

DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION

Biden vows to defeat Trump

Will end 'season of darkness'

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Associated Press

WILMINGTON, Del. — Joe Biden vowed to unite an America torn by crisis and contempt Thursday night, accepting the Democratic presidential nomination in an unfinished personal quest that has spanned three decades and been marred by personal tragedy, political stumbles and more dynamic rivals.

The past hurdles fell away as Biden addressed his fellow Democrats and millions of Americans at home who he hopes will send him to the White House to replace President Donald Trump — though his triumphant moment was drained of immediate drama by the coronavirus pandemic, which left him speaking to a nearly empty arena rather than to a joyously cheering crowd.

"Here and now I give you my word, if you entrust me with the presidency, I will draw on the best of us not the worst," Biden declared. "I'll be an ally of the light, not our darkness."

"And make no mistake, united we can and will overcome this season of darkness in America."

Fireworks lit the sky outside as the convention ended, giving a celebratory feel at last to the affair.

In his acceptance speech, Biden highlighted both his world view and a series of deeply personal challenges that shaped his life. On issues big and small, the 77-year-old Democrat presented a sharp contrast to the Republican president, but maintained a hopeful tone



Andrew Harnik/AP Photo

Democratic presidential candidate and former Vice President Joe Biden and his running mate, California Sen. Kamala Harris, watch fireworks during the fourth day of the Democratic National Convention on Thursday in Wilmington, Delaware.

throughout. His critics often lament his ability to speak under pressure, but with the nation watching, Biden did not stumble.

The pandemic has shaken the nation and fundamentally altered the campaign. But Biden pointed to the public health emergency and the severe economic fallout to turn traits previously seen as vulnerabilities, notably a long career spent in elected office, into an advantage by presenting himself as a competent leader in a moment when Democrats are crying out for one in the White House.

The night's keynote address was the speech of a lifetime for Biden, who would be the oldest president

ever elected if he defeats Trump in November. But his convention leaned on a younger generation earlier in the night to help energize his sprawling coalition.

Tammy Duckworth, an Illinois senator who lost both legs in Iraq and is raising two young children, said Biden has "common decency."

Cory Booker, only the ninth African American senator in U.S. history, said Biden believes in the dignity of all working Americans.

And Pete Buttigieg, a 38-year-old openly gay military veteran from Indiana, noted that Biden came out in favor of same-sex marriage as vice president even before President Barack Obama did.

"Joe Biden is right, this is a contest for the soul of

the nation. And to me that contest is not between good Americans and evil Americans," Buttigieg said. "It's the struggle to call out what is good for every American."

Above all, Biden focused on uniting the nation as Americans grapple with the long and fearful health crisis, the related economic devastation, a national awakening on racial justice — and Trump, who stirs heated emotions from all sides.

Biden's positive focus Thursday night marked a break from the dire warnings offered by Obama and others the night before. The 44th president of the United States warned that American democracy itself could falter if Trump is reelected, while Biden's running mate,

Kamala Harris, the 55-year-old California senator and the daughter of Jamaican and Indian immigrants, addressed race problems in a way Biden could not.

Throughout their convention, the Democrats summoned a collective urgency about the dangers of Trump as president. In 2016, they dismissed and sometimes trivialized him. In the days leading up to Biden's acceptance speech, they cast him as an existential threat to the country.

Beyond Biden's highly anticipated speech, Thursday's program was designed to highlight the diversity of the Democratic Party and the nation he hopes to lead.

"We know how important it is that we elect real leaders

like Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, people of honor and integrity, who hold justice close to their hearts and believe that the lives of my four Black children matter," Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms said. She spoke ahead of a tribute to the late John Lewis, the Georgia congressman and civil rights leader who devoted much of his life to ensuring African Americans are able to vote.

Biden's Democratic Party has sought this week to put forward a cohesive vision of values and policy priorities, highlighting efforts to combat climate change, tighten gun laws and embrace a humane immigration policy. They have drawn a sharp contrast with Trump's policies and personality, portraying him as cruel, self-centered and woefully unprepared to manage virtually any of the nation's mounting crises and policy challenges.

Voting was a prime focus of the convention on Thursday as it has been all week. Democrats fear that the pandemic — and the Trump administration — may make it difficult for voters to cast ballots in person or by mail.

Comedian Sarah Cooper, a favorite of many Democrats for her videos lip syncing Trump's speeches, put it bluntly: "Donald Trump doesn't want any of us to vote because he knows he can't win fair and square."

Biden's call for unity comes as some strategists worry that Democrats cannot retake the White House simply by tearing Trump down; Biden needs to give his sprawling coalition something to vote for. That's easier said than done in a modern Democratic Party made up of disparate factions that span generation, race and ideology.

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