

# Biden pitches big spending boost

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Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden declared Wednesday night that “America is rising anew” as he called for an expansion of federal programs to drive the economy past the pandemic and broadly extend the social safety net on a scale not seen in decades.

In his first address to Congress, he pointed optimistically to the nation’s emergence from the coronavirus scourge as a moment for America to prove that its democracy can still work and maintain primacy in the world.

Speaking in highly personal terms while demanding massive structural changes, the president marked his first 100 days in office by proposing a \$1.8 trillion investment in children, families and education to help rebuild an economy devastated by the virus and compete with rising global competitors.

His speech represented both an audacious vision and a considerable gamble. He is governing with the most slender of majorities in Congress, and even some in his own party have blanched at the price tag of his proposals.

At the same time, the speech highlighted Biden’s fundamental belief in the power of government as a force for good, even at a time when it is so often the object of scorn.

“I can report to the nation: America is on the move again,” he said. “Turning peril into possibility. Crisis into opportunity. Setback into strength.”

While the ceremonial setting of the U.S. Capitol was the same as usual, the visual images were unlike any previous presidential address. Members of Congress wore masks and were seated apart because of pandemic restrictions. Outside the grounds were still surrounded by fencing after insurrectionists in January protesting Biden’s election stormed to the doors of the House chamber where he gave his address.

The nationally televised ritual raised the stakes for his ability to sell his plans to voters of both parties, even if Republican lawmakers prove resistant. The president followed the speech by hitting the road to push his plans, starting in Georgia on Thursday and then on to Pennsylvania and Virginia.

“America is ready for takeoff. We are working again. Dreaming again. Discovering again. Leading the world again. We have shown each other and the world: There is no quit in America,” Biden said.

This year’s scene at the front of the House chamber also had a historic look: For the first time, a female vice president, Kamala Harris, was seated behind the chief executive. And she was next to another woman, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

The first ovation came as Biden greeted “Madam Vice



President Joe Biden addresses a joint session of Congress on Wednesday at the U.S. Capitol as Vice President Kamala Harris, left, and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi look on.

President.” He added, “No president has ever said those words from this podium, and it’s about time.”

The chamber was so sparsely populated that individual claps could be heard echoing off the walls.

Yet Biden said, “I have never been more confident or more optimistic about America. We have stared into an abyss of insurrection and autocracy — of pandemic and pain — and ‘We the People’ did not flinch.”

At times, the president plainly made his case for democracy itself.

Biden demanded that the government take care of its own as a powerful symbol to the world of an America willing to forcefully follow its ideals and people. He confronted an issue rarely faced by an American president, namely that in order to compete with autocracies like China, the nation needs “to prove that democracy still works” after his predecessor’s baseless claims of election fraud and the ensuing attack on the U.S. Capitol.

“Can our democracy overcome the lies, anger, hate and fears that have pulled us apart?” he asked. “America’s adversaries — the autocrats of the world — are betting it can’t. They believe we are too full of anger and division and rage. They look at the images of the mob that assaulted this Capitol as proof that the sun is setting on American democracy. They are wrong. And we have to prove them wrong.”

Biden repeatedly hammered home that his plans would put Americans back to work, restoring the millions of jobs lost to the virus. He laid out an extensive proposal for universal preschool, two years of free community college, \$225 billion for child care and monthly payments of at least \$250 to parents. His ideas target frailties that were uncovered by the pandemic, and he argues that economic growth will best come from taxing the rich to help the middle class and the poor.

Biden’s speech also provided an update on combating the COVID-19 crisis he was elected to tame, showcasing hundreds of millions of vaccinations and relief

checks delivered to help offset the devastation wrought by a virus that has killed more than 573,000 people in the United States. He also championed his \$2.3 trillion infrastructure plan, a staggering figure to be financed by higher taxes on corporations.

His appeals were often emotive and personal, talking about Americans needing food and rental assistance. He also spoke to members of Congress as a peer as much as a president, singling out U.S. Sen. Mitch McConnell, the Republicans’ leader, to praise him and speaking as one at a professional homecoming.

The GOP members in the chamber largely stayed silent, even refusing to clap for seemingly universal goals like reducing childhood poverty. U.S. Sen. Tim Scott, of South Carolina, said, in the Republicans’ designated response, that Biden was more rhetoric than action.

“Our president seems like a good man,” Scott said. “But our nation is starving for more than empty platitudes.”

The president spoke against a backdrop of the weakening but still lethal pandemic, staggering unemployment and a roiling debate about police violence against Blacks. He also used his address to touch on the broader national reckoning over race in America, urging legislation be passed by the anniversary of George Floyd’s death next month, and to call on Congress to act on the thorny issues of prescription drug pricing, gun control and modernizing the nation’s immigration system.

In his first three months in office, Biden has signed a \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief bill — passed without a single GOP vote — and has shepherded direct payments of \$1,400 per person to more than 160 million households. Hundreds of billions of dollars in aid will soon arrive for state and local governments, enough money that overall U.S. growth this year could eclipse 6% — a level not seen since 1984. Administration officials are betting that it will be enough to bring back all 8.4 million jobs lost to the pandemic by next year.

A significant amount proposed just Wednesday would

ensure that eligible families receive at least \$250 monthly per child through 2025, extending the enhanced tax credit that was part of Biden’s COVID-19 aid. There would be more than \$400 billion for subsidized child care and free preschool for all 3- and 4-year-olds.

Another combined \$425 billion would go to permanently reduce health insurance premiums for people who receive coverage through the Affordable Care Act, as well a national paid family and medical leave program. Further spending would be directed toward Pell Grants, historically Black and tribal institutions and to allow people to attend community college tuition-free for two years.

Funding all of this would be a series of tax increases on the wealthy that would raise about \$1.5 trillion over a decade. Republican lawmakers in Congress so far have balked at the price tags of Biden’s plans, complicating the chances of passage in a deeply divided Washington.

Associated Press writer Darlene Superville contributed to this report.

# Pause: ‘A reset is essential right now for all aspects’

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Henrikson said the aim is to end up with a final product that the board is able to adopt.

Commissioners unanimously supported pausing the work. During the hiatus, Henrikson said, county staff will continue to prepare drafts of the 18 goals and provide regular updates to the board.

“As we go forward, the governing body will take on the responsibility of tripping up this process,” Commissioner Lianne Thompson said to committee members during a board meeting Wednesday night. “We’re working on this. Let me assure you, your work is honored. It is valued. It is not lost.

“A reset is essential right now for all aspects.”

When committee members received an email from Henrikson about the pause, there was some shock and speculation about the intent behind the move.

Several committee members attended the board meeting Wednesday to ask commissioners to reinstate the committee meetings.

“Has it been tedious and too long, maybe?” Patrick Corcoran, a member of the countywide citizen advisory committee, said. “But this is the part of the process that’s supposed to be difficult. This is the beginning part of the making of the sausage. And as the process works through, it will finally come to the Board of Commissioners to adopt the language as it is written at that point. So I’m a little more patient with the process.

“Pauses equal lost momentum on a major project and this project doesn’t need to lose momentum. Land use planning is a very complex, steep learning curve for the nontechnical stakeholders.”

Corcoran added that having county staff work exclusively with commissioners over the next several months is at odds with Oregon’s land use planning goals, which stress citizen involvement.

“While I’m hesitant to lose momentum, I think there is value in having a dialogue with commissioners, the Planning Commission and staff on the best way to move forward,” Andy Davis, the chairman of the countywide citizen advisory committee, said. “So what I’d like to ask you to consider is to include some of or all of the CAC members in the dialogue suggested at the work session so that we can share both our reflections on our current work and to have conversations with you about some of the items that were brought up, like aspirational goals and scope of authority.

“I think reasonable people can have different ideas about how those concepts fit into the comprehensive plan and having a dialogue about them outside of just short public comment periods may be helpful to everyone getting on the same page, or at least understanding each other and finding a way forward in a way that best contributes to making a successful comp plan — and in the long run makes our county stronger, which is what I believe all of us want in this process.”

## CLATSOP CARE HEALTH & REHABILITATION CENTER

An update from your local nursing home

As a not-for-profit community supported organization, it's very important to us to keep the community informed of what's happening in our facility. That's why we've decided to share updates each week in the local paper.

### EXPANSION TO VACCINATIONS

In an ongoing effort to protect our community and the community at large, Clatsop Care Center is offering anyone who comes in contact with our facility the opportunity to be vaccinated.

We're now able to offer COVID-19 vaccines on an ongoing basis to incoming residents, their visitors, family, and staff. Through our partnership with Consonus Pharmacy, we're able to order the COVID-19 vaccine and administer them on site with the help of our staff nurses.

This Tuesday we successfully administered 6 doses of the Pfizer vaccines to residents and staff! This new development helps us keep our residents, staff, and community safe.

Clatsop Care Center completed the initial round of vaccine clinics in December, January, and February with Walgreens Pharmacy (pictures below).



Thank you for your continued support!

for more information, please visit  
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