

ELECTION 2020

# Back in Hometown, Biden Makes Economic Case Against Trump

The Democratic contender focused on a critique of the president's policies toward working-class voters, a thematic shift from his recent emphasis on the impeachment inquiry



Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden lays out his economic policy plan to help rebuild the middle class during a campaign stop in Scranton, Pa., on Wednesday. PHOTO: RICK LOOMIS/GETTY IMAGES

*By Sabrina Siddiqui*

Updated Oct. 23, 2019 3:30 pm ET

SCRANTON, Pa.—In a bid to appeal to the working class voters who helped propel President Trump to the White House in 2016, Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden returned to his hometown of Scranton Wednesday to deliver a rebuke of Mr. Trump's economic policies and values.

Hours before Mr. Trump was poised to touch down on the other side of the state in Pittsburgh, Mr. Biden, who faces a crowded Democratic primary field, refocused his message on a general election argument against the president, suggesting Mr. Trump had failed to grasp the struggles of middle class Americans.

"He doesn't seem to have any sense of empathy at all for people," Mr. Biden said. "I've not seen it exist—unlike any other president I've worked with."

“We don’t deserve a president who goes out of his way to make life in America harder, crueller, pettier,” Mr. Biden added. “He said he’s working for the forgotten American. He’s forgotten about the forgotten American.”

The president has made his economic record a central focus of his reelection effort.

“Thanks to President Trump’s pro-growth agenda unemployment is at record lows, wage-growth is strong, and household incomes are higher than they were under Obama-Biden,” said Trump campaign spokeswoman Sarah Matthews. “On nearly every indicator, Americans are better off than they were four years ago with Joe Biden in office.”

Mr. Biden’s speech marked a return to the economic case he has sought to build against Mr. Trump since launching his campaign in April under the premise that he holds the most experience in the sprawling Democratic field to challenge the president next November.

---

#### ELECTION UPDATES

---

- Follow the latest from the campaign trail, at Campaign Wire
  - • Who’s Running in 2020
- 

In recent weeks, Mr. Biden’s campaign pitch across early battleground states placed more emphasis on the impeachment inquiry engulfing Mr. Trump in Washington. The investigation stems from the president’s attempts to persuade the Ukrainian government to investigate Mr. Biden and his son, Hunter Biden, as well as

alleged Ukrainian interference in the 2016 election.

In Scranton, Mr. Biden drew heavily on his roots in the northeastern Pennsylvania city where he was born, casting himself as a longtime champion of working and middle class voters.

Mr. Trump carried Pennsylvania in 2016 by fewer than 45,000 votes. Although Hillary Clinton narrowly won Lackawanna County, which covers Scranton, neighboring Luzerne County saw one of the largest flips in Mr. Trump’s favor in the traditionally Democratic state.

Mr. Biden’s remarks came as a new national survey found him with his widest margin over his 2020 Democratic rivals since April. The CNN poll, released on Wednesday, followed a spate of other surveys showing Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren running neck-and-neck with Mr. Biden.

Mr. Biden didn’t mention Ms. Warren by name, even as he used his remarks to bolster his own credentials as a candidate who would take on corporations and the wealthiest Americans. But just before Mr. Biden took the stage in Scranton, Ms. Warren drew the endorsement of Jim Kenney, the mayor of Philadelphia, where Mr. Biden’s campaign is headquartered.

Although Mr. Biden received a warm reception from his hometown crowd, Salvatore Ricciardi, a retired teamster from Troop, a borough outside of Scranton, said Mr. Trump's attacks on Mr. Biden and his son had the potential to stick to his candidacy. Mr. Ricciardi compared the issue to the controversy in 2016 over Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server as secretary of state.

"That's what scares me," said Mr. Ricciardi, a supporter of Mr. Biden's. "Donald Trump is discouraging voters by getting them to think, 'the Bidens—they're just like the Clintons—they've been around too long.'"

**Write to Sabrina Siddiqui at [Sabrina.Siddiqui@wsj.com](mailto:Sabrina.Siddiqui@wsj.com)**

Copyright © 2019 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers visit <https://www.djreprints.com>.