office with a new economic vision for America: invest in America; educate Americans; grow the workforce; build the economy from the bottom up and the middle out, not from the top down. Because we know—because we know—when the middle class grows, the poor go way up, and the wealthy do very well.

America used to have the best roads, bridges, and airports on Earth. And now our infrastructure is ranked 13th in the world. We won't be able to compete for the jobs of the 21st century if we don't fix it. That's why it was so important to pass the bipartisan infrastructure law. And I thank my Republican friends who joined to invest and rebuild America, the single biggest investment in history.

It was a bipartisan effort, and I want to thank the members of both parties who worked to make it happen. We're done talking about infrastructure weeks. We're now talking about an infrastructure decade. And look, it's going to transform America to put us on a path to win the economic competition of the 21st century that we face with the rest of the world, particularly China. I've told Xi Jinping: It's never been a good bet to bet against the American people.

We'll create good jobs for millions of Americans—modernizing roads, airports, ports, waterways—all across America. And we'll do it to withstand the devastating effects of climate crisis and promote environmental justice. We'll build a national network of 500,000 electric vehicle charging stations; begin to replace the poisonous lead pipes so every child, every American has clean water to drink at home and at school.

We're going to provide affordable high-speed internet for every American—rural, suburban, urban, and Tribal communities. Four thousand projects have already been announced. Many of you have announced them in your districts. And tonight I'm announcing that, this year, we will start fixing over 65,000 miles of highway and 1,500 bridges in disrepair. And, folks, when we use taxpayers' dollars to rebuild America, we're going to do it by buying American. Buy American products. Support American jobs.

The Federal Government spends about $600 billion a year to keep this country safe and secure. There's been a law on the books for almost a century to make sure taxpayers' dollars support American jobs and businesses. Every administration—Democrat and Republican—says they'll do it, but we're actually doing it. We'll buy American to make sure everything from the deck of an aircraft carrier to the steel on highway guardrails is made in America from beginning to end. All of it. All of it.

But, folks, to compete for the jobs of the future, we also need to level the playing field with China and other competitors. That's why it's so important to pass the bipartisan innovation act sitting in Congress that will make record investments in emerging technologies and American manufacturing. We used to invest almost 2 percent of our GDP in research and development. We don't now. Can't—China is.

Let me give you one example why it's so important to pass. If you travel 20 miles east of Columbus, Ohio, you'll find a thousand empty acres of land. It won't look like much. But if you stop and look closely, you'll see a "field of dreams," the ground on which America's future will be built. That's where Intel, the American company that helped build Silicon Valley, is going to build a $20 billion semiconductor "mega site," up to eight state-of-the-art factories in one place. Ten thousand new jobs. And in those factories, the average job—about $135—$135,000 a year.

Some of the most sophisticated manufacturing in the world to make computer chips the size of a fingertip that power the world and everyday lives, from smartphones, technology that—the internet—technology that's yet to be invented. But that's just the beginning.

Intel's CEO, Pat Gelsinger, who is here tonight—and I don't know where Pat is. Pat? There you go, Pat. Stand up. Pat came to see me, and he told me they're ready to increase their investment from $20 billion to $100 billion. That would be the biggest investment in manufacturing in American history. And all they're waiting for is for you to pass this bill. So let's not wait any longer. Send it to my desk, I'll sign it, and we will really take off in a big way.

And, folks, Intel is not alone. There's something happening in America. Just look around, and you'll see an amazing story—the rebirth of pride that comes from stamping products "Made in America," the revitalization of American manufacturing. Companies are choosing to build new factories here when just a few years ago, they would have gone overseas. That's what is happening. Ford is investing $11 billion in electric vehicles, creating 11,000 jobs across the country. GM is making the largest investment in its history—$7 billion to build electric vehicles, creating 4,000 jobs in Michigan. All told, 369,000 new manufacturing jobs were created in America last year alone.

And, folks, powered by people I've met—like JoJo Burgess from generations of union steelworkers in Pittsburgh, who's here with us tonight. Where are you, JoJo? There you go. Thanks, buddy. As Ohio—as Ohio Senator Sherrod Brown says—[*applause*]—as Sherrod Brown says, "It's time to bury the label 'Rust Belt.'" It's time to see the—what used to be called the Rust Belt become the home of a significant resurgence of manufacturing.

And with all the bright spots in our economy—record job growth, higher wages—too many families are struggling to keep up with their bills. Inflation is robbing them of gains they thought otherwise they would be able to feel. I get it. That's why my top priority is getting prices under control.

Look, our economy roared back faster than almost anyone predicted, but the pandemic meant that businesses had a hard time hiring enough people because of the pandemic to keep up production in their factories. So you didn't have people making those beams that went into buildings because they were out—the factory was closed. The panic [pandemic]\* also disrupted the global supply chain. Factories close. When that happens, it takes longer to make goods and get them to the warehouses, to the stores, and go—prices go up.

Look at cars last year. One-third of all the inflation was because of automobile sales. There weren't enough semiconductors to make all the cars that people wanted to buy. And guess what? Prices of automobiles went way up, especially used vehicles as well. What—and so we have a choice. One way to fight inflation is to drive down wages and make Americans poorer. I think I have a better idea to fight inflation: Lower your costs, not your wages.

And, folks, that means make more cars and semiconductors in America, more infrastructure and innovation in America, more goods moving faster and cheaper in America, more jobs where you can earn a good living in America. Instead of relying on foreign supply chains, let's make it in America.

Look, economists——

*Audience members.* U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

*The President.* Economists——

*Audience members.* U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

*The President.* ——call this increasing the productive capacity of our economy. I call it building a better America. My plan to fight inflation will lower your costs and lower the deficit. Seventeen Nobel laureates in economics said my plan will ease long-term inflationary pressures. Top business leaders and, I believe, most Americans support the plan.

And here's the plan. First, cut the cost of prescription drugs. We pay more for the same drug produced by the same company in America than any other country in the world. Just look at insulin. One in ten Americans has diabetes. In Virginia, I met a 13-year-old boy, the handsome young man standing up there, Joshua Davis. He and his dad both have type 1 diabetes, which means they need insulin every single day. Insulin costs about $10 a vial to make. That's what it costs the pharmaceutical company. But drug companies charge families like Joshua and his dad up to 30 times that amount.

I spoke with Joshua's mom. Imagine what it's like to look at your child who needs insulin to stay healthy and have no idea how in God's name you're going to be able to pay for it—what it does to your family, but what it does to your dignity, your ability to look your child in the eye, to be the parent you expect yourself to be. I really mean it. Think about that. That's what I think about. You know, yesterday—Joshua is here tonight, but yesterday was his birthday. Happy birthday, buddy, by the way.

For Joshua and 200,000 other young people with type 1 diabetes, let's cap the cost of insulin at $35 a month so everyone can afford it. And drug companies will do very, very well—their profit margin. And while we're at it—I know we have great disagreements on this floor with this—let's let Medicare negotiate the price of prescription drugs. They already set the price for VA drugs. Look, the American Rescue Plan is helping millions of families on Affordable Care Act plans to save them $2,400 a year on their health premiums. Let's close the coverage gap and make those savings permanent.

And second, let's cut energy costs for families an average of $500 a year by combating climate change. Let's provide an investment and tax credit to weatherize your home and your business to be energy efficient and get a tax credit for it; double America's clean energy production in solar, wind, and so much more; lower the price of electric vehicles, saving another $80 a month that you've not going to have to pay at the pump.

Folks—third—the third thing we can do to change the standard of living for hard-working folks is cut the cost of childcare. [*Applause*] Cut the cost of childcare. Folks, if you live in a major city in America, you can pay up to $14,000 a year for childcare per child. I was a single dad for 5 years, raising two kids. I had a lot of help though. I had a mom, a dad, a brother, and sister that really helped. But middle class and working folks shouldn't have to pay more than 7 percent of their income to care for their young children.

My plan would cut the cost of childcare in half for most families and help parents, including millions of women who left the workforce during the pandemic because they couldn't afford childcare to be able to get back to work, generating economic growth. But my plan doesn't stop there. It also includes home and long-term care, more affordable housing, pre-K for 3- and 4-year-olds. All of these will lower costs to families.

And under my plan, nobody—let me say this again—nobody earning less than $400,000 a year will pay an additional penny in new taxes. Not a single penny. I may be wrong, but my guess is, if we took a secret ballot in this floor, that we'd all agree that the present tax system ain't fair. We have to fix it. I'm not looking to punish anybody, but let's make corporations and wealthy Americans start paying their fair share.

Look, last year—[*applause*]—last year—and like Chris Coons and Tom Carper and my distinguished Congresswoman—we come from the land of corporate America. There are more corporations incorporated in America [Delaware]\* than every other State in America combined. And I still won 36 years in a row. The point is, even they understand they should pay just a fair share.

Last year, 55 of the Fortune 500 companies earned $40 billion in profit and paid zero in Federal taxes.

*Audience members.* Boo!

*The President.* No, look, it's not fair. That's why I proposed a 15-percent minimum tax rate for corporations. And we've got—and that's why in the G-7 and other meetings overseas we were able to put together—I was able to be somewhat helpful—130 countries to agree on a global minimum tax rate so companies can't get out of paying their taxes at home by shipping jobs and factories overseas. It will raise billions of dollars.

And that's why I've proposed closing loopholes for the very wealthy who don't pay—who pay a lower tax rate than a teacher and a firefighter. So that's my plan. But we have—we'll go into more detail later. I'm going to grow—we will grow the economy, lower the costs to families. So what are we waiting for? Let's get this done. We all know we've got to make changes.

Folks, and while you're at it, confirm my nominees for the Federal Reserve, which plays a critical role in fighting inflation.

My plan will not only lower costs and give families a fair shot, it will lower the deficit. The previous administration not only ballooned the deficit with those tax cuts for the very wealthy and corporations, it undermined the watchdogs—the job of those to keep pandemic relief funds from being wasted. Remember we had those debates about whether or not those watchdogs should be able to see, every day, how much money was being spent, where it—was it going to the right place?

In my administration, the watchdogs are back. And we're going after the criminals who stole billions of relief money meant for small business and millions of Americans. And tonight I'm announcing that the Justice Department will soon name a chief prosecutor for pandemic fraud.

And look—[*applause*]—I think we all agree—thank you—by the end of this year, the deficit will be down to less than half what it was before I took office, the only President ever to cut the deficit by more than $1 trillion in a single year.

Lowering your costs also meant demanding more competition. I'm a capitalist, but capitalism without competition is not capitalism. Capitalism without competition is exploitation. It drives up profits [prices].\* When corporations have to compete, their profits go up and your prices go up—when they don't have to compete. Small businesses and family farmers and ranchers—I need not tell some of my Republican friends from those States—guess what? You've got four basic meatpacking facilities. That's it. You play with them or you don't get to play at all. And you pay a hell of a lot more—a hell of a lot more—because there's only four.

See what's happening with ocean carriers moving goods in and out of America. During the pandemic, about half a dozen or less foreign-owned companies raised prices by as much as 1,000 percent and made record profits. Tonight I'm announcing a crackdown on those companies overcharging American businesses and consumers.

Folks—[*applause*]—and as Wall Street firms take over more nursing homes, quality in those homes has gone down, and costs have gone up. That ends on my watch. Medicare is going to set higher standards for nursing homes and make sure your loved ones get the care they deserve and that they inspect and they will—looked at closely. We're also going to cut costs to keep the economy going strong and giving workers a fair shot; provide more training and apprenticeships; hire them based on skills, not just their degrees.

Let's pass the Paycheck Fairness Act and paid leave; raise the minimum wage to $15 an hour; and extend the child tax credit so no one has to raise a family in poverty. Let's increase Pell grants; increase our historic support for HBCUs; and invest in what Jill, our First Lady, who teaches full time, calls America's best kept secret: community colleges.

Look, let's pass the PRO Act. When a majority of workers want to form a union, they shouldn't be able to be stopped. When we invest in our workers and we build an economy from the bottom up and the middle out, together we can do something we haven't done in a long time: build a better America.

For more than 2 years, COVID has impacted every decision in our lives and the life of this Nation. And I know you're tired, frustrated, and exhausted. That doesn't even count the close to a million people who sit at a dining room table or a kitchen table and look at an empty chair because they lost somebody.

But I also know this: Because of the progress we've made, because of your resilience and the tools that we have been provided by this Congress, tonight I can say we're moving forward safely, back to a more—normal routines. We've reached a new moment in the fight against COVID-19 where severe cases are down to a level not seen since July of last year.

Just a few days ago, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention issued a new mask guidelines. Under the new guidelines, most Americans in most of the country can now go mask free. And based on projections, more of the country will reach a point across—that point across the next couple of weeks. And thanks to the progress we've made in the past year, COVID-19 no longer need control our lives. I know some are talking about "living with COVID-19." But tonight I say that we never will just accept living with COVID-19; we'll continue to combat the virus as we do other diseases.

And because this virus mutates and spreads, we have to stay on guard. And here are four commonsense steps as we move forward safely, in my view: first, stay protected with vaccines and treatments. We know how incredibly effective vaccines are. If you're vaccinated and boosted, you have the highest degree of protection, and we'll never give up on vaccinating more Americans. Now, I know parents with kids under 5 are eager to see their vaccines authorized for their children. Scientists are working hard to get that done, and we'll be ready with plenty of vaccines if and when they do.

We're already—we are also ready with antiviral treatments. If you get COVID-19, the Pfizer pill reduces your chances of ending up in the hospital by 90 percent. I've ordered more pills than anyone in the world has. Pfizer is working overtime to get us a million pills this month and more than double that next month. And now we're launching the "Test To Treat" initiative so people can get tested at a pharmacy and, if they prove positive, receive the antiviral pills on the spot at no cost.

And, folks, if you're immunocompromised or have some other vulnerability, we have treatments and free high-quality masks. We're leaving no one behind or ignoring anyone's needs as we move forward. On testing, we've made hundreds of millions of tests available, and you can order them for free to your doorstep. And we've already ordered free tests. If you already ordered free tests, tonight I'm announcing you can order another group of tests. COVID—go to COVIDtests.gov, starting next week, and you can get more tests.

Second, we must prepare for new variants. Over the past—we've gotten much better at detecting new variants. If necessary, we'll be able to develop [deploy]\* new vaccines within a hundred days instead of maybe months or years. And if Congress presides [provides]\* the funds we need, we'll have new stockpiles of tests, masks, pills ready if needed. I can't promise a new variant won't come, but I can promise you we'll do everything within our power to be ready if it does.

Third, we can end the shutdown of schools and businesses. We have the tools we need. It's time for America to get back to work and fill our great downtowns again with people. People working from home can feel safe and begin to return to their offices.

We're doing that here in the Federal Government. The vast majority of Federal workers will once again work in person. Our schools are open. Let's keep it that way. Our kids need to be in school. With 75 percent of adult Americans fully vaccinated and hospitalizations down by 77 percent, most Americans can remove their masks and stay in the classroom and move forward safely.

We achieved this because we provided free vaccines, treatments, tests, and masks. Of course, continuing this costs money, so it will not surprise you I'll be back to see you all. [*Laughter*] And I'm going to soon send a request to Congress. The vast majority of Americans have used these tools and may want again—we may need them again. So I expect Congress—and I hope you'll pass that quickly.

Fourth, we'll continue vaccinating the world. We've sent 475 million vaccine doses to 112 countries—more than any nation on Earth. We won't stop, because you can't build a wall high enough to keep out a vaccine—the vaccine can stop the spread of these diseases.

You know, we've lost so much in COVID-19. Time with one another. The worst of all, the loss of life. Let's use this moment to reset. So stop looking at COVID as a partisan dividing line. See it for what it is, a God-awful disease. Let's stop sending—seeing each other as enemies and start seeing each other for who we are, fellow Americans.

Look, we can't change how divided we've been. That was a long time in coming. But we can change how to move forward on COVID-19 and other issues that we must face together.

I recently visited New York City Police Department days after the funerals of Officer Wilbert Mora and his partner, Officer Jason Rivera. They were responding to a 911 call when a man shot and killed them with a stolen gun. Officer Mora was 27 years old. Officer Rivera was 22 years old. Both Dominican Americans who grew up in the same streets that they later chose to parole—to patrol as police officers. I spoke with their families, and I told them that we are forever in debt for their sacrifices and we'll carry on their mission to restore the trust and safety in every community it deserves.

Like some of you that have been around for a while—I've worked with you on these issues for a long time. I know what works: Investigating [Investing in]\* crime prevention and community policing: cops who walk the beat, who know the neighborhood, and who can restore trust and safety.

Let's not abandon our streets or choose between safety and equal justice. Let's come together and protect our communities, restore trust, and hold law enforcement accountable. That's why the Justice Department has required body cameras, banned chokeholds, and restricted no-knock warrants for its officers.

That's why the American Rescue Plan that you all provided $350 billion that cities, States, and counties can use to hire more police, invest in more proven strategies like community violence interruption, trusted messengers breaking the cycle of violence and trauma and giving young people some hope. We should all agree the answer is not to defund the police.

*Audience member.* That's right!

*The President.* It's to fund the police. Fund them. Fund them. Fund them with the resources and training—resources and training they need to protect our communities. I ask Democrats and Republicans alike to pass my budget and keep our neighborhoods safe. And we'll do everything in my power to crack down on gun trafficking of ghost guns that you can buy online, assemble at home—no serial numbers, can't be traced. I ask Congress to pass proven measures to reduce gun violence. Pass universal background checks. Why should anyone on the terrorist list be able to purchase a weapon. Why? Why?

*Audience members.* Boo!

*The President.* And, folks, ban assault weapons with high-capacity magazines that hold up to a hundred rounds. You think the deer are wearing Kevlar vests? [*Laughter*] Look, repeal the liability shield that makes gun manufacturers the only industry in America that can't be sued—the only one. Imagine had we done that with the tobacco manufacturers. These laws don't infringe on the Second Amendment, they save lives.

The most fundamental right in America is the right to vote and have it counted. And look, it's under assault. In State after State, new laws have been passed not only to suppress the vote—we've been there before—but to subvert the entire election. We can't let this happen. Tonight I call on the Senate to pass the Freedom To Vote act. Pass the John Lewis Act—Voting Rights Act. And while you're at it, pass the DISCLOSE Act so Americans know who is funding our elections.

Look, tonight I'd like to honor someone who has dedicated his life to serve this country: Justice Breyer, an Army veteran, constitutional scholar, retiring Justice of the United States Supreme Court. Justice Breyer, thank you for your service. Thank you, thank you, thank you. I mean it. Get up. Stand and let them see you. Thank you.

And we all know—no matter what your ideology, we all know one of the most serious constitutional responsibilities a President has is nominating someone to serve on the United States Supreme Court. As I did 4 days ago, I've nominated a Circuit Court of Appeals—Ketanji Brown Jackson.

One of our Nation's top legal minds who will continue in Justice Breyer's legacy of excellence. A former top litigator in private practice, a former Federal public defender from a family of public-school educators and police officers, she's a consensus builder. Since she's been nominated, she's received a broad range of support, including the Fraternal Order of Police and former judges appointed by Democrats and Republicans.

Folks, if we are to advance liberty and justice, we need to secure our border and fix the immigration system.

*Audience members.* Build the wall! Build the wall! Build the wall!

*The President.* And as you might guess, I think we can do both. At our border, we've installed new technology, like cutting-edge scanners, to better detect drug smuggling. We've set up joint patrols with Mexico and Guatemala to catch more human traffickers. We're putting in place dedicated immigration judges in significant larger number so families fleeing persecution and violence can have their cases—cases heard faster—and those who don't [aren't]\* legitimately here can be sent back.

We're screening—we're securing commitments and supporting partners in South and Central America to host more refugees and secure their own borders. We can do all this while keeping lit the torch of liberty that has led the generation of immigrants to this land, my forebearers and many of yours. Provide a pathway to citizenship for "dreamers," those with temporary status, farmworkers, essential workers. To revise our laws so businesses have workers they need and families don't wait decades to reunite.

It's not only the right thing to do, it's economically smart thing to do. That's why the immigration reform is supported by everyone from labor unions to religious leaders to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Let's get it done once and for all.

Folks, advancing liberty and justice also requires protecting the rights of women. The constitutional right affirmed by *Roe* v. *Wade*, standing precedent for half a century, is under attack as never before. If you want to go forward not backwards, we must protect access to health care, preserve a woman's right to choose, and continue to advance maternal health care for all Americans.

And, folks, for our LGBTQ+ Americans, let's finally get the bipartisan Equality Act to my desk. The onslaught of State laws targeting transgender Americans and their families—it's simply wrong. As I said last year, especially to our younger transgender Americans, I'll always have your back as your President so you can be yourself and reach your God-given potential.

Folks, as I've just demonstrated, while it often appears we do not agree—[*laughter*]—and that—we do agree on a lot more things than we acknowledge. I signed 80 bipartisan bills into law last year, from preventing Government shutdowns, to protecting Asian Americans from still-too-common hate crimes, to reforming military justice. And we'll soon be strengthening the Violence Against Women Act that I first wrote three decades ago.

And it's important—it's important—for us to show the Nation that we can come together and do big things. So tonight I'm offering a unity agenda for the Nation: four big things we can do together, in my view.

First, beat the opioid epidemic. There's so much we can do: increase funding for prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and recovery; get rid of outdated rules and stop doctors and—that stop doctors from prescribing treatments; stop the flow of illicit drugs by working with State and local law enforcement to go after the traffickers. And if you're suffering from addiction, you know—you should know you're not alone. I believe in recovery, and I celebrate the 23 million—23 million Americans in recovery.

Second, let's take on mental health—especially among our children, whose lives and education have been turned upside down. The American Rescue Plan gave schools money to hire teachers and help students make up for lost learning. I urge every parent to make sure your school does just that. They have the money. We can all play a part. Sign up to be a tutor or a mentor. Children were also struggling before the pandemic: bullying, violence, trauma, and the harms of social media.

As Frances Haugen, who is here tonight with us, has shown, we must hold social media platforms accountable for the national experiment they're conducting on our children for profit. Folks—[*applause*]—thank you. Thank you for the courage you showed. It's time to strengthen privacy protections; ban targeted advertising to children; demand tech companies stop collecting personal data on our children. And let's get all Americans the mental health services they need. More people can turn for help and full parity between physical and mental health care if we treat it that way in our insurance.

Look, the third piece of that agenda is support our veterans. Veterans are the backbone and the spine of this country. They're the best of us. I've always believed that we have a sacred obligation to equip those we send to war and care for those and their family when they come home. My administration is providing assistance and job training and housing and now helping lower income veterans get VA care debt free.

And our troops in Iraq have faced—and Afghanistan—have faced many dangers. One being stationed at bases, breathing in toxic smoke from burn pits. Many of you have been there. I've been in and out of Iraq and Afghanistan over 40 times. These burn pits that incinerate waste—the wastes of war, medical and hazardous material, jet fuel, and so much more. And they come home—many of the world's fittest and best trained warriors in the world—never the same: headaches, numbness, dizziness, a cancer that would put them in a flag-draped coffin. I know.

*Representative Lauren Boebert.* You put them in. Thirteen of them.

*Audience members.* Whoa!

*Audience members.* Boo!

*The President.* One of those—one of those soldiers was my son, Major Beau Biden. I don't know for sure if the burn pit that he lived near—that his hooch was near in Iraq and, earlier than that, in Kosovo is the cause of his brain cancer and the disease of so many other troops. But I'm committed to find out everything we can.

Committed to military families like Danielle Robinson from Ohio, the widow of Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson. He was born a soldier. Army National Guard. Combat medic in Kosovo and Iraq. Stationed near Baghdad, just yards from burn pits the size of football fields.

Danielle is here with us tonight. They loved going to Ohio State football games. And he loved building Legos with their daughter. But cancer from prolonged exposure to burn pits ravaged Heath's lungs and body. Danielle says Heath was a fighter to the very end. He didn't know how to stop fighting, and neither did she. Through her pain, she found purpose to demand that we do better. Tonight, Danielle, we are going to do better.

The VA is pioneering new ways of linking toxic exposures to disease, already helping more veterans get benefits. And tonight I'm announcing we're expanding eligibility to veterans suffering from nine respiratory cancers. I'm also calling on Congress to pass a law to make sure veterans devastated by toxic exposure in Iraq and Afghanistan finally get the benefits and the comprehensive health care they deserve.

And fourth and last, let's end cancer as we know it. This is personal. This is personal to me and to Jill and to Kamala and so many of you. So many of you have lost someone you love—husband, wife, son, daughter, mom, dad. Cancer is the number-two cause of death in America, second only to heart disease.

Last month, I announced the plan to supercharge the Cancer Moonshot that President Obama asked me to lead 6 years ago. Our goal is to cut cancer death rates by at least 50 percent over the next 25 years. And I think we can do better than that: turn cancers from death sentences into treatable diseases, more support for patients and their families.

To get there, I call on Congress to fund what I called ARPA-H: Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health. Patterned after DARPA in the Defense Department, projects that led—in DARPA—to the internet, GPS, and so much more that make our Forces more—safer and be able to wage war more—with more clarity. ARPA [ARPA-H]\* will have a singular purpose to drive breakthroughs in cancer, Alzheimer's, and diabetes, and more. A unity agenda for the Nation. We can do these things. It's within our power. And I don't see a partisan edge to any one of those four things.

My fellow Americans, tonight we've gathered in a sacred space: the citadel of democracy. In this Capitol, generation after generation of Americans have debated great questions amid great strife and have done great things. We fought for freedom, expanded liberty, debated [defeated]\* totalitarianism and terror. We built the strongest, freest, and most prosperous nation the world has ever known.

Now is the hour: our moment of responsibility, our test of resolve and conscience of history itself. It is in this moment that our character of this generation is formed, our purpose is found, our future is forged.

Well, I know this Nation. We'll meet the test, protect freedom and liberty, expand fairness and opportunity. And we will save democracy. As hard as those times have been, I'm more optimistic about America today than I've been my whole life because I see the future that's within our grasp, because I know there is simply nothing beyond our capacity.

We're the only nation on Earth that has always turned every crisis we've faced into an opportunity, the only nation that can be defined by a single word: possibilities. So, on this night, on our 245th year as a nation, I've come to report on the state of the Nation—the state of the Union. And my report is this: The state of the Union is strong because you, the American people, are strong.

We are stronger today—we are stronger today—than we were a year ago. And we'll be stronger a year from now than we are today. This is our moment to meet and overcome the challenges of our time. And we will, as one people, one America: the United States of America.

God bless you all, and may God protect our troops. Thank you. Go get 'em.

Thank you. You can smile. It's okay.

Thank you, thank you, thank you. Thank you. Please.

Mr. Speaker, Madam Vice President, our First Lady and Second Gentleman—good to see you guys up there—[*applause*]—Members of Congress. and by the way, Chief Justice, I may need a court order. She gets to go to the game tomorrow—next week. I have to stay home. [*Laughter*] We've got to work something out here.

Members of the Cabinet, leaders of our military, Chief Justice, Associate Justices, and retired Justices of the Supreme Court, and to you, my fellow Americans: You know, I start tonight by congratulating the 118th Congress and the new Speaker of the House, Kevin McCarthy. Speaker, I don't want to ruin your reputation, but I look forward to working with you. [*Laughter*]

And I want to congratulate the new leader of the House Democrats, the first African American minority leader in history, Hakeem Jeffries. He won in spite of the fact I campaigned for him. [*Laughter*]

Congratulations to the longest serving leader in the history of the United States Senate, Mitch McConnell. Where are you, Mitch?

And congratulations to Chuck Schumer, another—you know, another term as Senate minority [majority; White House correction] leader. You know, I think you—only this time you have a slightly bigger majority, Mr. Leader. And you're the majority leader. About that much bigger? [*Laughter*] Yes.

Well, I tell you what, I want to give special recognition to someone who I think is going to be considered the greatest Speaker in the history of the House of Representatives: Nancy Pelosi.

Folks, the story of America is a story of progress and resilience, of always moving forward, of never, ever giving up. It's a story unique among all nations. We're the only country that has emerged from every crisis we've ever entered stronger than we got into it. Look, folks, that's what we're doing again.

Two years ago, the economy was reeling. I stand here tonight, after we've created, with the help of many people in this room, 12 million new jobs—more jobs created in 2 years than any President has created in 4 years—because of you all, because of the American people.

Two years ago—[*applause*]. And 2 years ago, COVID had shut down—our businesses were closed, our schools were robbed of so much. And today, COVID no longer controls our lives.

And 2 years ago, our democracy faced its greatest threat since the Civil War. And today, though bruised, our democracy remains unbowed and unbroken.

As we gather here tonight, we're writing the next chapter in the great American story, a story of progress and resilience. When world leaders ask me to define America—and they do, believe it or not—I say I can define it in one word, and I mean this: possibilities. We don't think anything is beyond our capacity. Everything is a possibility.

You know, we're often told that Democrats and Republicans can't work together. But over the past 2 years, we've proved the cynics and naysayers wrong. Yes, we disagreed plenty. And yes, there were times when Democrats went alone.

But time and again, Democrats and Republicans came together. Came together to defend a stronger and safer Europe. You came together to pass one-in-a-generation—once-in-a-generation infrastructure law building bridges connecting our Nation and our people. We came together to pass one the most significant law ever helping victims exposed to toxic burn pits. And, in fact—[*applause*]. It's important.

And, in fact, I signed over 300 bipartisan pieces of legislation since becoming President, from reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act to the Electoral Count Reform Act, the Respect for Marriage Act that protects the right to marry the person you love.

And to my Republican friends, if we could work together in the last Congress, there's no reason we can't work together and find consensus on important things in this Congress as well.

I think—folks, you all are as informed as I am, but I think the people sent us a clear message: Fighting for the sake of fighting, power for the sake of power, conflict for the sake of conflict gets us nowhere.

That's always been my vision of our country, and I know it's many of yours: to restore the soul of this Nation; to rebuild the backbone of America, America's middle class; and to unite the country. We've been sent here to finish the job, in my view.

For decades, the middle class has been hollowed out in more than—and not in one administration, but for a long time. Too many good-paying manufacturing jobs moved overseas. Factories closed down. Once-thriving cities and towns that many of you represent became shadows of what they used to be. And along the way, something else we lost: pride, our sense of self-worth.

I ran for President to fundamentally change things. To make sure our economy works for everyone so we can all feel that pride in what we do. To build an economy from the bottom up and the middle out, not from the top down. Because when the middle class does well, the poor have a ladder up, and the wealthy still do very well. We all do well.

I know a lot of you always kid me for always quoting my dad. But my dad used to say, "Joey, a job is about a lot more than a paycheck." Because he really would say this. "It's about a lot more than a paycheck. It's about your dignity. It's about respect. It's about being able to look your kid in the eye and say, 'Honey, it's going to be okay' and mean it."

Well, folks, so let's look at the results. We're not finished yet, by any stretch of the imagination. But unemployment rate is at 3.4 percent, a 50-year low. And near record—and near record unemployment—near record unemployment for Black and Hispanic workers.

We've already created, with your help, 800,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs, the fastest growth in 40 years. And where is it written—where is it written that America can't lead the world in manufacturing? And I don't know where that's written.

For too many decades, we imported projects and exported jobs. Now, thanks to what you've all done, we're exporting American products and creating American jobs.

Folks, inflation—inflation has been a global problem because the pandemic disrupted our supply chains, and Putin's unfair and brutal war in Ukraine disrupted energy supplies as well as food supplies, blocking all that grain in Ukraine. But we're better positioned than any country on Earth right now. But we have more to do.

But here at home, inflation is coming down. Here at home, gas prices are down $1.50 from their peak. Food inflation is coming down, not fast enough, but coming down. Inflation has fallen every month for the last 6 months, while take-home pay has gone up.

Additionally, over the last 2 years, a record 10 million Americans applied to start new businesses. Ten million. And by the way, every time—every time someone starts a small business, it's an act of hope.

And, Madam Vice President, I want to thank you for leading that effort to ensure that small businesses have access to capital and the historic laws we enacted that are going to just come into being.

Standing here last year, I shared with you a story of American genius and possibilities. Semiconductors—small computer chips the size of a fingerprint that power everything from cellphones to automobiles and so much more—these chips were invented in America. Let's get that straight: They were invented in America.

And we used to make 40 percent of the world's chips. In the last several decades, we lost our edge. We're down to only producing 10 percent.

We all saw what happened during the pandemic when chip factories shut down overseas. Today's automobiles need 3,000 chips—each of those automobiles—but American automobiles [automakers; White House correction] couldn't make enough cars because there weren't enough chips. Car prices went up. People got laid off. So did everything from refrigerators to cell phones.

We can never let that happen again. That's why—that's why we came together to pass the bipartisan CHIPS and Science Act.

Folks, I know I've been criticized for saying this, but I'm not changing my view. We're going to make sure the supply chain for America begins in America—the supply chain begins in America.

And we've already created—[*applause*]. We've already created 800,000 new manufacturing jobs without this law, before the law kicks in. With this new law, we're going to create hundreds of thousands of new jobs across the country. And I mean all across the country, throughout—not just the coast, but through the middle of the country as well.

That's going to come from companies that have announced more than $300 billion in investment in American manufacturing over the next few years. Outside of Columbus, Ohio, Intel is building semiconductor factories on a thousand acres, literally a "field of dreams." It's going to create 10,000 jobs, that one investment; 7,000 construction jobs; 3,000 jobs in those factories once they're finished. They call them factors. Jobs paying an average of $130,000 a year, and many do not require a college degree.

And jobs—because we worked together, these jobs where people don't have to leave home to search for opportunity. And it's just getting started. Think about the new homes, the small businesses, the big—the medium-sized businesses. So much more that's going to be needed to support those 3,000 permanent jobs and the factories that are going to be built.

Talk to mayors and Governors, Democrats and Republicans, and they'll tell you what this means for their communities. We're seeing these "fields of dreams" transform the Heartland. But to maintain the strongest economy in the world, we need the best infrastructure in the world.

And, folks, as you all know, we used to be number one in the world in infrastructure. We've sunk to 13th in the world. The United States of America—13th in the world in infrastructure, modern infrastructure.

But now we're coming back because we came together and passed the bipartisan infrastructure law, the largest investment in infrastructure since President Eisenhower's Interstate Highway System.

And, folks, already, we've funded over 20,000 projects, including major airports from Boston to Atlanta to Portland, projects that are going to put thousands of people to work rebuilding our highways, our bridges, our railroads, our tunnels, ports, airports, clean water, high-speed internet all across America: urban, rural, Tribal.

And, folks, we're just getting started. We're just getting started.

And I mean this sincerely: I want to thank my Republican friends who voted for the law. And my Republican friends who voted against it as well—but I'm still—I still get asked to fund the projects in those districts as well, but don't worry. [*Laughter*] I promised I'd be a President for all Americans. We'll fund these projects. And I'll see you at the groundbreaking.

Look, this law—this law will further unite all of America. Projects like Brent Spence Bridge in Kentucky over the Ohio River, built 60 years ago, badly in need of repairs. One of the Nation's most congested freight routes, carrying $2 billion worth of freight every single day across the Ohio River.

And, folks, we've been talking about fixing it for decades, but we're really finally going to get it done. I went there last month with Democrats and Republicans in—from both States—to deliver a commitment of $1.6 billion for this project. And while I was there, I met a young woman named Saria, who's here tonight. I don't know where Saria is. Is she up in the box? I don't know. Saria, how are you?

Well, Saria—for 30 years—for 30 years—I learned—she told me she'd been a proud member of the Ironworkers Local 44, known as—known as the "Cowboys in the Sky"—the folks who built Cincinnati's skyline. Saria said she can't wait to be 10 stories above the Ohio River building that new bridge. God bless her. [*Laughter*] That's pride. And that's what we're also building: We're building back pride.

Look, we're also replacing poisonous lead pipes that go into 10 million homes in America, 400,000 schools and childcare centers so every child in America—every child in American—can drink the water, instead of having permanent damage to their brain.

Look, we're making sure—[*applause*]—we're making sure that every community—every community in America—has access to affordable, high-speed internet. No parent should have to drive by a McDonald's parking lot to help their—do their homework online with their kids, which many—thousands were doing across the country.

And when we do these projects—and, again, I get criticized about this, but I make no excuses for it—we're going to buy American. We're going to buy American.

Folks—[*applause*]—and it's totally—it's totally—consistent with international trade rules. Buy American has been the law since 1933. But for too long, past administrations—Democrat and Republican—have fought to get around it. Not anymore.

Tonight I'm announcing new standards to require all construction materials used in Federal infrastructure projects to be made in America. Made in America. I mean it. Lumber, glass, drywall, fiber-optic cable. And on my watch, American roads, bridges, and American highways are going to be made with American products as well.

Folks, my economic plan is about investing in places and people that have been forgotten. So many of you listening tonight, I know you feel it. So many of you felt like you've just simply been forgotten. Amid the economic upheaval of the past four decades, too many people have been left behind and treated like they're invisible.

Maybe that's you, watching from home. You remember the jobs that went away. You remember them, don't you? The folks at home remember them. You wonder whether the path even exists anymore for your children to get ahead without having to move away.

Well, that's why—I get that. That's why we're building an economy where no one is left behind. Jobs are coming back, pride is coming back, because of choices we made in the last several years. You know, this is, in my view, a blue-collar blueprint to rebuild America and make a real difference in your lives at home.

For example, too many of you lay in bed at night, like my dad did, staring at the ceiling, wondering what in God's name happens if your spouse gets cancer or your child gets deadly ill or if something happens to you. What are you going—are you going to have the money to pay for those medical bills? Are you going to have to sell the house or try to get a second mortgage on it?

I get it. I get it.

With the Inflation Reduction Act that I signed into law, we're taking on powerful interests to bring health care costs down so you can sleep better at night with more security. You know, we pay more for prescription drugs than any nation in the world. Let me say it again: We pay more for prescription drugs than any major nation on Earth.

For example, 1 in 10 Americans has diabetes. Many of you in this chamber do and in the audience. But every day, millions need insulin to control their diabetes so they can literally stay alive. Insulin has been around for over 100 years. The guy who invented it didn't even patent it because he wanted it to be available for everyone.

It costs the drug companies roughly $10 a vial to make that insulin. Package it and all, you may get up to $13. But Big Pharma has been unfairly charging people hundreds of dollars, $4- to $500 a month, making record profits. Not anymore. Not anymore.

*Audience members.* Not anymore! Not anymore! Not anymore!

*The President*. So many things that we did are only now coming to fruition. We said we were doing this, and we said we'd pass the law to do it, but people didn't know because the law didn't take effect until January 1 of this year.

We capped the cost of insulin at $35 a month for seniors on Medicare. But people are just finding out. I'm sure you're getting the same calls I'm getting.

Look, there are millions of other Americans who do not—are not on Medicare, including 200,000 young people with type 1 diabetes who need these insulin—need this insulin to stay alive. Let's finish the job this time. Let's cap the cost of insulin for everybody at $35.

Folks—and Big Pharma is still going to do very well, I promise you all. [*Laughter*] I promise you they're going to do very well.

This law also—this law also caps—and it won't even go into effect until 2025. It costs [caps; White House correction] out-of-pocket drug costs for seniors on Medicare at a maximum of $2,000 a year. You don't have to pay more than $2,000 a year, no matter how much your drug costs are. Because you know why? You all know it.

Many of you, like many of my family, have cancer. You know the drugs can range from $10-, $11-, $14-, $15,000 for the cancer drugs. And if drug prices rise faster than inflation, drug companies are going to have to pay Medicare back the difference.

And we're finally—we're finally giving Medicare the power to negotiate drug prices. Bringing down—bringing down prescription drug costs doesn't just save seniors money, it cuts the Federal deficit by billions of dollars—[*applause*]—by hundreds of billions of dollars because these prescription drugs are drugs purchased by Medicare to make—keep their commitment to the seniors.

Well, guess what? Instead of paying 4- or 500 bucks a month, you're paying 15. That's a lot of savings for the Federal Government. And by the way, why wouldn't we want that?

Now, some Members here are threatening—and I know it's not an official party position, so I'm not going to exaggerate—but threatening to repeal the Inflation Reduction Act. As my coach—that's okay. That's fair. As my football coach used to say, "Lots of luck in your senior year." [*Laughter*]

Make no mistake, if you try anything to raise the cost of prescription drugs, I will veto it.

And look, I'm pleased to say that more Americans health—have health insurance now than ever in history. A record 16 million people are enrolled in the Affordable Care Act. And thanks to the law I signed last year, saving—millions are saving $800 a year on their premiums.

And by the way, that law was written—and the benefit expires in 2025. So my plea to some of you, at least in this audience: Let's finish the job and make these savings permanent. Expand coverage on Medicaid.

Look, the Inflation Reduction Act is also the most significant investment ever in climate change—ever. Lowering utility bills, creating American jobs, leading the world to a clean energy future.

I visited the devastating aftermath of record floods, droughts, storms, and wildfires from Arizona to New Mexico to all the way up to the Canadian border. More timber has been burned that I've observed from helicopters than the entire State of Missouri. And we don't have global warming? Not a problem.

In addition to emergency recovery from Puerto Rico to Florida to Idaho, we're rebuilding for the long term. New electric grids that are able to weather major storms and not—prevent those fire—forest fires. Roads and water systems to withstand the next big flood. Clean energy to cut pollution and create jobs in communities often left behind.

We're going to build 500,000 electric vehicle charging stations, installed across the country by tens of thousands of IBEW workers. And we're helping families save more than $1,000 a year with tax credits to purchase electric vehicles and efficient—and efficient appliances—energy-efficient appliances. Historic conservation efforts to be responsible stewards of our land.

Let's face reality. The climate crisis doesn't care if you're in a red or a blue State. It's an existential threat. We have an obligation not to ourselves, but to our children and our grandchildren to confront it.

I'm proud of how the—how America, at last, is stepping up to the challenge. We're still going to need oil and gas for a while, but guess what—[*applause*]—no, we do—but there's so much more to do. We've got to finish the job.

And we pay for these investments in our future by finally making the wealthiest and biggest corporations begin to pay their fair share. Just begin.

Look, I'm a capitalist. I'm a capitalist. But pay your fair share. I think a lot of you at home—a lot of you at home—agree with me and many people that you know: The tax system is not fair. It is not fair.

Look, the idea that in 2020, 55 of the largest corporations in America, the Fortune 500, made $40 billion in profits and paid zero in Federal taxes? Zero.

*Audience members.* Boo!

*The President.* Folks, it's simply not fair.

But now, because of the law I signed, billion-dollar companies have to pay a minimum of 15 percent. God love them. Fifteen percent. That's less than a nurse pays.

And let me be crystal clear. I said at the very beginning: Under my plans, as long as I'm President, nobody earning less than $400,000 will pay an additional penny in taxes. Nobody. Not one penny.

But let's finish the job. There's more to do.

We have to reward work, not just wealth. Pass my proposal for the billionaire minimum tax. You know, there's a thousand billionaires in America—it's up from about 600 at the beginning of my term—but no billionaire should be paying a lower tax rate than a schoolteacher or a firefighter. No, I mean it. Think about it.

I mean, look, I know you all aren't enthusiastic about that, but think about it. Think about it. Have you noticed? Big Oil just reported its profits. Record profits. Last year, they made $200 billion in the midst of a global energy crisis. I think it's outrageous.

Why? They invested too little of that profit to increase domestic production. And when I talked to a couple of them, they say, "We were afraid you were going to shut down all the oil wells and all the oil refineries anyway, so why should we invest in them?" I said, "We're going to need oil for at least another decade, and that's going to exceed"—[*laughter*]—and beyond that. We're going to need it. Production.

If they had, in fact, invested in the production to keep gas prices down—instead they used the record profits to buy back their own stock, rewarding their CEOs and shareholders.

Corporations ought to do the right thing. That's why I propose we quadruple the tax on corporate stock buybacks and encourage long-term investments. They'll still make considerable profit.

Let's finish the job and close the loopholes that allow the very wealthy to avoid paying their taxes. Instead of cutting the number of audits for wealthy taxpayers, I just signed a law to reduce the deficit by $114 billion by cracking down on wealthy tax cheats. That's being fiscally responsible.

In the last 2 years, my administration has cut the deficit by more than $1.7 trillion, the largest deficit reduction in American history. Under the previous administration, the American deficit went up 4 years in a row.

Because of those record deficits, no President added more to the national debt in any 4 years than my predecessor. Nearly 25 percent of the entire national debt that took over 200 years to accumulate was added by just one administration alone, the last one. They're the facts. Check it out. Check it out.

How did Congress respond to that debt? They did the right thing. They lifted the debt ceiling three times without preconditions or crisis. They paid the American bill to prevent an economic disaster to the country.

So tonight I'm asking the Congress to follow suit. Let's commit here tonight that the full faith and credit of the United States of America will never, ever be questioned.

So my—many of—some of my Republican friends want to take the economy hostage—I get it—unless I agree to their economic plans. All of you at home should know what those plans are. Instead of making the wealthy pay their fair share, some Republicans want Medicare and Social Security to sunset. I'm not saying it's a majority——

*Audience members.* Boo!

*The President.* Let me give you——

*Audience members.* No!

*The President.* Anybody who doubts it, contact my office. I'll give you a copy. I'll give you a copy of the proposal.

*Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene.* Liar!

*The President.* That means Congress doesn't vote——

Well, I'm glad to see—no, I tell you, I enjoy conversion. [*Laughter*]

You know, it means if Congress doesn't keep the programs the way they are, they'd go away. Other Republicans say—I'm not saying it's a majority of you. I don't even think it's a significant——

*Audience member.* [*Inaudible*]—don't say——

*The President.* ——but it's being proposed by individuals.

*Audience member.* But you don't say who.

*The President.* I'm not—politely not naming them, but it's being proposed by some of you.

*Audience members.* [*Inaudible*]

*Rep. Greene.* Liar, liar!

*The President.* Look, folks, the idea is that we're not going to be—we're not going to be moved into being threatened to default on the debt if we don't respond.

Folks—[*applause*]—so, folks, as we all apparently agree, Social Security and Medicare is off the books now, right? They're not to be touched? [*Applause*] All right. All right. We've got unanimity!

Social Security and Medicare are a lifeline for millions of seniors. Americans have to pay into them from the very first paycheck they've started. So tonight let's all agree—and we apparently are—let's stand up for seniors. Stand up and show them we will not cut Social Security. We will not cut Medicare.

Those benefits belong to the American people. They earned it. And if anyone tries to cut Social Security—which apparently no one is going to do—[*laughter*]—and if anyone tries to cut Medicare, I'll stop them. I'll veto it.

And look, I'm not going to allow them to take away—be taken away. Not today. Not tomorrow. Not ever. But apparently, it's not going to be a problem. [*Laughter*]

Next month, when I offer my fiscal plan, I ask my Republican friends to lay down their plan as well. I really mean it. Let's sit down together and discuss our mutual plans together. Let's do that.

I can tell you, the plan I'm going to show you is going to cut the deficit by another $2 trillion. And it won't cut a single bit of Medicare or Social Security. In fact, we're going to extend the Medicare Trust Fund at least two decades, because that's going to be the next argument: how do we make—keep it solvent. Right?

Well, I will not raise taxes on anyone making under 400 grand. But we'll pay for it the way we talked about tonight: by making sure that the wealthy and big corporations pay their fair share. Look—look, look, here's the deal. They aren't just taking advantage of the Tax Code, they're taking advantage of you, the American consumer.

Here's my message to all of you out there: I have your back. We're already preventing Americans who are [from; White House correction] receiving surprise medical bills, stopping 1 billion dollar surprise bills [1 million surprise bills; White House correction] per month so far.

We're protecting seniors' life savings by cracking down on nursing homes that commit fraud, endanger patient safety, or prescribe drugs that are not needed. Millions of Americans can now save thousands of dollars because they can finally get a hearing aid over the counter without a prescription.

Look, capitalism without competition is not capitalism, it's extortion; it's exploitation.

Last year, I cracked down, with the help of many of you, on foreign shipping companies that were making you pay higher prices for every good coming into the country. I signed a bipartisan bill that cut shipping costs by 90 percent, helping American farmers, businessmen, and consumers.

Let's finish the job. Pass the bipartisan legislation to strengthen and—to strengthen antitrust enforcement and prevent big online platforms from giving their own products an unfair advantage.

My administration is also taking on junk fees, those hidden surcharges too many companies use to make you pay more. For example, we're making airlines show you the full ticket price upfront, refund your money if your flight is canceled or delayed. We've reduced exorbitant bank overdrafts by saving consumers more than $1 billion a year. We're cutting credit card late fees by 75 percent, from $30 to $8.

Look, junk fees may not matter to the very wealthy, but they matter to most other folks in homes like the one I grew up in, like many of you did. They add up to hundreds of dollars a month. They make it harder for you to pay your bills or afford that family trip.

I know how unfair it feels when a company overcharges you and gets away with it. Not anymore. We've written a bill to stop it all. It's called the Junk Fee Prevention Act. We're going to ban surprise resort fees that hotels charge on your bill. Those fees can cost you up to $90 a night at hotels that aren't even resorts. [*Laughter*]

We—the idea that cable, internet, and cell phone companies can charge you $200 or more if you decide to switch to another provider. Give me a break. We can stop service fees on tickets to concerts and sporting events and make companies disclose all the fees upfront. And we'll prohibit airlines from charging $50 roundtrip for a family just to be able to sit together. Baggage fees are bad enough. Airlines can't treat your child like a piece of baggage.

Americans are tired of being—we're tired of being played for suckers. So pass the Junk Fee Prevention Act so companies stop ripping us off.

For too long, workers have been getting stiffed, but not anymore. We're going to be—we're beginning to restore the dignity of work.

For example, I should have known this, but I didn't until 2 years ago: Thirty million workers have to sign noncompete agreements for the jobs they take. Thirty million. So a cashier at a burger place can't walk across town and take the same job at another burger place and make a few bucks more.

*Audience members.* Boo!

*The President.* It just changed. Well, they just changed it because we exposed it. That was part of the deal, guys. Look it up. But not anymore. We're banning those agreements so companies have to compete for workers and pay them what they're worth.

And I must tell you, this is bound to get a response from my friends on my left, but the right. I'm so sick and tired of companies breaking the law by preventing workers from organizing. Pass the PRO Act! Because businesses have a right—workers have a right to form a union. And let's guarantee all workers have a living wage.

Let's make sure working parents can afford to raise a family with sick days, paid family and medical leave, affordable childcare. That's going to enable millions of more people to go and stay at work. And let's restore the full child tax credit, which gave tens of millions of parents some breathing room and cut child poverty in half to the lowest level in history.

And by the way, when we do all of these things, we increase productivity, we increase economic growth.

So let's finish the job and get more families access to affordable, quality housing.

Let's get seniors who want to stay in their homes the care they need to do so. Let's give more breathing room to millions of family caregivers looking after their loved ones.

Pass my plan so we get seniors and people with disabilities the homecare services they need and support the workers who are doing God's work.

These plans are fully paid for, and we can afford to do them.

Restoring the dignity of work means making education an affordable ticket to the middle class. You know, when we made public education—12 years of it—universal in the last century, we made the best educated, best paid—we became the best education, best paid nation in the world.

But the rest of the world has caught up. It's caught up.

Jill, my wife, who teaches full-time, has an expression. I hope I get it right, kid. [*Laughter*] "Any nation that outeducates is going to outcompete us." Any nation that outeducates is going to outcompete us.

Folks, we all know 12 years of education is not enough to win the economic competition of the 21st century. If we want to have the best educated workforce, let's finish the job by providing access to preschool for 3 and 4 years old. Studies show that children who go to preschool are nearly 50-percent more likely to finish high school and go on to earn a 2- or 4-year degree, no matter their background they came from.

Let's give public school teachers a raise.

We're making progress by reducing student debt, increasing Pell grants for working and middle class families. Let's finish the job and connect students to career opportunities starting in high school, provide access to 2 years of community college, the best career training in America, in addition to being a pathway to a 4-year degree.

Let's offer every American a path to a good career, whether they go to college or not.

And, folks—folks, in the midst of the COVID crisis, when schools were closed and we were shutting down everything, let's recognize how far we came in the fight against the pandemic itself.

While the virus is not gone, thanks to the resilience of the American people and the ingenuity of medicine, we've broken the COVID grip on us.

COVID deaths are down by 90 percent. We've saved millions of lives and opened up our country—we opened our country back up. And soon, we'll end the public health emergency.

*Audience member.* [*Inaudible*]

*The President.* But—that's called a public health emergency.

But we'll remember the toll and pain that's never going to go away. More than a million Americans lost their lives to COVID. A million. Families grieving. Children orphaned. Empty chairs at the dining room table constantly reminding you that she used to sit there. Remembering them, we remain vigilant.

We still need to monitor dozens of variants and support new vaccines and treatments. So Congress needs to fund these efforts and keep America safe.

And as we emerge from this crisis stronger, we're also—got to double down prosecuting criminals who stole relief money meant to keep workers and small businesses afloat.

Before I came to office, you remember, during that campaign, the big issue was about inspector generals who would protect taxpayers' dollars, who were sidelined. They were fired. Many people said, "We don't need them." And fraud became rampant.

Last year, I told you the watchdogs are back. Since then—since then, we've recovered billions of taxpayers' dollars. Now let's triple the antifraud strike force going after these criminals, double the statute of limitations on these crimes, and crack down on identity fraud by criminal syndicates stealing billions of dollars—billions of dollars—from the American people.

And the data shows that for every dollar we put into fighting fraud, the taxpayer will get back at least 10 times as much. It matters. It matters.

Look, COVID left its scars, like the spike in violent crime in 2020, the first year of the pandemic. We have an obligation to make sure all people are safe. Public safety depends on public trust, as all of us know. But too often, that trust is violated.

Joining us tonight are the parents of Tyre Nichols—welcome—[*applause*]—who had to bury Tyre last week. As many of you personally know, there's no words to describe the heartache or grief of losing a child. But imagine—imagine—if you lost that child at the hands of the law. Imagine having to worry whether your son or daughter came home from walking down the street or playing in the park or just driving a car.

Most of us in here have never had to have "the talk"—"the talk"—that Brown and Black parents have had to have with their children. Beau, Hunter, Ashley—my children—I never had to have the talk with them. I never had to tell them: "If a police officer pulls you over, turn your interior lights on right away. Don't reach for your license. Keep your hands on the steering wheel."

Imagine having to worry like that every single time your kid got in a car.

Here's what Tyre's mother shared with me when I spoke to her, when I asked her how she finds the courage to carry on and speak out. With the faith of God, she said her son was, quote, "a beautiful soul" and "something good will come of this." Imagine how much courage and character that takes.

It's up to us, to all of us. We all want the same thing: neighborhoods free of violence, law enforcement who earns the community's trust. Just as every cop, when they pin on that badge in the morning, has a right to be able to go home at night, so does everybody else out there. Our children have a right to come home safely.

Equal protection under the law is a covenant we have with each other in America.

We know police officers put their lives on the line every single night and day. And we know we ask them, in many cases, to do too much—to be counselors, social workers, psychologists—responding to drug overdoses, mental health crises, and so much more. In one sense, we ask much too much of them.

I know most cops and their families are good, decent, honorable people—the vast majority. That they risk—[*applause*]. And they risk their lives every time they put that shield on. But what happened to Tyre in Memphis happens too often. We have to do better. Give law enforcement the real training they need. Hold them to higher standards. Help them to succeed in keeping them safe.

We also need more first responders and professionals to address the growing mental health, substance abuse challenges. More resources to reduce violent crime and gun crime. More community intervention programs. More investments in housing, education, and job training. All this can help prevent violence in the first place.

And when police officers or police departments violate the public trust, they must be held accountable. With the support—[*applause*]. With the support of families of victims, civil rights groups, and law enforcement, I signed an Executive order for all Federal officers, banning chokeholds, restricting no-knock warrants, and other key elements of the George Floyd Act.

Let's commit ourselves to make the words of Tyler's [Tyre's; White House correction] mom true: Something good must come from this. Something good.

And all of us—all of us—[*applause*]. Folks, it's difficult, but it's simple: All of us in the Chamber—in this Chamber, we need to rise to this moment. We can't turn away. Let's do what we know in our hearts that we need to do. Let's come together to finish the job on police reform. Do something. Do something.

That was the plea of parents who lost their children in Uvalde—I met with every one of them—"Do something about gun violence." Thank God—thank God—we did, passing the most sweeping gun safety law in three decades.

That includes things like—that the majority of responsible gun owners already support: enhanced background checks for 18 to 21 years old, red-flag laws keeping guns out of the hands of people who are a danger to themselves and others.

But we know our work is not done. Joining us tonight is Brandon Tsay, a 26-year-old hero. Brandon put his college dreams on hold—to be at his mom's side—his mom's side when she was dying from cancer. And Brandon now works at the dance studio started by his grandparents.

And 2 weeks ago, during the Lunar New Year celebrations, he heard the studio door close, and he saw a man standing there pointing a semiautomatic pistol at him. He thought he was going to die, but he thought about the people inside.

In that instant, he found the courage to act and wrestled the semiautomatic pistol away from the gunman who had already killed 11 people in another dance studio. Eleven.

He saved lives. It's time we do the same. Ban assault weapons now! Ban them now! Once and for all. I led the fight to do that in 1994. And in 10 years that ban was law, mass shootings went down. After we let it expire in a Republican administration, mass shootings tripled.

Let's finish the job and ban these assault weapons.

And let's also come together on immigration. Make it a bipartisan issue once again. We know—we now have a record number of personnel working to secure the border, arresting 8,000 human smugglers, seizing over 23,000 pounds of fentanyl in just the last several months.

We've launched a new border plan last month. Unlawful migration from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Venezuela has come down 97 percent as a consequence of that.

But American border problems won't be fixed until Congress acts. If we don't pass my comprehensive immigration reform, at least pass my plan to provide the equipment and officers to secure the border—and a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers, those on temporary status, farmworkers, essential workers.

Here in "the people's house," it's our duty to protect all the people's rights and freedoms. Congress must restore the right and——

*Audience member.* Secure the border!

*Audience member.* [*Inaudible*]—border!

*Audience members.* [*Inaudible*]

*The President.* Congress must restore the right that was taken away in *Roe* v. *Wade* and protect *Roe* v. *Wade*. Give every woman the constitutional right. The Vice President and I are doing everything to protect access to reproductive health care and safeguard patient safety. But already, more than a dozen States are enforcing extreme abortion bans.

Make no mistake about it: If Congress passes a national ban, I will veto it.

But let's also pass—let's also pass the bipartisan Equality Act to ensure LGBTQ Americans, especially transgender young people, can live with safety and dignity.

Our strength—our strength is not just the example of our power, but the power of our example. Let's remember: The world is watching.

I spoke from this Chamber 1 year ago, just days after Vladimir Putin unleashed his brutal attack against Ukraine, a murderous assault, evoking images of death and destruction Europe suffered in World War II.

Putin's invasion has been a test for the ages—a test for America, a test for the world. Would we stand for the most basic of principles? Would we stand for sovereignty? Would we stand for the right of people to live free of tyranny? Would we stand for the defense of democracy? For such defense matters to us because it keeps peace and prevents open season on would-be aggressors that threatens our prosperity.

One year later, we know the answer. Yes, we would. And we did. We did. And together, we did what America always does at our best. We led. We united NATO. We built a global coalition. We stood against Putin's aggression. We stood with the Ukrainian people.

And tonight we're once again joined by Ukrainians' Ambassador to the United States. She represents not her—just her nation, but the courage of her people. Ambassador is—our Ambassador is here, united in our—we're united in our support of your country.

Will you stand so we can all take a look at you? Thank you. Because we're going to stand with you as long as it takes.

Our Nation is working for more freedom, more dignity, and more peace, not just in Europe, but everywhere.

Before I came to office, the story was about how the People's Republic of China was increasing its power and America was failing in the world. Not anymore. We made clear and I made clear in my personal conversations, which have been many, with President Xi that we seek competition, not conflict. But I will make no apologies that we're investing and—to make America stronger.

Investing in American innovation and industries that will define the future that China intends to be dominating. Investing in our alliances and working with our allies to protect advanced technologies so they will not be used against us. Modernizing our military to safeguard stability and determine—deter aggression.

Today, we're in the strongest position in decades to compete with China or anyone else in the world. Anyone else in the world.

And I'm committed—I'm committed—to work with China where we can advance American interests and benefit the world. But make no mistake about it: As we made clear last week, if China threatens our sovereignty, we will act to protect our country. And we did.

Look, let's be clear: Winning the competition should unite all of us.

We face serious challenges across the world. But in the past 2 years, democracies have become stronger, not weaker. Autocracies have grown weaker, not stronger.

Name me a world leader who'd change places with Xi Jinping. Name me one. Name me one.

America is rallying the world to meet those challenges, from climate to global health to food insecurity to terrorism to territorial aggression. Allies are stepping up, spending more, and doing more. Look, the bridges we're forming between partners in the Pacific and those in the Atlantic.

And those who bet against America are learning how wrong they are. It's never, ever been a good bet to bet against America. Never.

*Audience members.* U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

*The President.* Well——

*Audience members.* U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

*The President.* When I came to office, most assured that bipartisanship—assumed—was impossible. But I never believed it. That's why a year ago, I offered a unity agenda to the Nation as I stood here. We made real progress together.

We passed the law making it easier for doctors to prescribe effective treatments for opioid addiction. We passed the gun safety law, making historic investments in mental health.

We launched the ARPA-H drive for breakthroughs in the fight against cancer, Alzheimer's, and diabetes, and so much more. We passed the Heath Robinson PACT Act, named after the late Iraq war veteran whose story about exposure to toxic burn pits I shared here last year.

And I understand something about those burn pits.

But there is so much more to do. And we can do it together.

Joining us tonight is a father named Doug from Newton, New Hampshire. He wrote Jill, my wife, a letter—and me as well—about his courageous daughter Courtney. A contagious laugh. His sister's best friend—her sister's best friend.

He shared a story all too familiar to millions of Americans and many of you in the audience. Courtney discovered pills in high school. It spiraled into addiction and eventually death from a fentanyl overdose. She was just 20 years old.

Describing the last 8 years without her, Doug said, "There is no worse pain." Yet their family has turned pain into purpose, working to end the stigma and change laws. He told us he wants to "start a journey towards American recovery."

Doug, we're with you. Fentanyl is killing more than 70,000 Americans a year. Big——

*Audience members.* [*Inaudible*]—the border.

*Audience members.* The border!

*The President.* Big—you've got it.

*Audience member.* [*Inaudible*]—China!

*Representative W. Andrew Ogles IV.* It's your fault!

*Audience members.* Boo!

*The President.* So let's launch a major surge to stop fentanyl production and the sale and trafficking. With more drug detection machines, inspection cargo, stop pills and powder at the border. Working with couriers, like FedEx, to inspect more packages for drugs. Strong penalties to crack down on fentanyl trafficking.

Second, let's do more on mental health, especially for our children. When millions of young people are struggling with bullying, violence, trauma, we owe them greater access to mental health care at their schools.

We must finally hold social media companies accountable for experimenting they're doing—running [on; White House correction] children for profit. And it's time to pass bipartisan legislation to stop Big Tech from collecting personal data on kids and teenagers online, ban targeted advertising to children, and impose stricter limits on the personal data that companies collect on all of us.

Third, let's do more to keep this Nation's one fully sacred obligation: to equip those we send into harm's way and care for them and their families when they come home.

Job training, job placement for veterans and their spouses as they come to—return to civilian life. Helping veterans to afford their rent, because no one should be homeless in America, especially someone who served the country.

Denis McDonough is here, of the VA. We had our first real discussion when I asked him to take the job. And I'm glad he did. We were losing up to 25 veterans a day on suicide. Now we're losing 17 a day to the silent scourge of suicide. Seventeen veterans a day are committing suicide, more than all the people being killed in the wars.

Folks, VA is doing everything it can, including expanding mental health screening, proven programs that recruits veterans to help other veterans understand what they're going through, get them the help they need. We've got to do more.

And fourth, last year, Jill and I reignited the Cancer Moonshot that I was able to start with, and President Obama asked me to lead our administration on this issue. Our goal is to cut the cancer death rates at least by 50 percent in the next 25 years, turn more cancers from death sentences to treatable diseases, provide more support for patients and their families.

It's personal to so many of us, so many of us in this audience. Joining us are Maurice and Kandice, an Irishman and a daughter of immigrants from Panama. They met and fell in love in New York City and got married in the same chapel as Jill and I got married in New York City. Kindred spirits.

He wrote us a letter about his little daughter Ava. And I saw her just before I came over. She was just a year old when she was diagnosed with a rare kidney disease—cancer. After 26 blood transfusions, 11 rounds of radiation, 8 rounds of chemo, 1 kidney removed, given a 5 percent survival rate.

He wrote how, in the darkest moments, he thought, "If she goes, I can't stay." Many of you have been through that as well. Jilly and I understand that, like so many of you. And he read Jill's book describing our family's cancer journey and how we tried to steal moments of joy where we could with Beau.

For them, that glimmer of joy was the half-smile of their baby girl. It meant everything to them. They never gave up hope, and little Ava never gave up hope. She turns 4 next month.

They just found out Ava is beating the odds, is on her way to being cured of cancer. And she's watching from the White House tonight, if she's not asleep already.

For the lives we can save—[*applause*]. For the lives we can save and the lives we have lost, let this be a truly American moment that rallies the country and the world together and prove that we can still do big things.

Twenty years ago, under the leadership of President Bush and countless advocates and champions, he undertook a bipartisan effort through PEPFAR to transform the global fight against HIV/AIDS. It's been a huge success. He thought big. He thought large. He moved!

I believe we can do the same thing with cancer. Let's end cancer as we know it and cure some cancers once and for all.

Folks, there's one reason why we've been able to do all of these things: our democracy itself. It's the most fundamental thing of all. With democracy, everything is possible. Without it, nothing is.

Over the last few years, our democracy has been threatened and attacked, put at risk—put to the test in this very room on January the 6th.

And then, just a few months ago, an unhinged "big lie" assailant unleashed a political violence at the home of the then-Speaker of the House of Representatives, using the very same language the insurrectionists used as they stalked these halls and chanted on January 6.

Here tonight, in this Chamber, is the man who bears the scars of that brutal attack, but is as tough and as strong and as resilient as they get: my friend, Paul Pelosi. Paul, stand up.

But such a heinous act should have never happened. We must all speak out. There is no place for political violence in America.

We have to protect the right to vote, not suppress the—that fundamental right. Honor the results of our elections, not subvert the will of the people. We have to uphold the rule of the law and restore trust in our institutions of democracy. And we must give hate and extremism in any form no safe harbor.

Democracy must not be a partisan issue. It's an American issue.

Every generation of Americans have faced a moment where they have been called to protect our democracy, defend it, stand up for it. And this is our moment.

My fellow Americans, we meet tonight at an inflection point, one of those moments that only a few generations ever face, where the direction we now take is going to decide the course of this Nation for decades to come.

We're not bystanders of history. We're not powerless before the forces that confront us. It's within our power of "We the People." We're facing the test of our time. We have to be the nation we've always been at our best: optimistic, hopeful, forward-looking; a nation that embraces light over dark, hope over fear, unity over division, stability over chaos.

We have to see each other not as enemies, but as fellow Americans. We're good people. The only nation in the world built on an idea—the only one. Other nations are defined by geography, ethnicity, but we're the only nation based on an idea that all of us, every one of us, is created equal in the image of God. A nation that stands as a beacon to the world. A nation in a new age of possibilities.

So I have come to fulfill my constitutional obligation to report on the state of the Union. And here is my report: Because the soul of this Nation is strong, because the backbone of this Nation is strong, because the people of this Nation are strong, the state of the Union is strong.

I'm not new to this place. I stand here tonight having served as long as about any one of you who have ever served here. [*Laughter*] But I've never been more optimistic about our future, about the future of America.

We just have to remember who we are. We're the United States of America. And there's nothing—nothing—beyond our capacity if we do it together.

God bless you all, and may God protect our troops. Thank you.

*The President.* Your bedtime reading.

Tony! Thank you. Looking for Jill.

Good evening. Good evening. If I were smart, I'd go home now. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker, Madam Vice President, Members of Congress, my fellow Americans: In January 1941, Franklin Roosevelt came to this Chamber to speak to the Nation. And he said, "I address you at a moment unprecedented in the history of the Union." Hitler was on the march. War was raging in Europe. President Roosevelt's purpose was to wake up Congress and alert the American people that this was no ordinary time. Freedom and democracy were under assault in the world.

Tonight I come to the same Chamber to address the Nation. Now it's we who face an unprecedented moment in the history of the Union. And yes, my purpose tonight is to wake up the Congress and alert the American people that this is no ordinary moment either. Not since President Lincoln and the Civil War have freedom and democracy been under assault at home as they are today.

What makes our moment rare is that freedom and democracy are under attack at—both at home and overseas at the very same time. Overseas, Putin of Russia is on the march, invading Ukraine and sowing chaos throughout Europe and beyond. If anybody in this room thinks Putin will stop at Ukraine, I assure you: He will not.

But Ukraine—[*applause*]. Ukraine can stop Putin. Ukraine can stop Putin if we stand with Ukraine and provide the weapons that it needs to defend itself. That is all—that is all—Ukraine is asking. They're not asking for American soldiers. In fact, there are no American soldiers at war in Ukraine, and I'm determined to keep it that way.

But now assistance to Ukraine is being blocked by those who want to walk away from our world leadership. It wasn't long ago when a Republican President named Ronald Reagan thundered, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall." Now—[*applause*]. Now my predecessor, a former Republican President, tells Putin, quote, "Do whatever the hell you want."

*Audience members.* Boo!

*The President.* That's a quote. A former President actually said that, bowing down to a Russian leader. I think it's outrageous, it's dangerous, and it's unacceptable.

America is a founding member of NATO, the military alliance of democratic nations created after World War II prevent—to prevent war and keep the peace. And today we've made NATO stronger than ever. We welcomed Finland to the alliance last year. And just this morning Sweden officially joined, and their Minister is here tonight. Come here, stand up. Welcome. Welcome, welcome, welcome. And they know how to fight.

Mr. Prime Minister, welcome to NATO, the strongest military alliance the world has ever seen.

I say this to Congress: We have to stand up to Putin. Send me a bipartisan national security bill. History is literally watching. History is watching. If the United States walks away, it will put Ukraine at risk. Europe is at risk. The free world will be at risk, emboldening others to do what they wish to do us harm.

My message to President Putin, who I've known for a long time, is simple: We will not walk away. We will not bow down. I will not bow down.

In a literal sense, history is watching. History is watching, just like history watched 3 years ago on January 6, when insurrectionists stormed this very Capitol and placed a dagger to the throat of American democracy.

Many of you were here on that darkest of days. We all saw with our own eyes, the insurrectionists were not patriots. They had come to stop the peaceful transfer of power, to overturn the will of the people.

January 6 lies about the 2020 election and the plots to steal the election posed a great—gravest threat to U.S. democracy since the Civil War. But they failed. America stood—[*applause*]. America stood strong, and democracy prevailed. We must be honest: The threat to democracy must be defended [defeated; White House correction].

My predecessor and some of you here seek to bury the truth about January 6. I will not do that. This is a moment to speak the truth and to bury the lies. Here's the simple truth: You can't love your country only when you win.

As I've done ever since being elected to office, I ask all of you, without regard to party, to join together and defend democracy. Remember your oath of office to defend against all threats foreign and domestic. Respect—respect—free and fair elections, restore trust in our institutions, and make clear political violence has absolutely no place—no place—in America. Zero place.

Again, it's not hyperbole to suggest history is watching. They're watching. Your children and grandchildren will read about this day and what we do.

History is watching another assault on freedom. Joining us tonight is Latorya Beasley, a social worker from Birmingham, Alabama.

Fourteen months ago—fourteen months ago, she and her husband welcomed a baby girl thanks to the miracle of IVF. She scheduled treatments to have that second child, but the Alabama Supreme Court shut down IVF treatments across the State, unleashed by a Supreme Court decision overturning *Roe* v. *Wade*. She was told her dream would have to wait.

What her family had gone through should never have happened. Unless Congress acts, it could happen again. So tonight let's stand up for families like hers. To my friends across the aisle, don't keep this waiting any longer. Guarantee the right to IVF. Guarantee it nationwide.

Like most Americans, I believe *Roe* v. *Wade* got it right.

I thank Vice President Harris for being an incredible leader defending reproductive freedom and so much more. [*Applause*] Thank you.

My predecessor came to office determined to see *Roe* v. *Wade* overturned. He's the reason it was overturned, and he brags about it. Look at the chaos that has resulted.

Joining us tonight is Kate Cox, a wife and mother from Dallas. She'd become pregnant again and had a fetus with a fatal condition. Her doctor told Kate that her own life and her ability to have future in the—children in the future were at risk if she didn't act. Because Texas law banned her ability to act, Kate and her husband had to leave the State to get what she needed.

What her family had gone through should have never happened as well. But it's happening to too many others. There are State laws banning the freedom to choose, criminalizing doctors, forcing survivors of rape and incest to leave their States to get the treatment they need.

Many of you in this Chamber and my predecessor are promising to pass a national ban on reproductive freedom.

*Audience members.* Boo!

*The President.* My God, what freedom else would you take away?

Look, its decision to overturn *Roe* v. *Wade*, the Supreme Court majority wrote the following—and with all due respect, Justices—"Women are not without electoral power"—excuse me—"electoral or political power." You're about to realize just how much you were right about that.

Clearly—[*applause*]. Clearly, those bragging about overturning *Roe* v. *Wade* have no clue about the power of women. But they found out. When reproductive freedom was on the ballot, we won in 2022 and 2023. And we'll win again in 2024.

If you—if you, the American people—send me a Congress that supports the right to choose, I promise you I will restore *Roe* v. *Wade* as the law of the land again.

Folks, America cannot go back.

I am here tonight to show what I believe is the way forward, because I know how far we've come. Four years ago next week, before I came to office, the country was hit by the worst pandemic and the worst economic crisis in a century. Remember the fear, record losses?

Remember the spikes in crime and the murder rate? A raging virus that took more than 1 million American lives of loved ones, millions left behind. A mental health crisis of isolation and loneliness.

A President, my predecessor, failed in the most basic Presidential duty that he owes to American people: the duty to care.

*Representative Derrick Van Orden.* Lies!

*The President.* I think that's unforgivable.

I came to office determined to get us through one of the toughest periods in the Nation's history. We have. It doesn't make new, but in a—news—in a thousand cities and towns, the American people are writing the greatest comeback story never told.

So let's tell the story here—tell it here and now. America's comeback is building a future of American possibilities; building an economy from the middle out and the bottom up, not the top down; investing in all of America, in all Americans to make every—sure everyone has a fair shot and we leave no one—no one—behind.

The pandemic no longer controls our lives. The vaccine that saved us from COVID is—are now being used to beat cancer. Turning setback into comeback—that's what America does. That's what America does.

Folks, I inherited an economy that was on the brink. Now, our economy is literally the envy of the world: 15 million new jobs in just 3 years—a record, a record; unemployment at 50-year lows.

A record 16 million Americans are starting small businesses, and each one is a literal act of hope, with historic job growth and small-business growth for Black and Hispanics and Asian Americans. Eight hundred thousand new manufacturing jobs in America and counting. Where is it written we can't be the manufacturing capital of the world? We are, and we will.

More people have health insurance today—[*applause*]. More people have health insurance today than ever before. The racial wealth gap is the smallest it's been in 20 years. Wages keep going up. Inflation keeps coming down. Inflation has dropped from 9 percent to 3 percent, the lowest in the world and tending [trending; White House correction] lower.

The landing is and will be soft. And now, instead of importing foreign products and exporting American jobs, we're exporting American products and creating American jobs, right here in America, where they belong.

And it takes time, but the American people are beginning to feel it. Consumer studies show consumer confidence is soaring.

"Buy America" has been the law of the land since the 1930s. Past administrations, including my predecessor—including some Democrats, as well, in the past—failed to buy American. Not anymore.

On my watch, Federal projects that you fund—like helping build American roads, bridges, and highways—will be made with American products and built by American workers, creating good-paying American jobs.

And thanks to our CHIPS and Science Act, the United States is investing more in research and development than ever before. During the pandemic, a shortage of semiconductors, chips that drove up the price of everything from cell phones to automobiles—and by the way, we invented those chips right here in America.

Well, instead of having to import them, instead of—private companies are now investing billions of dollars to build new chip factories here in America, creating tens of thousands of jobs, many of those jobs paying $100,000 a year and don't require a college degree.

In fact, my policies have attracted $650 billion in private-sector investment in clean energy, advanced manufacturing, creating tens of thousands of jobs here in America. And thanks—[*applause*]. And thanks to our bipartisan infrastructure law, 46,000 new projects have been announced all across your communities.

And by the way, I noticed some of you who've strongly voted against it are there cheering on that money coming in. [*Laughter*] And I like it. I'm with you. I'm with you. And if any of you don't want that money in your district, just let me know. [*Laughter*]

Modernizing our roads and bridges, ports and airports, public transit systems; removing poisonous lead pipes so every child can drink clean water without risk of brain damage; providing affordable—affordable—high-speed internet for every American, no matter where you live—urban, suburban, or rural communities in red States and blue States; record investments in Tribal communities.

Because of my investment in family farms—[*applause*]—because I invested in family farms—led by my Secretary of Agriculture, who knows more about this than anybody I know—we're better able to stay in the family for the—those farms so their—and their children and grandchildren won't have to leave home to make a living. It's transformative.

The great comeback story is Belvidere, Illinois. Home to an auto plant for nearly 60 years. Before I came to office, the plant was on its way to shutting down. Thousands of workers feared for their livelihoods. Hope was fading.

Then, I was elected to office, and we raised the Belvidere repeatedly with auto companies, knowing unions would make all the difference. The UAW worked like hell to keep the plant open and get these jobs back. And together, we succeeded.

Instead of auto factories shutting down, auto factories are reopening, and a new state-of-the-art battery factory is being built to power those cars there at the same—[*applause*]. Folks—[*applause*]. To the folks of Belvidere, I say: Instead of your town being left behind, your community is moving forward again. Because instead of watching auto jobs of the future go overseas, 4,000 union jobs with higher wages are building a future in Belvidere right here in America.

Here tonight is UAW President Shawn Fain, a great friend and a great labor leader. Shawn, where are you? Stand up. And Dawn—and Dawn Simms, a third-generation worker—UAW worker at Belvidere. Shawn, I was proud to be the first President to stand in the picket line. And today, Dawn has a good job in her hometown, providing stability for her family and pride and dignity as well.

Showing once again, Wall Street didn't build America. They're not bad guys. They didn't build it, though. The middle class built the country, and unions built the middle class.

I say to the American people: When America gets knocked down, we get back up. We keep going. That's America. That's you, the American people. It's because of you America is coming back. It's because of you our future is brighter. It's because of you that tonight we can proudly say the state of our Union is strong and getting stronger.

*Audience members.* Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

*The President.* Tonight—tonight, I want to talk about the future of possibilities that we can build together, a future where the days of trickle-down economics are over and the wealthy and the biggest corporations no longer get the—all the tax breaks.

And by the way, I understand corporations. I come from a State that has more corporations invested—[*laughter*]—than every one of your States in the State—the United States combined. And I represented it for 36 years. I'm not anticorporation.

But I grew up in a home where trickle-down economics didn't put much on my dad's kitchen table. That's why I determined to turn things around so the middle class does well. When they do well, the poor have a way up and the wealthy still do very well. We all do well.

And there's more to do to make sure you're feeling the benefits of all we're doing.

Americans pay more for prescription drugs than anywhere in the world. It's wrong, and I'm ending it. With a law that I proposed and signed—and not one of your Republican buddies work—voted for it—we finally beat Big Pharma. Instead of paying $400 a month or thereabouts for insulin with diabetes—and it only costs 10 bucks to make—they only get paid $35 a month now and still make a healthy profit.

And I want to—and what to do next, I want to cap the cost of insulin at $35 a month for every American who needs it—everyone.

For years, people have talked about it. But finally, we got it done and gave Medicare the power to negotiate lower prices on prescription drugs, just like the VA is able to do for veterans.

That's not just saving seniors money. It's saving taxpayers money. We cut the Federal deficit by $160 billion, because Medicare will no longer have to pay those exorbitant prices to Big Pharma.

This year, Medicare is negotiating lower prices for some of the costliest drugs on the market that treat everything from heart disease to arthritis. It's now time to go further and give Medicare the power to negotiate lower prices for 500 different drugs over the next decade.

They're making a lot of money, guys. And they'll still be extremely profitable. It will not only save lives, it will save taxpayers another $200 billion.

Starting next year, the same law caps total prescription drug costs for seniors on Medicare at $200—at $2,000 a year, even for expensive cancer drugs that cost $10-, $12-, $15,000. Now I want to cap prescription drug costs at $2,000 a year for everyone.

Folks, I'm going to get in trouble for saying that, but any of you want to get in Air Force One with me and fly to Toronto, Berlin, Moscow—I mean, excuse me. [*Laughter*] Well, even Moscow, probably. [*Laughter*] And bring your prescription with you, and I promise you, I'll get it for you for 40-percent the cost you're paying now. Same company, same drug, same place.

Folks, the Affordable Care Act—the old "Obamacare"—is still a very big deal. [*Laughter*] Over 100 million of you can no longer be denied health insurance because of a preexisting condition. But my predecessor and many in this Chamber want to take the—that prescription drug away by repealing Affordable Care Act.

*Audience members.* Boo!

*The President.* I'm not going to let that happen. We stopped you 50 times before, and we'll stop you again.

In fact, I'm not only protecting it, I'm expanding it. The—we enacted tax credits of $800 per person per year [to; White House correction] reduce health care costs for millions of working families. That tax credit expires next year. I want to make that savings permanent.

To state the obvious: Women are more than half of our population, but research on women's health has always been underfunded. That's why we're launching the first ever White House Initiative on Women's Health Research, led by Jill—doing an incredible job as First Lady—to pass my plan for $12 billion to transform women's health research and benefit millions of lives all across America.

I know the cost of housing is so important to you. If inflation keeps coming down, mortgage rates will come down as well, and the Fed acknowledges that.

But I'm not waiting. I want to provide an annual tax credit that will give Americans $400 a month for the next 2 years as mortgage rates come down to put toward their mortgages when they buy their first home or trade up for a little more space. Just for 2 years.

And my administration is also eliminating title insurance [fees; White House correction] on federally backed mortgages. When you refinance your home, you can save $1,000 or more as a consequence.

For millions of renters, we're cracking down on big landlords who use antitrust law—using antitrust—who break antitrust laws—by price-fixing and driving up rents. We've cut redtape so builders can get federally financing, which is already helping build a record 1.7 million new house—housing units nationwide.

Now pass—[*applause*]—now pass [my plan; White House correction] and build and renovate 2 million affordable homes and bring those rents down.

To remain the strongest economy in the world, we need to have the best education system in the world. And I, like I suspect all of you, want to give a child—every child a good start by providing access to preschool for 3- and 4-years-old.

You know, I think I pointed out last year—[*applause*]. I think I pointed out last year that children coming from broken homes where there's no books, they're not read to, not spoken to very often start school—kindergarten or first grade hearing—having heard a million fewer words spoken.

Well, studies show that children who go to preschool are nearly 50-percent more likely to finish high school and go on to earn a 2- and 4-year degree no matter what their background is.

I met a year and a half ago with the leaders of the Business Roundtable. They were mad that I was ever—angry—I—well, they were discussing—[*laughter*]—why I wanted to spend money on education.

I pointed out to them: As Vice President, I met with over eight—I think it was 182 of those folks—don't hold me to the exact number—and I asked them what they need most—the CEOs. And you've had the same experience on both sides of the aisle. They say, "A better educated workforce," right?

So I looked at them. And I say: "I come from Delaware. DuPont used to be the eighth largest corporation in the world. And every new enterprise they bought, they educated the workforce to that enterprise. But none of you do that anymore. Why are you angry with me providing you the opportunity for the best educated workforce in the world?"

And they all looked at me and said, "I think you're right."

I want to expand high-quality tutoring and summer learning to see that every child learns to read by third grade. I'm also connecting local businesses and high schools so students get hands-on experience and a path to a good-paying job whether or not they go to college.

And I want to make sure that college is more affordable. Let's continue increasing the Pell grants to working and middle class families and increase record investments in HBCUs and minority-serving institutions, including Hispanic institutions.

When I was told I couldn't universally just change the way in which we did—dealt with student loans, I fixed two student loan programs that already existed to reduce the burden of student debt for nearly 4 million Americans, including nurses, firefighters, and others in public service.

Like Keenan Jones, a public educator in Minnesota, who's here with us tonight. Keenan, where are you? Keenan, thank you. He's educated hundreds of students so they can go to college. Now he's able to help, after debt forgiveness, get his own daughter to college.

And, folks, look, such relief is good for the economy because folks are now able to buy a home, start a business, start a family.

And while we're at it, I want to give public school teachers a raise.

And by the way, the first couple of years, we cut the deficit.

Now let me speak to the question of fundamental fairness for all Americans. I've been delivering real results in fiscally responsible ways. We've already cut the Federal deficit—[*laughter*]. We've already cut the Federal deficit over $1 trillion.

I signed a bipartisan deal to cut another trillion dollars in the next decade. It's my goal to cut the Federal deficit another $3 trillion by making big corporations and the very wealthy finally beginning to pay their fair share.

Look, I'm a capitalist. If you want to make or can make a million or millions of bucks, that's great. Just pay your fair share in taxes.

A fair Tax Code is how we invest in things that make this country great: health care, education, defense, and so much more.

But here's the deal. The last administration enacted a $2 trillion tax cut overwhelmingly benefit the top 1 percent—the very wealthy——

*Audience members.* Boo!

*The President.* ——and the biggest corporations—and exploded the Federal deficit.

They added more to the national debt than any Presidential term in American history. Check the numbers.

Folks at home, does anybody really think the Tax Code is fair?

*Audience members.* No!

*The President.* Do you really think the wealthy and big corporations need another $2 trillion tax break?

*Audience members.* No!

*The President.* I sure don't. I'm going to keep fighting like hell to make it fair. Under my plan, nobody earning less than $400,000 a year will pay an additional penny in Federal taxes—nobody—not one penny. And they haven't yet.

In fact, the child tax credit I passed during the pandemic cut taxes for millions of working families and cut child poverty in half. Restore that child tax credit. No child should go hungry in this country.

The way to make the Tax Code fair is to make big corporations and the very wealthy begin to pay their fair share. Remember in 2020, 55 of the biggest companies in America made $40 billion and paid zero in Federal income tax. Zero.

*Audience members.* Boo!

*The President*. Not anymore.

Thanks to the law I wrote and we signed, big companies now have to pay a minimum of 15 percent. But that's still less than working people pay in Federal taxes. It's time to raise the corporate minimum tax to at least 21 percent so every big corporation finally begins to pay their fair share.

I also want to end tax breaks for Big Pharma, Big Oil, private jets, massive executive pay when it was only supposed to be a million—a million dollars that could be deducted. They can pay them $20 million if they want, but deduct a million. End it now.

You know, there are 1,000 billionaires in America. You know what the average Federal tax is for those billionaires?

*Audience member.* Zero!

*The President.* No. [*Laughter*] They're making great sacrifices—8.2 percent.

*Audience members.* Boo!

*The President.* That's far less than the vast majority of Americans pay. No billionaire should pay a lower Federal tax rate than a teacher, a sanitation worker, or a nurse.

I proposed a minimum tax for billionaires of 25 percent—just 25 percent. You know what that would raise? That would raise $500 billion over the next 10 years.

And imagine what that could do for America. Imagine a future with affordable childcare, millions of families can get what they need to go to work to help grow the economy. Imagine a future with paid leave, because no one should have to choose between working and taking care of their sick family member. Imagine—imagine—a future with home care and eldercare, and people's living with disabilities so they can stay in their homes and family caregivers can finally get the pay they deserve.

Tonight let's all agree once again to stand up for seniors. Many of my friends on the other side of the aisle want to put Social Security on the chopping block. If anyone here tries to cut Social Security or Medicare or raise the retirement age, I will stop you.

The working people—[*applause*]. The working people who built this country pay more into Social Security than millionaires and billionaires do. It's not fair.

We have two ways to go. Republicans can cut Social Security and give more tax breaks to the wealthy. I will——

*Audience member.* [*Inaudible*]

*The President.* That's the proposal. Oh, no? You guys don't want another $2 trillion tax cut?

*Audience member.* Liar!

*The President.* I kind of thought that's what your plan was. [*Laughter*] Well, that's good to hear. You're not going to cut another $2 trillion for the superwealthy? That's good to hear.

I'll protect and strengthen Social Security and make the wealthy pay their fair share.

Look——

*Audience members.* Joe! Joe! Joe!

*The President.* ——too many corporations raise prices to pad their profits, charging more and more for less and less. That's why we're cracking down on corporations that engage in price gouging and deceptive pricing, from food to health care to housing.

In fact, the snack companies think you won't notice if they change the size of the bag and put a hell of a lot fewer—[*laughter*]—same size bag—put fewer chips in it. No, I'm not joking. It's called "shrink-flation." Pass Bobby Casey's bill, and stop this. I really mean it.

You probably all saw that commercial on Snickers bars. [*Laughter*] And you get—you get charged the same amount, and you've got about, I don't know, 10-percent fewer Snickers in it. [*Laughter*]

Look, I'm also getting rid of junk fees, those hidden fees at the end of your bill that are there without your knowledge. My administration announced we're cutting credit card late fees from $32 to $8.

Banks and credit card companies are allowed to charge what it costs them to instigate the collection. And that's more—a hell of a lot like $8 than 30-some dollars.

But they don't like it. The credit card companies don't like it, but I'm saving American families $20 billion a year with all of the junk fees I'm eliminating. Folks at home, that's why the banks are so mad. It's $20 billion in profit.

I'm not stopping there. My administration has proposed rules to make cable, travel, utilities, and online ticket sellers tell you the total price up front so there are no surprises. It matters. It matters.

And so does this. In November, my team began serious negotiations with a bipartisan group of Senators. The result was a bipartisan bill with the toughest set of border security reforms we've ever seen.

*Audience members.* Boo!

*The President.* Oh, you don't think so?

*Audience members.* Boo!

*The President.* Oh, you don't like that bill—huh?—that conservatives got together and said was a good bill? I'll be darned. That's amazing.

That bipartisan bill would hire 1,500 more security agents and officers, 100 more immigration judges to help tackle the backload of 2 million cases, 4,300 more asylum officers, and new policies so they can resolve cases in 6 months instead of 6 years now. What are you against?

One hundred more high-tech drug detection machines to significantly increase the ability to screen and stop vehicles smuggling fentanyl into America that's killing thousands of children.

This bill would save lives and bring order to the border. It would also give me and any new President new emergency authority to temporarily shut down the border when the number of migrants at the border is overwhelming.

The Border Patrol union has endorsed this bill.

[*At this point, members of the audience spoke over the President.*]

The Federal Chamber of Commerce has—yes, yes. You're saying "no." Look at the facts. [*Laughter*] I know—[*applause*]. I know you know how to read.

I believe that given the opportunity—for—a majority in the House and Senate would endorse the bill as well—a majority right now.

*Audience member.* Yes!

*The President.* But unfortunately, politics has derailed this bill so far.

I'm told my predecessor called Members of Congress in the Senate to demand they block the bill. He feels political win—he viewed it as a—it would be a political win for me and a political loser for him. It's not about him. It's not about me. I'd be a winner—not really. I——

*Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene.* What about Laken Riley?

[*Members of the audience spoke over the President.*]

*Audience members.* Boo!

*Rep. Greene*. Say her name!

[*The President held up a pin reading: "Say Her Name, Laken Riley."*]

*The President.* Lanken—Lanken [Laken; White House correction] Riley, an innocent young woman who was killed.

*Rep. Greene*. By an illegal!

*The President.* By an illegal. That's right. But how many of thousands of people are being killed by legals?

[*Members of the audience spoke over the President.*]

To her parents, I say: My heart goes out to you. Having lost children myself, I understand.

But look, if we change the dynamic at the border—people pay people—people pay these smugglers 8,000 bucks to get across the border because they know if they get by—if they get by and let into the country, it's 6 to 8 years before they have a hearing. And it's worth the—taking the chance of the $8,000.

[*Members of the audience spoke over the President.*]

But—but—if it's only 6 months—6 weeks, the idea is it's highly unlikely that people will pay that money and come all that way knowing that they'll be—able to be kicked out quickly.

Folks, I would respectfully suggest to my friend in—my Republican friends owe it to the American people. Get this bill done. We need to act now.

*Audience members.* Get it done! Get it done! Get it done!

*Audience member.* Build the wall.

*The President.* And if my predecessor is watching: Instead of paying [playing; White House correction] politics and pressuring Members of Congress to block the bill, join me in telling the Congress to pass it. We can do it together. But that's what he apparently—here's what he will not do.

I will not demonize immigrants, saying they are "poison in the blood of our country." I will not separate families. I will not ban people because of their faith.

Unlike my predecessor, on my first day in office, I introduced a comprehensive bill to fix our immigration system. Take a look at it. It has all these and more: secure the border, provide a pathway to citizenship for "Dreamers," and so much more.

But, unlike my predecessor, I know who we are as Americans. We're the only nation in the world with a heart and soul that draws from old and new.

Home to Native Americans whose ancestors have been here for thousands of years. Home to people of every place—from every place on Earth. They came freely. Some came in chains. Some came when famine struck, like my ancestral family in Ireland. Some to flee persecution, to chase dreams that are impossible anywhere but here in America.

That's America. And we all come from somewhere, but we're all Americans.

Look, folks, we have a simple choice: We can fight about fixing the border, or we can fix it. I'm ready to fix it. Send me the border bill now.

*Audience members.* Fix it! Fix it! Fix it!

*The President.* A transformational history—moment in history happened 58—59 years ago today in Selma, Alabama. Hundreds of foot soldiers for justice marched across the Edmund Pettus Bridge, named after the Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan, to claim their fundamental right to vote.

They were beaten. They were bloodied and left for dead. Our late friend and former colleague John Lewis was on that march. We miss him.

But joining us tonight are other marchers, both in the gallery and on the floor, including Bettie Mae Fikes, known as the "Voice of Selma." The daughter of gospel singers and preachers, she sang songs of prayer and protest on that Bloody Sunday to help shake the Nation's conscience.

Five months later, the Voting Rights Act passed and was signed into law. Thank you. Thank you, thank you, thank you. But 59 years later, there are forces taking us back in time: voter suppression, election subversion, unlimited dark money, extreme gerrymandering.

John Lewis was a great friend to many of us here. But if you truly want to honor him and all the heroes who marched with him, then it's time to do more than talk. Pass the Freedom To Vote Act, the John Lewis Voting Right [Rights; White House correction] Act.

And stop—stop denying another core value of America: our diversity across American life. Banning books, it's wrong. Instead of erasing history, let's make history.

I want to protect fundamental rights. Pass the Equality Act. And my message to transgender Americans is, I have your back.

Pass the PRO Act for workers' rights. Raise the Federal minimum wage, because every worker has the right to a decent living more than eight—7 bucks an hour.

We're also making history by confronting the climate crisis, not denying it. I don't think any of you think there's no longer a climate crisis. At least, I hope you don't. [*Laughter*] I'm taking the most significant action ever on climate in the history of the world.

I'm cutting our carbon emissions in half by 2030, creating tens of thousands of clean energy jobs, like the IBEW workers building and installing 500,000 electric vehicle charging stations; conserving 30 percent of America's lands and waters by 2030; and taking action on environmental justice—fenceline communities smothered by the legacy of pollution.

And patterned after the Peace Corps and AmericaCorps [AmeriCorps; White House correction], I launched the Climate Corps to put 20,000 young people to work in the forefront of our clean energy future. I'll triple that number in a decade.

To state the obvious, all Americans deserve the freedom to be safe. And America is safer today than when I took office.

The year before I took office, murder rates went up 30 percent.

*Norco, CA, resident and Gold Star father Steven Nikoui*. Remember Abbey Gate!

*The President.* Thirty percent, they went up——

*Mr. Nikoui*. United States Marines! Kareem Mae'Lee Nikoui!

*The President.* ——the biggest increase in history.

*Mr. Nikoui.* [*Inaudible*]

*The President.* It was then, through no—through my American Rescue Plan—which every American [Republican; White House correction] voted against, I might add—we made the largest investment in public safety ever.

Last year, the murder rate saw the sharpest decrease in history. Violent crime fell to one of its lowest levels in more than 50 years.

But we have more to do. We have to help cities invest in more community police officers, more mental health workers, more community violence intervention.

Give communities the tools to crack down on gun crime, retail crime, and carjacking. Keep building trust, as I've been doing, by taking executive action on police reform and calling for it to be the law of the land.

Directing my Cabinet to review the Federal classification of marijuana and expunging thousands of convictions for the mere possession, because no one should be jailed for simply using or have it on their record.

Take on crimes of domestic violence. I'm ramping up the Federal enforcement of the Violence Against Women Act that I proudly wrote when I was a Senator so we can finally—finally end the scourge against women in America.

There are other kinds of violence I want to stop. With us tonight is Jazmin whose 9-year-old sister Jackie was murdered with 21 classmates and teachers in her elementary school in Uvalde, Texas.

Very soon after that happened, Jill and I went to Uvalde for a couple days. We spent hours and hours with each of the families. We heard their message so everyone in this room, in this Chamber could hear the same message.

The constant refrain—and I was there for hours, meeting with every family. They said, "Do something." "Do something."

Well, I did do something by establishing the first ever Office of Gun Violence Prevention in the White House, that the Vice President is leading the charge. Thank you for doing it.

Meanwhile—[*applause*]. Meanwhile, my predecessor told the NRA he's proud he did nothing on guns when he was President.

*Audience members.* Boo!

*The President.* After another shooting in Iowa recently, he said—when asked what to do about it, he said, just "get over it." That was his quote. Just "get over it." I say stop it. Stop it, stop it, stop it.

I'm proud we beat the NRA when I signed the most significant gun safety law in nearly 30 years because of this Congress. We now must beat the NRA again.

I'm demanding a ban on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines. Pass universal background checks. None of this—none of this—I taught the Second Amendment for 12 years. None of this violates the Second Amendment or vilifies responsible gun owners.

[*Members of the audience spoke over the President.*]

You know, as we manage challenges at home, we're also managing crises abroad, including in the Middle East. I know the last 5 months have been gut-wrenching for so many people: for the Israeli people, for the Palestinian people, and so many here in America.

This crisis began on October 7 with a massacre by a terrorist group called Hamas, as you all know. One thousand two hundred innocent people—women and girls, men and boys—slaughtered after enduring sexual violence. The deadliest day of the—for the Jewish people since the Holocaust. And 250 hostages taken.

Here in this Chamber tonight are families whose loved ones are still being held by Hamas. I pledge to all the families that we will not rest until we bring every one of your loved ones home.

We also—we will also work around the clock to bring home Evan and Paul, Americans being unjustly detained by the Russians—and others around the world.

Israel has a right to go after Hamas. Hamas ended this conflict by releasing the hostages, laying down arms—could end it by releasing the hostages, laying down arms, and surrendering those responsible for October 7.

But Israel has a—excuse me. Israel has a added burden because Hamas hides and operates among the civilian population like cowards, under hospitals, daycare centers, and all the like.

Israel also has a fundamental responsibility, though, to protect innocent civilians in Gaza. This war has taken a greater toll on innocent civilians than all previous wars in Gaza combined. More than 30,000 Palestinians have been killed——

*Audience member.* Says who?

*The President.* ——most of whom are not Hamas. Thousands and thousands of innocents—women and children. Girls and boys also orphaned.

Nearly 2 million more Palestinians under bombardment or displacement. Homes destroyed, neighborhoods in rubble, cities in ruin. Families without food, water, medicine. It's heartbreaking.

I've been working nonstop to establish an immediate cease-fire that would last for 6 weeks to get all the prisoners released—all the hostages released and to get the hostages home and ease the intolerable and—humanitarian crisis and build toward an enduring—a more—something more enduring.

The United States has been leading international efforts to get more humanitarian assistance into Gaza. Tonight I'm directing the U.S. military to lead an emergency mission to establish a temporary pier in the Mediterranean on the coast of Gaza that can receive large shipments carrying food, water, medicine, and temporary shelters.

No U.S. boots will be on the ground.

A temporary pier will enable a massive increase in the amount of humanitarian assistance getting into Gaza every day.

And Israel must do its part. Israel must allow more aid into Gaza and ensure humanitarian workers aren't caught in the crossfire. And they're announcing they're going to—they're going to have a crossing in Northern Gaza.

To the leadership of Israel, I say this: Humanitarian assistance cannot be a secondary consideration or a bargaining chip. Protecting and saving innocent lives has to be a priority.

As we look to the future, the only real solution to the situation is a two-state solution over time. And I say this as a lifelong supporter of Israel, my entire career. No one has a stronger record with Israel than I do. I challenge any of you here. I'm the only American President to visit Israel in wartime.

But there is no other path that guarantees Israel's security and democracy. There is no other path that guarantees that Palestinians can live in peace with—with peace and dignity. And there is no other path that guarantees peace between Israel and all of its neighbors, including Saudi Arabia, with whom I'm talking.

Creating stability in the Middle East also means containing the threat posed by Iran. That's why I built a coalition of more than a dozen countries to defend international shipping and freedom of navigation in the Red Sea.

I've ordered strikes to degrade the Houthi capability and defend U.S. forces in the region. As Commander in Chief, I will not hesitate to direct further measures to protect our people and our military personnel.

For years, I've heard many of my Republican and Democratic friends say that China is on the rise and America is falling behind. They've got it backwards. I've been saying it for over 4 years, even when I wasn't President.

America is rising. We have the best economy in the world. And since I've come to office, our GTB [GDP; White House correction] is up, our trade deficit with China is down to the lowest point in over a decade. And we're standing up against China's unfair economic practices.

We're standing up for peace and stability across the Taiwan Straits. I've revitalized our partnership and alliance in the Pacific: India, Australia, Japan, South Korea, the Pacific Islands. I've made sure that the most advanced American technologies can't be used in China—not allowing to trade them there.

Frankly, for all his tough talk on China, it never occurred to my predecessor to do any of that.

I want competition with China, not conflict. And we're in a stronger position to win the conflict [competition; White House correction] of the 21st century against China than anyone else for that matter—than at any time as well.

Here at home, I've signed over 400 bipartisan bills. But there's more to pass my unity agenda.

Strengthen penalties on fentanyl trafficking.

*Audience member.* Boo!

*The President.* You don't want to do that, huh? [*Laughter*]

Pass bipartisan privacy legislation to protect our children online.

Harness—[*applause*]. Harness the promise of AI to protect us from peril. Ban AI voice impersonations and more.

And keep our truly sacred obligation to train and equip those we send into harm's way and care for them and their families when they come home and when they don't.

That's why, with the strong support and help of Denis and the VA, I signed the PACT Act, one of the most significant laws ever, helping millions of veterans exposed to toxins who now are battling more than 100 different cancers. Many of them don't come home, but we owe them and their families support.

And we owe it to ourselves to keep supporting our new health research agency called ARPA-H—and remind us—to remind us that we can do big things, like end cancer as we know it. And we will.

Let me close with this. [*Applause*] Yay! [*Laughter*] I know you don't want to hear anymore, Lindsey, but I've got to say a few more things. [*Laughter*]

I know I may not look like it, but I've been around a while. [*Laughter*] When you get to be my age, certain things become clearer than ever.

I know the American story. Again and again, I've seen the contest between competing forces in the battle for the soul of our Nation, between those who want to pull America back to the past and those who want to move America into the future.

My lifetime has taught me to embrace freedom and democracy, a future based on core values that have defined America—honesty, decency, dignity, and equality—to respect everyone; to give everyone a fair shot; to give hate no safe harbor.

Now, other people my age see it differently. [*Laughter*] The American story of resentment, revenge, and retribution.

That's not me. I was born amid World War II, when America stood for the freedom of the world. I grew up in Scranton, Pennsylvania, and Claymont, Delaware, among working class people who built this country.

I watched in horror as two of my heroes—like many of you did—Dr. King and Bobby Kennedy, were assassinated. And their legacies inspired me to pursue a career of service.

I left a law firm and became a public defender because my city of Wilmington was the only city in America occupied by the National Guard after Dr. King was assassinated because of the riots. And I became a county councilman almost by accident.

I got elected to the United States Senate when I had no intention of running, at age 29. Then Vice President to our first Black President. Now a President to the first woman Vice President. In my career, I've been told I was too young. [*Laughter*] By the way, they didn't let me on the Senate elevators for votes sometimes. They—not a joke. [*Laughter*]

And I've been told I am too old. [*Laughter*] Whether young or old, I've always been known—I've always known what endures. I've known our North Star. The very idea of America is that we're all created equal—deserves to be treated equally throughout our lives.

We've never fully lived up to that idea, but we've never walked away from it either. And I won't walk away from it now.

I'm optimistic. I really am. I'm optimistic, Nancy.

*Audience members.* Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

*The President.* My fellow Americans, the issue facing our Nation isn't how old we are, it's how old are our ideas.

Hate, anger, revenge, retribution are the oldest of ideas. But you can't lead America with ancient ideas that only take us back. To lead America, the land of possibilities, you need a vision for the future and what can and should be done.

Tonight you've heard mine. I see a future where [we're; White House correction] defending democracy, you don't diminish it. I see a future where we restore the right to choose and protect our freedoms, not take them away. I see a future where the middle class has—finally has a fair shot and the wealthy have to pay their fair share in taxes. I see a future where we save the planet from the climate crisis and our country from gun violence.

Above all, I see a future for all Americans. I see a country for all Americans. And I will always be President for all Americans because I believe in America. I believe in you, the American people. You're the reason we've never been more optimistic about our future than I am now.

So let's build the future together. Let's remember who we are. We are the United States of America. And there is nothing—nothing—beyond our capacity when we act together.

God bless you all, and may God protect our troops. Thank you, thank you, thank you.