

White House press conference (via CNN)

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4:33:46 p.m.

8 minutes and 22 seconds

NANCY CORDES: When it comes to your legislative agenda — when you were Vice President, your legislative agenda basically ran into a brick wall two years in when Republicans took control of the House, and that lasted for the rest of the Obama presidency. Is there any way for you to prevent that same fate from happening this time around —

PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN: Yes.

CORDES: — if Republicans take control of the House?

BIDEN: Yes, because it's going to be much closer if they take control. Look, the predictions were — and again, I'm not being critical of anybody who made the predictions. I got it, okay? This was supposed to be a red wave. You guys — you were talking about us losing 30 to 50 seats and this was going to — we're nowhere near — that's not going to happen. And so, there's always enough people in the — on the other team, whether it's Democrat or Republican, that the opposite party can make an appeal to and maybe pick them off to get the help. And — and so it remains to be seen. But, look, I doubt whether or not — for example, all the talk — I'd ask the rhet- — I don't expect you to answer, but the rhetorical question: Do you think that, you know, Senator Johnson is going to move to cut Medicare and Social Security? And if he does, how many Republicans do you think are going to vote for it? So, it depends.

CORDES: And then, my — my final question. Republicans have made it clear that if they do take control of the House, that they want to launch a raft of investigations on day one into your handling of Afghanistan, the border. They want to look into some of your Cabinet officials. They want to investigate you. They may even want to investigate your son. What's your message to Republicans who are considering investigating your family and, particularly, your son Hunter's business dealings?

BIDEN: “Lots of luck in your senior year,” as my coach used to say. Look, I think the American public want us to move on and get things done for them and, you know, I heard that there were — it was reported — whether it's accurate or not, I'm not sure — but it was reported many times that Republicans were saying, and the former President said, “How many times are you going to impeach Biden?” You know, impeachment proceedings against Bi — I mean, I think the — I think the American people will look at all of that for what it is. It's just almost comedy. I mean, it's — but, you know, look, I can't control what they're going to do. All I can do is continue to try to make life better for the American people. Okay. Phil. Phil Mattingly, CNN.

PHIL MATTINGLY: Thank you, Mr. President. I have 37 ques- — I'm kidding. [LAUGHTER] Sir, at a fundraiser last month, you said, “The rest of the world is looking at this election...both the good guys and the bad guys.” You noted you're going to G20 in a couple days. You'll come face to face with many of those leaders at the same moment that your predecessor is considering

launching his reelection effort. How should those world leaders, both good guys and bad guys, view this moment both for America and for your presidency?

BIDEN: Well, first of all, these world leaders know we're doing better than anybody else in the world, as a practical matter. Notwithstanding the difficulties we have, our economy is growing. You saw the last report; we're still growing at 2.6 percent. We're creating jobs. We're still in a solid position and there's not many other countries in the world that are in that position. And I promise you, from the telephone calls I still have and from the meetings I have with other heads of state, they're looking to the United States and saying, "How are you doing? And what are you doing? What can we do together? How..." So I think that the vast majority of my colleagues — at least those colleagues who are NATO members — European Union, Japan, South Korea, et cetera — I think they're looking to cooperate and wanting to know how — how we can help one another. And what was the other question?

MATTINGLY: (Inaudible) I hadn't asked it yet.

BIDEN: Oh, I'm sorry.

MATTINGLY: No, no, no. So, I think the — one way to follow up on that is you noted that you felt like there was a shift in terms of people being willing to show more decency in this moment. You've often talked about breaking the fever or kind of a transition from this moment that we faced over the last several years. Do you feel like the election is what represents that? Do you feel like the fever has broken, I guess?

BIDEN: Well, I'm not — I don't think we're going to break the fever for the super mega MAGA Republicans. I mean — but I think they're a minority of the Republican Party. I think the vast majority of the members of the Republican Party, we disagree strongly on issues but they're decent, honorable people. We have difference — differences of agreement on — on issues. But they — you know, I — I worked with a lot of these folks in the Senate and the House for a long time and, you know, they — they're — they're honest, and they're — and they're straightforward. They're different than mine, but they're — you know, they're — they're decent folks. And so, I think that the rest of the world — and a lot of you have covered other parts of the world, and you know — the rest of the world is looking at the United States. I guess the best way to say this is to — is to repeat what you've — some — some of you've heard me say before. The first G7 meeting — for the public, that's the — the seven largest democracies — when I went to — right after we got elected, in February, after I got sworn in in January. And I sat down at a table — a roundtable with the six other world leaders from the European Union, the United — and — and Canada, et cetera, and said, "America is back." And one of them turned to me and said, "For how long? For how long?" It was a deadly earnest question: "For how long?" And I looked at them. And then another one went on to say — and I'm not going to name them — went on to say, "What would you say, Joe, if, in fact, you went — we went to bed tonight here in — in England, woke up the next morning and found out that thousands of people had stormed the parliament of — of Great Britain — gone down the hall, broken down the doors, two cops ended up dying, a number of people injured, and they tried to stop the — the confirmation of an election?" It's not the same situation, obviously, as we have. And he said, "What would you think?" And what

— I ask a rhetorical question: What would you all think? You'd think England was really in trouble. You'd think democracy was on the edge if that happened in Great Britain.

And so, that's the way people were looking at us, like, "When is this going to stop?" Nothing like this has happened since the Civil War. I don't want to exaggerate. But literally, nothing like this has happened since the Civil War. And so, what I find is that they want to know: Is the United States stable? Do we know what we're about? Are we the same democracy we've always been? Because, look, the rest of the world looks to us — I don't mean that we're always — like we're always right. But if the United States tomorrow were to, "withdraw from the world," a lot of things would change around the world. A whole lot would change and so, they're very concerned that we are still the open democracy we've been and that we have rules and the institutions matter and that's the context in which I think that they're looking at: Are we back to a place where we are going to accept decisions made by the Court, by the Congress, by the government, et cetera?

MATTINGLY: So the entire genesis of that G7 conversation was tied to your predecessor, who is about to launch another campaign. So how do you reassure them, if that is the reason for their questioning, that the former President will not return or that his political movement, which is still very strong, will not —

BIDEN: Oh, yeah?

MATTINGLY: — once again take power in the United States?

BIDEN: Well, we just have to demonstrate that he will not take power by — if we — if he does run. I'm making sure he, under legitimate efforts of our Constitution, does not become the next President again.

MATTINGLY: Thanks.

(...)

4:46:15 p.m

11 minutes and 18 seconds

APRIL RYAN: Mr. President, I have a couple of questions on several issues. One, the Supreme Court. As you know, the Supreme Court has before it the issue of college admissions and affirmative action. What can and are you planning in case of a rollback that is expected? There are legal analysts that say that there will be drastic implications, there are tentacles from this, and they even say that this can impact *Brown v. Board* — the decision from *Brown v. Board*.

BIDEN: Well, you know, first of all, I asked our Justice Department to defend the present policy before the Supreme Court. And like a lot of pundits, I'm not prepared to believe that the Supreme Court is going to overrule the pre- — the existing decision. That's far from certain. And I don't be — I don't believe that. But number one — so, number one, what I did to try to change it is

object to it before the Supreme Court of the United States — our administration. Number two, I — there are a number of things that we can and must do to make it — and, by the way, this is a case involving an Asian American, in terms of getting into school, and whether there's affirmative action makes sense at all from the standpoint of those who are arguing against it. But, you know, the fact is that we're — we're also in a circumstance where there's a lot that we can do in the meantime to make sure that there's an access to good education across the board. And that is by doing things that relate to starting education at age three — formal schooling at age three — which it increases — not daycare, but school. All the studies over 10 years show that that increases the prospect of someone making it through 12 years without any difficulty, no matter what the background they come from, by 56 percent and I also think that we should be making sure that we have the ability to provide for two years of education beyond that, whether it's apprenticeships or community colleges.

And we also are in a situation where I think that — for example, I want to make sure we — a lot of it has to do with finances as well — that we make sure that we have help for people who come from modest means to be able to get to school. You know, the cost of college education has increased fourfold. And it used to be that a Pell Grant would cover something like 70 percent of the college tuition. Now it covers significantly less than that. So I want to increase the Pell Grants as well. But let's see what the Supreme Court decides and I'm — I am hopeful and our team and our — the lawyers who argued for us are not nearly as certain as the people you quoted as saying it's going to be overruled.

RYAN: Next question, sir. The issue is inflation. TheGrio and KFF conducted a study of Black voters that said inflation was the number one issue, and we saw it in this midterm election. What can you promise concretely in these next two years that will help turn the pocketbook for the better in the midst of staving off a recession?

BIDEN: Well, a number of things. First of all, un — Black unemployment is almost cut in half under my administration just since I began. More Black businesses have opened up — small businesses — than ever before. We're now in a situation where we're providing, through the Small Business Administration, down payments for people buying homes, because most people accumulate wealth in the value of their home, most middle-class families like mine. My dad bought a home, didn't have — just scraped together to get a home. By the time he was able to retire, he was — he had built up equity in a home. That's how most people do that and so — but what I can't do is I can't guarantee that we're going to be able to get rid of inflation, but I do think we can. We brought — we've already brought down the price of gasoline about \$1.20 a gallon across the board and I think that the — the — the — the oil companies are really doing the nation a real disservice. They've made — six of them made over \$100 billion in the last quarter in profit. A hundred billion dollars. In the past, if they had done the two things that they had done before — one, invest in more refineries and producing more product and/or passing on the rebates to the gas stations that — you know, they sell the oil at a cheaper rate than they have to — than they are selling it now, not taking advantage and that lowers the price of the total gallon of gas because that gets passed on. So there's a whole lot of things that we can do that are — that are difficult to do, but we're going to continue to push to do them.

And the other thing is that one of the things that makes a gigantic difference is what are the costs that exist in the average family and the average Black community. One, prescription drug costs. Well, we're driving those down precipitously, beginning next year and, you know, I'll bet you know a lot of people in the African American and — and Caucasian community that — that need to take insulin for diabetes. Well, we're going to reduce that cost. They're not going to pay more than \$35 for the insulin instead of four — average of \$400 and I can go down the list of the things that — my dad used to say it a different way. At the end of the month, the things you have to pay for, from your mortgage to food on the table to gasoline in the automobile, do you have enough money to do it? And when it's done, do you have anything left over? And medical bills are a big piece of that, particularly in the African American community and the poor — and poorer communities. They need help. And so we're driving down all of those costs. And we've already passed the legislation to do that; it's just taking effect. So there's a lot of things we can do to affect the things that people need on a monthly basis to reduce their inflation, their cost of living. And so — but I am optimistic, because we continue to grow and at a rational pace, we're not anywhere near a recession right now, in terms of the growth. But I think we can have what most economists call a "soft landing." I'm convinced that we're going to be able to gradually bring down prices so that they, in fact, end up with us not having to move into a recession to be able to get control of inflation.

RYAN: And, Mr. President, last question on humanity. I know, everybody else got some.

UNIDENTIFIED REPORTER: Not everybody else.

RYAN: Well, you're coming.

BIDEN: Okay, go ahead.

RYAN: Last question on humanity. Sir, you can't legislate and you can't executive order out the issue of empathy or the lack thereof in the midst of this rhetoric — this heated political rhetoric. What's next?

BIDEN: Part of what I think leadership requires — and I hope I meet the standard — is letting people know you understand their problem. Again, my dad used to have an expression. He said, "I don't expect the government to solve my problems, but I expect them to at least know what they are, understand them." And like a lot of you, we've been very fortunate as a family, but we've also been through a lot of fairly tough times and it's not — and I've had the great advantage of having a family to get through them. When my first wife and daughter were killed when a tractor trailer broadsided them and killed my wife and — killed my — my first wife and killed my daughter, and my two boys were expected to die; they were in the — it took the Jaws of Life three hours to get them out. They were on top of their dead mother and dead sister. I understand what that pain is like and when Jill and I lost Beau after a year in Iraq, winning the Bronze Star and Conspicuous Service Medal, a major in the United States military, came home with Stage 4 glioblastoma because he lived about 200, 5 — between 2 and 500 yards from burn pit that's 10 feet deep and as big as a football field, burning every toxic waste you could find. You know, I think that we — we understand what it's like to lose family members, mothers,

fathers, to can — all of you have been through that kind of thing. We've been fortunate, though. We've had each other. We've had strong families — Jill's sisters, my brothers, my sister and so what we can do to deal with that empathy is make sure there's help available, make sure there's people who are there to help — whether they are a psychologist or whether they're medical doctors or whether they're social workers — to be there to help, to help just hold a hand.

And, for example, we can do an awful lot for a lot of families, the families you're talking about, if we re — reinstate this Child Tax Credit. It cut child poverty by 40 percent when it was in place. I couldn't get it passed the second time around. So, there's a lot we can do. and the empathy is not just talking about it, it's communicating to people you genuinely understand and I hope a lot of people don't understand, because they — I don't want people having to know the pain. But the second piece of that is: Let them know that you are there to help. You're there to help and one of the things I've talked with Vivek Murthy about — and a lot of you have written about it, and you've written it well about it — is the need for mental health care in America. You know, when we got elected, there were something like, I don't know, 2-, 3-, 5 million people who had gotten their — their COVID shots. Well, in the meantime — I've got over 220 million people all three shots. But in the meantime, what happened? We lost over a million dead. A million dead. I read one study that for those million people, they had nine people who were — each one of them had, on average, nine people close to them. A relative, someone they're married to, a child — someone close. The impact has been profound. It's been profound. Think of all the people — think of all your children or your grandchildren who didn't have that senior prom, who didn't have that graduation party, who didn't have all the things we had that we took for granted — the impact on their psyche. So, there's a lot we have to do. And empathy reflects itself not just on what a person demonstrates they understand — of knowing what people need and helping to make it happen and we're trying to do that and a lot of Republicans are trying to do it, too. I don't mean this is a partisan thing. A lot of people are trying to do it because they know we got a problem.