

CNN's *Joe Biden: CNN Presidential Town Hall*

10/21/21

8:01:05 p.m.

20 seconds

ANDERSON COOPER: I just want to know, there's been a lot of negotiating going on behind the scenes, as I'm sure you are very involved with. Are you close to a done deal?

PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN: No problems. All done. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] No, look, Anderson, we've been — I've probably spent well over 100 hours. This is a — this is a big deal.

(....)

8:03:21 p.m.

27 seconds

NICHOLAS VAUGHT [Democrat]: So my wife and I have two young boys, Arthur and Teddy. However, the cost of child care is nearly double our mortgage. We won't have more children. But even though we earn a good salary now, child care is so expensive. So how will this new infrastructure plan help middle-class families pay for child care?

BIDEN: Well, let me ask you, do you — how old are your kids?

VAUGHT: Three and a half and six months old.

BIDEN: God love you.

(....)

8:05:26 p.m.

58 seconds

COOPER: Joe Manchin wants a work requirement with your enhanced tax credit for kids. Is that something you would support?

BIDEN: No. Here's the deal. All these people are working anyway. [APPLAUSE] And by the way, you know, why should somebody who is not working and has — you know, makes — has a million-dollar trust fund, why should they get the benefit and someone making 60 grand and not working but staying home, why should they not get anything? I don't get that.

COOPER: You're also proposing for the first time ever federal paid parental leave and —

BIDEN: Yes. [APPLAUSE] That's a different issue. Yeah. Go ahead.

COOPER: Different issue. Right. But this is in your proposal. How much time off would parents

actually get under your proposal? Because, at one point, you had talked about 12 weeks. Now there's reports it's down to maybe four weeks.

(....)

8:07:44 p.m.
46 seconds

VANESSA ANTRUM [Democrat]: Mr. President, my parents have been married for 73 years and both are dealing — [APPLAUSE] — yes — both of them are dealing with dementia. My father, who is a veteran, is completely bedridden, and my mom is experiencing issues with walking. I have found the process for me to provide care for them in my home very hard. They have worked all their life only for me to experience a lot of red tape to provide support —

BIDEN: Bingo.

ANTRUM: — in a loving home environment. What is being done to support the elderly, especially for middle-class family like mine?

(....)

8:10:23 p.m.
36 seconds

COOPER: One of the other things that Democrats are looking to do is to expand Medicare to include dental, vision, and hearing as well. Given all the negotiation that are going on, will all three of those still be covered?

BIDEN: That's a reach and the reason why it's a reach, it's not — I think it's a good idea and it's not that costly in relative terms, especially if we allow medicare to negotiate drug prices. But here's the thing. Mr. Manchin is opposed to that, as is I think Senator Sinema —

COOPER: Opposed to all of them?

BIDEN: — opposed to all three.

(....)

8:13:01 p.m.
17 seconds

BEN FREDERICK [Independent]: A study shows the top five percent of income earners pay 60 percent of the income taxes in this country. I hear you repeatedly say that the wealthy are not paying their fair share of income taxes. What is the percentage of income that you believe is fair?

(....)

8:14:02 p.m.

22 seconds

COOPER: Let me follow up because Kyrsten Sinema, who you mentioned, Senator Sinema, is opposed to any tax rate hikes for corporations and for high earners. Speaker Pelosi suggested today she could accept that. The question is, a, would you accept that? No rate hikes, tax rate hikes for corporations or high earners. And if so, how would you pay for this plan otherwise?

(....)

8:15:17 p.m.

29 seconds

COOPER: So you would be willing to go along with what Senator Sinema and it seems like Speaker Pelosi is willing to consider, no tax hike for corporations or for high earning individuals?

BIDEN: Here's what I'm willing to do. I'm willing to make sure that we pay for everything without anyone making less than \$400,000 paying a single cent more in taxes. That's my objective and so, there's ways to do that. For example, you covered it on your show. The minimum international tax at 15 percent.

COOPER: But no — no actual rate hikes?

BIDEN: No.

(....)

8:17:27 p.m.

34 seconds

SONDRA GUTTMAN [Democrat]: We've heard in the news that the proposal for two years of free community college may be cut from your economic package. An educated citizenry is absolutely crucial to solving complex problems like climate change — [APPLAUSE] — and the systematic inequities in this country. We hope that this is not cut from the package, but if it is what can you do to ensure that all Americans can get the education that they need to face these issues?

(....)

8:19:38 p.m.

16 seconds

COOPER: Mr. President, the question was on the — the — on community colleges —

BIDEN: No, I —

COOPER: — which — which was a big campaign promise that you made. You talked about that a lot on the campaign trail.

BIDEN: Yeah. [APPLAUSE] And I'm going to get it done. And if I don't I'll be sleeping alone for a long time. [LAUGHTER]

(...)

8:21:05 p.m.

24 seconds

COOPER: What was that conversation when you realized you weren't going to be able to get it in this bill at this time and you had dinner with Dr. Biden that night? What was that conversation like? How'd you break that news?

BIDEN: Well, the White House has a lot of bedrooms. [LAUGHTER] And she went like this. [POINTS OUT] Down the hall.

COOPER: Alright.

BIDEN: No, look, it really makes a gigantic difference.

(...)

8:22:22 p.m.

17 seconds

JOHN MECHE [Independent]: President Biden, I had so much faith in your election win, but based on history, the bipartisan efforts of the Democratic Party are held hostage by rogue moderates and Republicans. Why not do like the Republicans and usher through the Democratic agenda?

(...)

8:24:27 p.m.

34 seconds

COOPER: Let me ask you, just getting to his question, you — we've talked a lot about Senator Manchin and Senator Sinema. You seem relatively confident you can kind of get Senator Manchin on board. There's a lot of Democrats in the House and Senate who are confused about where Senator Sinema actually stands on things. [APPLAUSE] And I know she's been

negotiating directly with you and the White House. What is your read on her? And obviously, you need her to remain positive in your direction, so I don't know what you're going to say. But what is your read on her? Do you know where she stands?

(...)

8:26:05 p.m.
50 seconds

COOPER: We'd be interested in hearing them if you want.

BIDEN: No, no, no, no, I know. But all kidding aside, I think we can get there.

COOPER: Let — you talked about the environmental piece. You said Senator Sinema is — is on board with that, certainly Senator Manchin is not. It gets to our next question. This is from Kobi Khong. He's originally from Anaheim, California. He's a sophomore class president at Johns Hopkins University and a Democrat. [APPLAUSE] Kobi, what's your question?

BIDEN: Mr. President.

KOBI KHONG [Democrat]: One of the largest issues that people have trouble comprehending the severity of is climate change. Many legislators and politicians today are lenient as they won't have to live with the future effects. Without the legislative support for the climate aspects of your budget proposal and the Earth rapidly approaching the Paris agreement's 1.5 degrees limit, what other backup plans do you have to ensure a future for the next generations?

(...)

8:28:17 p.m.
17 seconds

COOPER: Let me just follow up very quickly on that cause the key climate provision that was in the Build Back Better plan, as you call it, the Clean Electricity Performance Program, that's been dropped now from the spending bill —

BIDEN: No, it hasn't.

COOPER: It has not?

BIDEN: No, it has —

COOPER: But Senator Manchin is opposed to that.

(...)

8:30:07 p.m.
7 seconds

COOPER: But the concession has been agreed to for Senator Manchin for coal in his state.

BIDEN: No, no.

COOPER: Is that true?

BIDEN: Nothing has been formally agreed to.

(....)

8:35:47 p.m.
19 seconds

COOPER: So before we get to our next question I want to just bring up the current labor market shortages. Millions of jobs are unfilled. Businesses are struggling to meet demand. Is there anything you can do to either encourage people to go back to work or make jobs more attractive that they want to go back to work?

BIDEN: Yes, so, first of all —

COOPER: Is there a role for the federal government?

(....)

8:39:02 p.m.
3 seconds

COOPER: What do you say to someone who's down? Because there's a lot of people watching tonight who are.

(....)

8:40:08 p.m.
23 seconds

ANNA HIRSCH [Democrat]: President Biden, growing up in a small town, I have been surrounded by small business owners including my mom, who owns her own interior design business. With the current supply chain crisis, small businesses are in jeopardy of not being able to get products that they need because priority is given to large businesses. Does your administration have any policies or plans in place to aid the current supply chain problem and/or to help small businesses that are affected by this?

(....)

8:42:16 p.m.

6 seconds

COOPER: Would you consider the National Guard to help with the supply chain issue?

BIDEN: Yes. Absolutely. Positively. I would do that.

(...)

8:42:55 p.m.

31 seconds

COOPER: So would you consider the National Guard for trucking, for —

BIDEN: Yes.

COOPER: — because there's a lot of problems with not enough truck drivers —

BIDEN: Yes.

COOPER: — right now.

BIDEN: But here's — and that's why what we're doing now —

COOPER: Do you have a timetable for that?

BIDEN: — well, I have a timetable — first of all, I want to get the ports up and running and get the railroads and the rail heads and the trucks in port, ready to move because I've gotten Walmart and others to say we're going to move stuff off of the port into our warehouses, which saves —

COOPER: So — but are you actually talking about having national guardsmen and women driving trucks?

BIDEN: The answer is — the answer is yes.

(...)

8:44:10 p.m.

22 seconds

LINDA HARRIS [Democrat]: My middle-class family of four lives on a pretty tight budget. My husband and I both work full-time at — at well-paying jobs, but we still struggle some months to make the ends meet with rising gas prices and utility prices and grocery prices. We're feeling our

discretionary income get squeezed and reduced. What plans does the administration have to help ease this kind of current crunch we're feeling?

(...)

8:45:40 p.m.
34 seconds

COOPER: Let me ask you about that just in terms of inflation because you had told us at a town hall, I think, it was in July, that the — in the — it was just near-term inflation. The Wall Street Journal recently talked to, like, 67 financial experts who said that they saw high inflation going all the way — or deep into 2022. Do you think it's going to last for a while?

BIDEN: I don't think so. I don't think it will last if — depending what we do. If we stay exactly where we are, yes. If we don't make these investments, yes.

COOPER: What about gas prices cause some states are seeing —

(...)

8:46:51 p.m.
5 seconds

COOPER: Do you there's — I mean, do you see — do you have a timeline for gas prices of when you think they may start coming down?

(...)

8:54:33 p.m.
6 seconds

NEIJMA DONNOR [Independent]: When will the vaccines for young children be ready? And how accessible will they be once released?

(...)

8:56:43 p.m.
22 seconds

COOPER: Mr. President, let me ask you a followup about that. As many as one in three emergency responders in some cities like Chicago, Los Angeles, right here in Baltimore, are refusing to comply with city vaccine mandates. I'm wondering where you stand on that. Should police officers, emergency responders be mandated to get vaccines? And if not, should they be stay at home or let go?

(....)

8:58:35 p.m.

28 seconds

BIDEN: But my generic point is there's so much misinformation. You know what I find fascinating, I turn on Fox to find out how popular I am. [LAUGHTER] But —

COOPER: How are you doing there?

BIDEN: — I'm doing very well. I think I'm at three percent favorable. [LAUGHTER] But all kidding aside, one of the things I find, do you realize they mandate vaccinations?

COOPER: At Fox headquarters?

[APPLAUSE]

BIDEN: Yeah. I find that mildly fascinating.

COOPER: Mildly fascinating?

BIDEN: Mildly fascinating.

(...)

8:59:27 p.m.

38 seconds

THADDEUS PRICE [Democrat]: You received overwhelming support from the Black community. [APPLAUSE] And rightfully so. Rightfully so. But now many of us are disheartened —

BIDEN: Yep.

PRICE: — as we watch a congress fail to support police reform. We watch our voting rights vanish before our very eyes. [APPLAUSE] Mr. President, my question is what will you do over the next three years to rectify these atrocities, secure our democracy, and ensure that freedoms and liberties that all Americans should be entitled to.

(....)

9:02:24 p.m.

15 seconds

COOPER: Let me ask on voting rights, if it is as important to you as you say, I think there's a lot

of Democrats who look at the filibuster and would like to see it changed, even if it's — [APPLAUSE] — just on this one case. Why do you oppose that?

(...)

9:04:30 p.m.
16 seconds

COOPER: But — but are you saying once you get this current agenda passed on spending and social programs, that you would be open to fundamentally altering the filibuster or doing away with it?

(...)

9:05:07 p.m.
42 seconds

COOPER: But when it comes to voting rights —

BIDEN: Voting rights —

COOPER: — you —

BIDEN: — is deeply consequential.

COOPER: — when it comes to voting rights, just so I'm clear, though, you would entertain the notion of doing away with the filibuster on that one issue, is that correct?

BIDEN: And maybe more.

COOPER: And maybe other issues? [APPLAUSE] Okay. Let's — just a short time ago, the full House voted to hold — to hold former Trump ally Steve Bannon — current trump ally as well, in criminal contempt of congress. A week ago you said the Department of Justice should prosecute those who defied subpoenas from the January 6th committee. Was that appropriate for you to weigh in on?

[APPLAUSE]:

BIDEN: No. The way I said it was not appropriate.

(...)

9:07:01 p.m.
13 seconds

COOPER: The attorney general put out a statement saying that they would make the decision on their own.

BIDEN: And they will. I guarantee that.

COOPER: You've decided not to exert executive privilege to shield the former President in the House's investigation into January 6th. Why? What were you —

(...)

9:11:59 p.m.
19 seconds

MEGAN CRAWFORD [Republican]: Throughout your campaign you've criticized former President Trump for his treatment of illegal immigrants and the southern border. Given that it's nearly been a year into your campaign, why haven't you been to the southern border of our country? And why did your stance on allowing immigrants suddenly revert to Trump-era policies?

(...)

9:13:48 p.m.
14 seconds

COOPER: Mr. President —

BIDEN: We don't have that.

COOPER: — you have kept in place a — under — public health authority known as Title 42.

BIDEN: Yes.

COOPER: — which is a Trump-era policy, which allows immediate or very quick return to people who crossed over the border based on Covid protocols.

(...)

9:14:43 p.m.
12 seconds

COOPER: Do you have plans to visit the southern border?

BIDEN: I've been there before and I haven't — I mean, I know it well. I guess I should go down, but the whole point of it is I haven't had a whole hell of a lot of time to get down.

(....)

9:16:25 p.m.

55 seconds

COOPER: Let me ask you about two other issues in the news. In less than two weeks, Minneapolis voters are going to decide whether or not to replace the police department in Minneapolis with what they would call a public safety department. What do you think of this?

BIDEN: Well, it depends what they mean by that. Look, I — I — grew up in a neighborhood —

COOPER: They said the public safety department would be — have a more comprehensive public health approach to the delivery of functions, of public safety, and could include licensed peace officers, police officers.

BIDEN: — well, it could. I think you need police officers. I think we need police officers to protect us. I think they have to be under certain — changed — circumstances but I think we have to provide for them more opportunities — I call for more money for police to go to community policing as well as dealing with additional help for psychologists and others working with the police departments.

COOPER: You've never been a fan of defunding police.

BIDEN: No, I haven't. I've never supported it.

(....)

9:19:44 p.m.

15 seconds

COOPER: Let me try to get in a couple of other questions from our audience.

BIDEN: I'm sorry. That's an easy one.

COOPER: But — but before we do, just another news question, New York City is removing statue of Thomas Jefferson from its legislative chamber because of Jefferson's history as a slave — slave holder. Do you support that decision?

(....)

9:21:17 p.m.

9 seconds

GLENN NIBLO [Republican]: China just tested a hypersonic missile. What will you do to keep up with them militarily and can you vow to protect Taiwan?

BIDEN: Yes and yes.

(...)

9:22:13 p.m.

6 seconds

COOPER: So, are you saying that — that the United States would come to Taiwan's defense —

BIDEN: Yes.

COOPER: — if China attacked?

BIDEN: Yes, we have a commitment to do that.

(...)

9:26:27 p.m.

26 seconds

COOPER: Just in the few minutes we have left, the country lost, and I know you lost somebody who you consider a close friend, General Colin Powell. What's something about him that people didn't know?

BIDEN: He had enormous integrity. They knew that, but he's one of the few serious, serious players I've dealt with over these years when he made a mistake, he acknowledges it. He said, I acknowledge — I was wrong about that.

COOPER: That's rare these days.

(...)

9:27:20 p.m.

1 minute and 31 seconds

BIDEN: He and I went out to the secret service racetrack. He had a brand new Corvette, his — his family bought, his kids bought him and I have a '67 327/350 and we raced. We raced. And, you know, you know, the only reason — no, I'm serious. It was on Jay Leno. Check it out. Jay Leno. He's — he's a hell of a guy.

COOPER: Who won?

BIDEN: Well, I won only because he was worried I was going to crash into him. [LAUGHTER] Because I don't have posy tracks and, so I was burning rubber the whole way out there and I could see him going, "whoa."

COOPER: Alright, so, just my final question is you famously at the signing ceremony, I think it was, for ObamaCare, you famously leaned in to the then-President and — I'm not going to say a direct quote, but off mic you said, “this is a big f'ing deal.” And I'm wondering the Build Back Better plan, is it a bigger f'ing deal than that?

[APPLAUSE]

BIDEN: 60 seconds. We got in the car to go over to the Department of Education after we did that.

COOPER: Oh, I thought you were talking about drag racing still.

BIDEN: No, no. He got in the car and he was laughing like hell. I said, “what's so damn funny? He told me. I whispered in his ear this way. I looked to where it's going and this is a big deal and I didn't realize the guy behind me was lip reading.

COOPER: Yeah.

BIDEN: He could see it. No, I'm serious. The answer is, yes, this is bigger.