Wow. Huh? Wow.

Well, listen, standing here with me, of course, are the people who I’ve dedicated my life to: My sweet daughters, Emma and Reese Kasich.

You know, I remember when they were born — remember that, sweetie?

(LAUGHTER)

I kept saying to the doctor, “How’s it going,” you know, and he’s trying to deliver two, and finally, he looks at me square in the eye, and he said, “Can you shut up? I’m a little busy right now.”

(LAUGHTER)

And they came out, and I could hold them in the palm of my hand. It was so sweet.

And so I, along with Karen, have dedicated our lives to giving them a better life than we were able to ever get from our parents. And you know what? They’re doing fantastic. Emma and Reese Kasich.

(APPLAUSE)

And my wife, pray for her. She’s married to me, OK?

(LAUGHTER)

KASICH: From the very tips of my toes to the top of my head, I just love my wife so much. Such a greater partner…

(APPLAUSE)

… and such a great lady.

So I want to tell you that it’s this whole business of the American Dream, isn’t it, that we can all work to make sure that next generation is going to be in a position of greater strength than what we received. And I get my inspiration from the people who came before me. And I want to tell you about a few of the ones that inspire me.

I’d like to start with my uncle Steve. Uncle Steve was a tough guy — you know, the son of a coal miner. Rough and gruff and tell it like it is. And he found himself at Iwo Jima, and he looked around during that battle and he saw a lot of people dying. Uncle Steve was not a church-going man, but in the middle of all the violence and the blood and the death, he said to God, if you will take me off this island, I will go to church every day for the rest of my life.

(LAUGHTER)

And he did. And he did. And Uncle Steve…

(APPLAUSE)

When Uncle Steve came home from the war, the brothers all slept in the same room; they didn’t have a lot. And Uncle George told me that he would have nightmares and he would speak in Japanese. And he told his brothers never wake me, never wake me from that nightmare because I don’t what will happen. Let me sleep and wake up on my own.

And Uncle George — he’s here today, he’s right over here. He’s 89 years old.

(APPLAUSE)

I so love my Uncle George. He’s the patriarch of our family. Well, Uncle George was in the infantry, and he was scheduled to take a boat from England to Belgium. But the division he was in couldn’t all fit in the boat, so they asked Uncle George to wait until the next day. Well that boat left England on its way to Belgium, and a submarine launched a torpedo and sunk that boat and everyone on it perished.

The next day, Uncle George took another boat and he landed in France. And he fought with great honor and he returned home and became a guidance counselor and guided young people for the next 38 years of his life. What a man.

(APPLAUSE)

You know, when my father-in-law — we call him Popsy, grandfather — joined the Marines at the age of 17; wanted to serve his country. But I guess most important, my mom and dad. You know, Mom was — well, she was a visionary. Didn’t get the education; you know, her mother could barely speak English, but boy, was she smart. And if you think I have opinions, you never met my mom.

(LAUGHTER)

And my father was the mailman. They called him John the Mailman. And when we laid my mother and father to rest, there were countless numbers of people who came and said John the Mailman, he watched out for all of us. And they gave up so much, didn’t take — I wished they’d have spent more on themselves, but they just — no matter what you told them, they weren’t doing to do it because it was all about the next generation. And they are the ones that have inspired me.

And all of you that are here today, you’re the same way, aren’t you? You’ve got those people who did so much for you who are your heroes. And they don’t have to be famous, they’re just people you love and that you admire. That American Dream that is pivotal for the future for our country, but I have to tell you there are a lot of people in America today who are not sure that that American Dream is possible, that that American Dream is alive. And I can understand their concerns.

KASICH: You know, when I was a kid, you went out and you got a job and you worked at that job your entire lifetime. You got your health care, you got your retirement and everything was good.

Today, you could be a 51-year-old man and one day after serving and doing everything the right way, somebody walks into your office and says, I’m sorry, but we don’t need you anymore.

Can you imagine that conversation?

Could you imagine that dad when he is driving home or that mom when she is driving home?

They lose confidence. They wonder what their future is.

Can they get another job?

Can they support their family?

Will anybody be there to help them?

Or how about moms and dads today?

They send their kids to college, many of these young people ringing up massive amounts of debt trying to get an education and they are living in the attic and Mom and Dad are wondering, will they get a job?

Will they pay their bills?

What kind of a future are they going to have?

Or, at the same time, we can also think about what all of us fear greatly and that is the problems of bad health.

Can I afford those expensive drugs that I need to survive?

What is it going to cost me to get treatment, just not for myself but for one of the loved ones in my family?

Will I be bankrupted and lose everything I have, everything I’ve worked for?

It’s a real fear.

Or the fear of the tsunami of drugs — it’s everywhere, isn’t it? The kids that are here and there are many of them, don’t do drugs, don’t put that big 1,000-pound pack on your back and keep you from your God-given purpose. But all moms and dads worry that those drugs are going to wash away our own neighborhoods and maybe wash away our children.

And how about those that struggle to make ends meet?

There are some people just say, oh, well, just work harder or pull yourself up by your bootstraps. I believe in all that. Some people just don’t have the fortune that many of us have. And they struggle. They struggle for a whole lifetime and they worry, that can they rise?

Can they — can they pull the rest of their family members up the ladder, the promise of America? And they worry about it.

Or how about if you are a member of the minority community, an African American?

You wonder. The system, I think, sometimes doesn’t just work for me but sometimes I feel like that system works against me. And you think about the troubles that many of our African Americans still face today in a world where we have worked to provide equal rights and opportunities. Sometimes they are not so sure and I don’t blame them.

Or how about all of us? We pick up the paper. It’s Chattanooga, it’s Fort Hood, it’s ISIS.

Are we safe?

Are we going to be safe to go to the mall?

Are we safe to leave our homes?

These are the worries that many Americans have.

But I have to tell you, as serious as these are — and they are very serious — we have had a lot worse, much worse in this country.

Think about it, the civil war.

You remember reading about it? I mean, it’s not just neighbors fighting against neighbors, but it was even family members, kin fighting against one another and killing one another on a battlefield right in America.

How about the racial violence that we experienced in this country?

The early days of television when they put the dogs and the gas and the batons on people of another color. Or the world wars, where many in our families never came home, leaving widows and children without a dad. Or the Depression, the Depression. Ask your grandfather, ask your mom and dad about that depression.

KASICH: My father used to say that he would go down to the store and get some food for the family and the guy would say, “We’ll put it on your bill.” There was no bill. That’s what it took for America to get through the Depression.

And you all remember that crystal clear morning and the horror we felt on 9/11.

But guess what? We’ve always got through it, because the testing is what makes you stronger. It’s the challenges that make you better. I have lived through them, and I have become stronger for them, and America has become stronger for them.

And here’s how we’ve done it: by staying together. Not by dividing each other but by staying together with our eyes on the horizon, with our eyes on the horizon, about the future.

(APPLAUSE)

We have a little town in Ohio called Wilmington. They followed that formula.

Let me tell you about these folks. They played by the rules — worked every day, highly productive, teamwork — and one day, an employer said, “We’re leaving. We’re out of here.”

And thousands of people, thousands of hardworking, God-fearing people like your neighbors, went from getting a paycheck on a Friday afternoon to visiting a food pantry so they could feed their kids.

I was down there in 2010 after this earthquake — economic earthquake hit Wilmington. We had a campaign bus. My wife was with me.

We walked through that food pantry. We looked at the people and preachers and civil servants and leaders and caregivers. They were at the food pantry, but they hadn’t lost any hope, because they had their eyes on the horizon.

We got back on the bus — I will never forget it as long as I live — we got back on — on the bus, and I said, “Folks, do you understand” — some of them had been with me for a long time, so they got it. But some of the others were rookies.

I said, “Do you understand what we are doing here? This isn’t a political campaign.” And by the way, either will this be. “This is not a political campaign.

“Did you see those people? Did you see the tears in their eyes? Did you see them hugging their children? Did you see them not hopeless? We’re going to join in, and we’re going to help them, because it is our job and our mission as human beings, as children of God, to work with them, to lift them.”

And guess what? And guess what?

(APPLAUSE)

And in Wilmington today, the sun’s coming up. I told them that the sun would come up again. It hasn’t reached its zenith, but the sun is rising, and the sun is going to rise to the zenith in America again. I promise you, it will happen.

(APPLAUSE)

Listen, you know — you know — you know who does this? See, it’s you and me. See, it’s teachers and preachers and moms and dads, doctors, construction workers, like that sweet man in Brown County that saw his family washed away over the weekend — keep him in your prayers — police and firemen and people like my dad, the mailman, John the mailman, because we are the glue, we are the glue that holds our country together.

How about — as for me, as for me, look, I’m just trying to do my best, OK?

I came here to Ohio State. I found myself on the 19th floor of one of the towers. You could hit it with a stone from here.

I had 15 roommates. The place was 23 floors high. The tower next door, the same size.

KASICH: Ohio State can be a pretty intimidating place, OK. It’s big. It is a big place. And I left my dorm room, went down to the first floor and I walked just right down the path to Ohio Stadium. And it was a time when you could actually walk in that stadium, they didn’t have that one end closed in. And I walked into that stadium — I swear this happened — and I walked right to the 50 yard line.

There was no one in the stadium that day, and I looked around. All of those seats, those big structures that were there and I thought to myself either this place is going to take me down or I’m going to take it down.

(LAUGHTER)

(APPLAUSE)

One way or the other, it was going to be — you know, either it was going to be me or it was going to be a place, kids — because you’ll face it someday — to help me move forward.

You know, it’s amazing, I’m back here today. You could throw a stone and hit that stadium or you could hit that dormitory so many years later, and guess what? I am here to ask you for your prayers, for your support, for your efforts because I have decided to run for president of the United States.

(APPLAUSE)

You know, they — they ask you all the time like it’s a trick question or something, you know, well why do you want to do this. I mean, it’s like they’re going to catch you, right?

(LAUGHTER)

I mean — I mean, if you can’t answer that question, you ought to be back at the 50 yard line at Ohio Stadium wondering about your future.

(LAUGHTER)

I do this because — well, first of all, we’re not born to serve others. Think about this, I want you to think about this. If we’re not born to serve others, what were we born to do? I do this for my family, of course, for my sweet family, for my neighbors, Molly, for my friends of many, many, many years, many of whom are working with me today 30, 40 years later. I really do it for everyone. And I have to humbly tell you — and I mean humbly tell you — that I believe I do have the skills and I have the experience…

(APPLAUSE)

I have the experience and the testing, the testing which shapes you and prepares you for the most important job in the world. And I believe I know how to work and help restore this great United States. And I have to tell you, it’s a daunting challenge.

I was just at Wendy’s on Saturday up here on Hudson Avenue, and the two wonderful African-American fellows were there. And I walked in, I was standing behind them, and one said to the other one, I don’t know what I believe what I’m seeing, but I think that’s Governor Kasich standing behind me.

(LAUGHTER)

And he said you better run. Do you know what meant to me? Two African-American guys, one with a knee — a brace on his knee and another one with a cane. And I said well, you know, people are going to have a lot more money than I am, and they looked at me and they said but you’ve got statistics, you’ve got statistics.

(LAUGHTER)

KASICH: So some are going to ask, as they always have, why do you think you can do this. You know, all of my life, people have told me you can’t do something, OK? And I’ll tell you why. It’s because I do believe in the power of very big idea, big bold ideas.

In 1976, I went out to the convention in Kansas City and not only worked for Ronald Reagan, but I worked with Ronald Reagan and I got to travel with Ronald Reagan.

(APPLAUSE)

Yes, I actually knew the guy, OK, the real guy, not from the history book. He lost at that convention. I had been managing, I think, five states for him at that convention. I mean, you talk about lightning striking me. I was 24 years old. I walked in; they were one man short and said, could you manage five states for the governor? I had no idea what they were saying.

I said, of course I could. OK? I had no idea about it.

Well, he lost, as you know. And I was there when he met with his closest advisers. And he said we’ve lost the battle. We hadn’t lost any war because we will all be back. And I’m going to fix America with all of your help.

And of course, he did and it further cemented my notion that big ideas — big ideas change the world. Big ideas change the world.

(APPLAUSE)

So I came back — I came back here to Ohio and I was all charged up and I was working as an aide. And I came back and I remember meeting with one of my buddies. And I said, you know, I think I’m going to just run for the state senate and beat that guy we had been watching. And I remember he was drinking something and it fell on the floor when I told him that.

People, look, I was 24.5 years old. I had no relatives that lived in the state. I didn’t really know anybody, but I had a big idea.

And you know what we did? We went out and we got moms and dads, a lot of moms who went door to door and rang doorbells. And the weekend before the election one of the local newspapers said, he is a fine young man but he has no chance to win.

Well, I won that election with the help of the army of volunteers. I went on to chair the health committee, where I learned to work across the aisle because the House was run by Democrats and that is where I learned that policy is far more important than politics, ideology or any of the other nonsense we see.

(APPLAUSE)

You know, they said it couldn’t be done. We proved them wrong.

And then at the ripe old age of 30 I decided I’m going to run for Congress.

My mother and father are like, Johnny, what are you doing now? OK?

Well, they said I couldn’t win. I was too young. And by the way, I was — I was going to run against an incumbent in 1982; it’s like the worst year. We lost 26 Republican seats that year. I was going to run against a guy — a guy who got one of his degrees from Harvard.

(LAUGHTER)

That’s when I knew I had an edge. Clearly he couldn’t have gotten into Ohio State. And I knew I had an edge.

(APPLAUSE)

And in 1982 I was the only Republican in America to defeat an incumbent Democrat all across this country. And…

(APPLAUSE)

… guess what? Here is the irony. I got to go to Washington and work with President Ronald Reagan.

You know?

(APPLAUSE)

They said — they said it couldn’t be done and we proved them wrong again.

And then I got down to Washington and got on a — the Armed Services Committee, where I served for 18 years on national security. And I was there just the blink of an eye and I discovered that these hammers and screwdrivers had cost thousands of dollars. And it was taking the resources from the people that needed it who were serving in the military. We were wasting money.

And I said we need to clean this up. And they’re like, “No, come on. It’s the Pentagon. You can’t — you — forget about it. It can’t happen.”

KASICH: Well, we passed some legislation and we made things right. We saved money. We improved the system. And we helped the military. They said it couldn’t be done and we proved them wrong again.

(APPLAUSE)

Let me be clear. Our military must be improved. We need to — we need to…

(APPLAUSE)

We need to cut the bureaucracy, and we need to strengthen our services.

Now, I’m a person — I’m person that doesn’t like to spend a lot of money. But in this case, national security climbs to the very top of the heap, because we must be strong, and we must assume our role as leaders of the world.

(APPLAUSE)

So six years after I got to Congress, I got on the budget committee. And I remember going to those first few meetings, Bob. I mean, it was, like, terrible, and I was complaining. I was up right here at a gas station in Westerville, and I’m saying, “These people don’t want to do anything.”

And some guy walked around the pump, and he looked me square in the eye. He said, “Things are so bad, what are you going to do about them”?

So I flew down to Washington, I met with my staff, about six of them, and I said, “You know, I think — I think we should just write a budget for the United States of America.” And they said, “Well, there’s, like, 100 people at the White House working on a budget and probably 50 up here, and we only have six.”

And I said, “I know, we’re overstaffed, but we stay out of our way, we’ll be able to get this done.”

(LAUGHTER)

And we wrote a budget for the United States of America.

And why? Everybody knows me as a budget guy. It’s not about numbers; it’s about vision, it’s about values, and we do not have the right as grownups to ring up debts to suit ourselves and pass them onto the next generation. We don’t have that right.

(APPLAUSE)

10 years of my life I worked at this.

My first budget was 405 to 30. I had the 30. My staff was depressed. I thought we were doing pretty well. That’s how I was.

(LAUGHTER)

Well, we just kept at it and kept at it and kept at it.

And you heard my great friend, John Sununu, by the way, one of the smart — he’s a wonderful, wonderful man. If John Sununu had not come to me and told me he was going to help me in New Hampshire, I wouldn’t have done this. I — I’ve just got to tell you. He is remarkable, and we did it together.

And the politicians didn’t care about — they — they didn’t care about anything, about being reelected; they cared about fixing America, Pat. They cared about getting the budget balanced and getting the economy going.

You know what? They said it couldn’t be done. They said it was too big, too hard, too much politics, and we proved them wrong again, and we balanced that federal budget. We balanced it.

(APPLAUSE)

You want job creation, you balance the books. Am I right? You balance the books.

And if I’m president — or maybe I should say when I am president…

(APPLAUSE)

… I will promise you — I will promise you that my top priority will get this country on a path to fiscal independence, strength, and we will rebuild the economy of this country, because creating jobs is our highest moral purpose, and we will move to get that done.

(APPLAUSE)

And by the way — by the way, how about a little balanced-budget amendment to the Constitution so Congress will start doing its job?

(APPLAUSE)

So I left. You know, I — I — I left Washington and had a great time. You — you know, I was — worked at Lehman Brothers and learned about businesses, and I went to Fox News, where, as you know, I was a giant television star.

(LAUGHTER)

And I had a great time.

But you know, I — I had a calling. It was like — here’s kind of how it went. Didn’t hear anything, but it was clear to me.

“You’ve had an amazing life. You got a lot of skills. You’re going back. You’re going back.”

And I sensed it when I was on a trip and I came back and called my friends together and said, “I guess we got to do this,” and they — you know, a lot of people, the doubters, they said, “Well, you know, you haven’t been in politics for 10 years, in a decade. You have never run state-wide, and we haven’t defeated an incumbent in 36 years in Ohio. Incumbents don’t lose.”

KASICH: So we put together a vision, we put together a team. They said it couldn’t be done and we proved them wrong again.

(APPLAUSE)

And then we took over the reins. But, you know, we didn’t go unprepared. We knew what we wanted to do, because I’m going to tell you, if I’m president, I know what we need to do, OK? There’s no confusion about that. I know what needs to be done. I have been there at all levels, OK.

(APPLAUSE)

When we came in here, $8 billion in the hole, a loss of 350,000 jobs, $0.89 in the rainy day fund. One guy said that he game them a dollar just to double the rainy day fund. A lot of hopelessness here, particularly among the poor and minorities.

People said maybe Ohio’s best days are behind them. I thought that was just a bunch of baloney. And I said not only will we get this budget balanced, but we’ll cut taxes, and they were like, are you kidding me? There’s no way we can do that. So we went to work. And we didn’t have to slash — we didn’t have to really slash things, we just had to use a 21st century formula.

Improve things, innovate them, make a better product at a lower price. You know, let Mom and Dad stay in their home rather than being forced in a nursing home, let them stay in their own home where they’ll be healthier and happier. And if we have to knock down the special interests to get it done, so be it. And that’s what we did.

(APPLAUSE)

Now today, four-and-a-half years later, $8 billion in the hole, $2 billion surplus. A loss of 350,000 jobs, a gain of 350,000 jobs. And tax cuts, tax cuts of $5 billion, the largest in the country.

(APPLAUSE)

And as I hope you all know, economic growth is not an end unto itself. If you’re drug addicted, we’re going to try to rehab you and get you on your feet. If you’re mentally ill, prison is no place for you. Some treatment and some help is where you need to be. If you’re the working poor, we’re going to give you an opportunity to take a pay raise and not bang you over the head because you’re trying to get ahead. Well, we’re changing that system. If you have an autistic son or daughter, for most of them, they can get insurance, and we’ll work to make sure all of them have it. For the developmentally disabled, they’re made in God’s image. They have a right to rise, they have to be successful.

(APPLAUSE)

And with all this — with all this, they said it couldn’t be done. And guess what? We proved them wrong again. And I’m going to take what we’ve learned here in the heartland, that band of brothers and sisters that I work with every day, and we are going to take the lessons of the heartland and straighten out Washington, D.C. and fix our country.

(APPLAUSE)

Well, and you know, now they’re going to say — got a lot of them back here — they’re going to say well, you know, nice guy or good guy or whatever they — or not a good guy, whatever they’re going to say, OK.

(LAUGHTER)

I don’t know if he can win. But with you, and you, sweetheart, OK; can you paint signs?

(LAUGHTER)

And with — and with all of you, together, we’ll prove them wrong again, won’t we? We’ll prove them wrong again.

(APPLAUSE)

AUDIENCE: Go John go! Go John go!

KASICH: Thank you.

So our team — you know, we’ll tame the bureaucracy, we’ll restore some common sense. Mary Taylor has the Common Sense Initiative; get rid of all those stupid rules. Well, we’ll do that in Washington.

(APPLAUSE)

KASICH: How about putting some people in the government that understand job creators and respect them rather than beating them down? How — how about that for an idea?

(APPLAUSE)

How about some common sense and make America stronger militarily?

But folks, here’s the thing that I want to say to you, and I said this at my inaugural. Some people think they just don’t matter in this. Do you know how wrong that is?

You know, we got this Holocaust Memorial, and there’s a line etched that says, “If you save one life, you’ve changed the world.”

Do you believe that? Do you believe that?

(APPLAUSE)

If you save one life, you changed the world. And the Lord will record what you’ve done for another in the Book of Life.

Now, we’ve got some values that we need to think about that can bring us together. Because folks, we’re a divided country, but we can fix it.

I’ll tell you what I think some of them are: personal responsibility. God ate — or, “The dog ate my homework,” went out in the fifth grade, OK?

Here’s the thing. We own our lives. I mean, if you’re hurting, we’ll help you.

You know, my mother used to say — my mother used to say that it is a sin not to help somebody who needs help but it’s equally a sin to continue to help somebody who needs to learn how to help themselves. Personal responsibility needs to be restored in our country.

(APPLAUSE)

Teach our children. Resilience. Everybody doesn’t get a trophy just for showing up, folks.

(LAUGHTER) You know what resilience is? It’s getting knocked down, and I have been knocked down so many times.

But getting knocked down’s not the problem. It’s refusing to get up. We need to teach our kids, teach our children about resilience and remind ourselves that you’re 51 years old, and you lost your job. You’re going to come back stronger and better, and we’ll help you.

Empathy, this one is so important. I just would ask you to think. Put yourself in the shoes of another person. We’re so quick to make judgments today in our country. Don’t walk so — so — so fast.

You know, yesterday, I was coming downtown, and — and there was a lady, and she was older, and she had a cane, and she was barely walking. She was putting one foot in front of another. I wanted to stop and just hug her, encourage her.

People who have not been dealt — dealt the best hand in life, yeah, we want to hold them accountable, but the Lord wants our hearts to reach out to those that don’t have what we have. I mean, that shouldn’t be hard for America. That’s who we are.

When people have studied our country, they have talked about our compassion, and we need to bring it back. Empathy, don’t be so quick to judge. Me, too, OK? Me, too.

And then teamwork. I know Tom Moe is up here. You know, one time, he — you know, he used to run the veterans. I call it the great arc of life.

The man goes in the military, he sits in the Hanoi Hilton, beaten all the time in a tiny little cell, he comes home, and I put him in charge of the veterans. I mean, this was the arc, the beautiful arc of what’s right.

Tom had a little code. I don’t know where he is right now. Here he is right here. He tapped out a code that kept them all together, and it was team that carried them through the most difficult times.

Uncle George, it was team that helped you to be successful, wasn’t it? The Vietnam veterans and Iraqi veterans and the Afghanistan veterans, we do best. Or the Depression, when we all hung together. Teamwork, team, they’re not the enemy; they’re part of our team. We can disagree. They’re our team.

And then family, huh? Look at these families here. It’s the building block of America. It’s the building block of our culture. Let’s recognize it.

KASICH: And of course, faith. And faith is real simple for me. It’s about the dos, not about the don’ts. And what it’s really about is God didn’t put us on this Earth just to take of ourselves, He put us on this Earth to make things a little bit better because we live here.

And so there are some that are going to try to divide us; we see about it all the time. You know (inaudible) forget it. I don’t pay any attention to that kind of nonsense. At the end of the day, it’s about being together. Because, you know, it says We the People.

And by the way, if you think that I or anybody who becomes president or a big shot, we don’t — we don’t move America. Oh, we do our part if we have courage and intelligence, but it’s all of us in the neighborhoods, in the families across the country. We’re the strength and the glue. Don’t — please, please, please don’t lose sight of it. As for me, I’m just a flawed man, a flawed man trying to honor God’s blessings in my life.

I just — I don’t even understand it. He’s been very good to me. And I want you to know that I will do my very best to serve you because you are in my mind’s eye. Who are you? Get up every day, go to work, work hard, follow the rules, come home, spend time with your family and at night, you go to bed and say your prayers for your family, for your neighbors and for our nation.

And folks, as it has been said many times, the light of a city on a hill cannot be hidden. The light of a city on a hill cannot be hidden. America is that city and you are that light.

God bless you and God bless America. Thank you all very much.