

INAUGURATION DAY IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

Joe Biden becomes 46th president, saying 'democracy has prevailed'

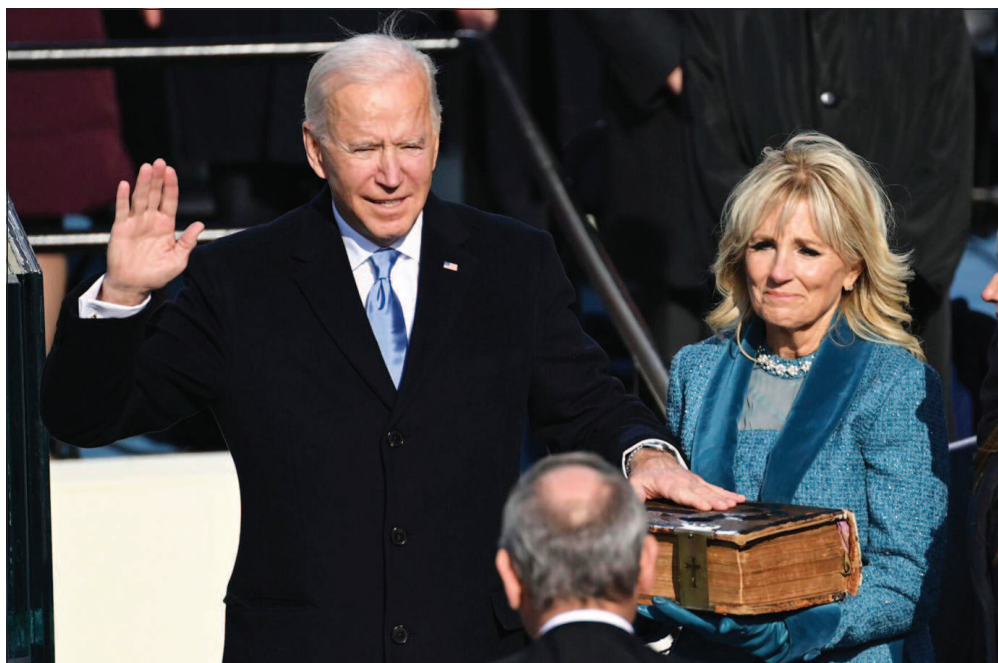
By Jonathan Lemire, Zeke Miller and Alexandra Jaffe
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Joe Biden became the 46th president of the United States on Wednesday, Jan. 20, declaring that “democracy has prevailed” as he took the helm of a deeply divided nation and inherited a confluence of crises arguably greater than any faced by his predecessors.

Biden’s inauguration came at a time of national tumult and uncertainty, a ceremony of resilience as the hallowed American democratic rite unfurled at a U.S. Capitol battered by an insurrectionist siege just two weeks ago. The chilly Washington morning was dotted with snow flurries, but the sun emerged just before Biden took the oath of office, the quadrennial ceremony persevering even though it was encircled by security forces evocative of a war zone and devoid of crowds because of the coronavirus pandemic.

“The will of the people has been heard, and the will of the people has been heeded. We’ve learned again that democracy is precious and democracy is fragile. At this hour, my friends, democracy has prevailed,” Biden said. “This is America’s day. This is democracy’s day. A day in history and hope, of renewal and resolve.”

And then he pivoted to challenges ahead, acknowledging the surging virus that has claimed more than 400,000 lives in the United States. Biden looked out over a capital city dotted with empty storefronts that attest to the pandemic’s deep economic toll and where summer protests laid bare the nation’s renewed reckoning on racial injustice.



Saul Loeb/Pool Photo via Associated Press

Joe Biden is sworn in as the 46th president of the United States by Chief Justice John Roberts as Jill Biden holds the Bible on Wednesday, Jan. 20, at the U.S. Capitol.

“We have much to do in this winter of peril, and significant possibilities: much to repair, much to restore, much to heal, much to build and much to gain,” Biden said. “Few people in our nation’s history have more challenged, or found a time more challenging or difficult than the time we’re in now.”

His predecessor’s absence underscored the healing that is needed.

Flouting tradition, Donald Trump departed Washington on Wednesday morning ahead of the inauguration rather than accompany his successor to the Capitol. Though three other former presidents — Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama — gathered to watch the ceremonial transfer of power, Trump, awaiting his second impeachment trial, instead flew to Florida after stoking grievance among his supporters with the lie that Biden’s win was illegitimate.

Biden, in his third run for

the presidency, staked his candidacy less on any distinctive political ideology than on galvanizing a broad coalition of voters around the notion that Trump posed an existential threat to American democracy. Biden did not mention Trump by name in the early moments of his inaugural address but alluded to the rifts his predecessor had helped create.

“I know the forces that divide us are deep and they are real. But I also know they are not new. Our history has been a constant struggle between the American ideal that we all are created equal and the harsh, ugly reality of racism, nativism, fear, demonization that have long torn us apart,” Biden said. “This is our historic moment of crisis and challenge, and unity is the path forward and we must meet this moment as the United States of America.”

Biden came to office with a well of empathy and resolve born by personal tragedy as

well as a depth of experience forged from more than four decades in Washington. At age 78, he was the oldest president inaugurated.

More history was made at his side, as Kamala Harris became the first woman to be vice president. The former U.S. senator from California is also the first Black person and the first person of South Asian descent elected to the vice presidency and will become the highest-ranking woman ever to serve in government.

The two were sworn in during an inauguration ceremony with few parallels in history.

Tens of thousands of troops are on the streets to provide security precisely two weeks after a violent mob of Trump supporters, incited by the Republican president, stormed the Capitol in an attempt to prevent the certification of Biden’s victory.

“Here we stand, just days after a riotous mob thought

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— President Joe Biden

they could use violence to silence the will of the people,” Biden said. “To stop the work of our democracy. To drive us from this sacred ground. It did not happen. It will never happen. Not today, not tomorrow. Not ever. Not ever.”

The tense atmosphere evoked the 1861 inauguration of Lincoln, who was secretly transported to Washington to avoid assassins on the eve of the Civil War, or Roosevelt’s inaugural in 1945, when he opted for a small, secure ceremony at the White House in the waning months of World War II.

The day began with a reach across the aisle after four years of bitter partisan battles under Trump. At Biden’s invitation, congressional leaders from both parties bowed their heads in prayer in the socially distanced service just a few blocks from the White House.

Once at the Capitol, Biden will be administered the oath by Chief Justice John Roberts; Harris will be sworn in by Justice Sonia Sotomayor; the first Latina member of the Supreme Court. Vice President Mike Pence, standing in for Trump, was sitting nearby as Lady Gaga, holding a gold microphone, sang the National Anthem accompanied by the U.S. Marine Corps band.

The theme of Biden’s approximately 30-minute speech will be “America United,” and aides said it would be a call to set aside differences during a moment of national trial.

Biden will then oversee a “Pass in Review,” a military tradition that honors the peaceful transfer of power to a new commander in chief. Then, Biden, Harris and their

spouses will be joined by that bipartisan trio of former presidents to lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery.

Later, Biden will join the end of a slimmed-down inaugural parade as he moves into the White House. Because of the pandemic, much of this year’s parade will be a virtual affair featuring performances from around the nation.

In the evening, in lieu of the traditional glitzy balls that welcome a new president to Washington, Biden will take part in a televised concert that also marks the return of A-list celebrities to the White House orbit after they largely eschewed Trump.

“I protested 45’s inauguration, and I wanted to be here when he left,” said Raelyn Maxwell of Park City, Utah. “And I wanted to celebrate the new president.” She brought a bouquet of roses she hoped to toss to Harris and some champagne to toast the occasion.

Trump is the first president in more than a century to skip the inauguration of his successor. In a cold wind, Marine One took off from the White House and soared above a deserted capital city to his own farewell celebration at nearby Joint Base Andrews. There, he boarded Air Force One for the final time as president for the flight to his Florida estate.

“I will always fight for you. I will be watching. I will be listening and I will tell you that the future of this country has never been better,” said Trump, who wished the incoming administration well but once again declined to mention Biden’s name.

Baker County Monthly Unemployment Rates: 2019-2020

11/19	12/19	01/20	02/20	03/20	04/20	05/20	06/20	07/20	08/20	09/20	10/20	11/20
4.0%	3.8%	4.1%	4.1%	4.1%	13.0%	13.2%	10.9%	9.8%	8.1%	7.5%	6.5%	5.9%

Source: Oregon Employment Department

JOBS

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The number of jobs in Baker County then increased in five of the next six months. The one exception was September 2020, when the county’s private, nonfarm workforce dropped slightly, from 4,350 to 4,330.

Jeff Nelson, Baker County business adviser with Blue Mountain Community College’s Small Business Development Center, said he was a bit surprised at how many jobs the county has recovered since last spring.

“Baker’s doing very well,” Nelson said.

An obvious exception to that assessment, Nelson said, is the leisure and hospitality industry, which has endured long periods of severe restrictions, including the current ban on indoor dining at restaurants.

Restaurants and bars have been limited to takeout, delivery or outdoor dining — the latter not especially feasible in midwinter given Baker County’s climate — for all but two weeks since early December.

In a December 2020 report, Christopher Rich, Eastern Oregon regional economist for the Employment Department, wrote that “leisure and hospitality has taken the brunt of the impact. The industry remains below seasonal expectations and below recovery as it rides an operational roller coaster.”

As of November 2020 — December statistics will be available next week — the number of leisure and hospitality jobs in Baker County was 600. That’s 20 fewer than in November 2019.

Rich said in an interview on Wednesday, Jan. 20, that he expects the December report will show a decline in leisure and hospitality jobs in the county, and a resulting increase from November’s 5.9% jobless rate.

The December figures will reflect effects of the ban on indoor dining, Rich said.

Bryan Tweit, the county’s economic developer, wrote in an email to the Herald that some local restaurant workers have moved to Idaho, where restaurants are not restricted as much as in Oregon.

“I think we will have a hard time getting those people back into the workforce locally when we get to open completely,” Tweit wrote.

Manufacturing jobs have actually increased over the past year, with 590 in Baker County in November 2020, compared with 560 in November 2019.

Nelson pointed out that

the county’s larger manufacturing employers, including Behlen Mfg. Inc., Marvin Wood Products and Ash Grove Cement, are not subject to the restrictions that the state has imposed on restaurants and some other retail businesses.

Manufacturing firms have also avoided COVID-19 outbreaks, which have affected similar businesses in many other counties.

No Baker County manufacturing company has had an outbreak, according to the Oregon Health Authority.

Nelson said he’s talked with several local business owners who have job vacancies but are struggling to fill them.

Baker County Unemployment: Annual average

- 2019: 4.6%
- 2018: 5.3%
- 2017: 5.5%
- 2016: 6.3%
- 2015: 6.8%
- 2014: 8.3%
- 2013: 9.6%
- 2012: 10.6%
- 2011: 10.9%
- 2010: 10.3%
- 2009: 10.4%
- 2008: 7.1%
- 2007: 5.8%
- 2006: 6.3%
- 2005: 7.4%

Source: Oregon Employment Department

Phone and Internet Discounts Available to CenturyLink Customers

The Oregon Public Utility Commission designated CenturyLink as an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier within its service area for universal service purposes. CenturyLink’s basic local service rates for residential voice lines are \$21.00 per month and business services are \$33.00-\$37.00 per month. Specific rates will be provided upon request.

CenturyLink participates in a government benefit program (Lifeline) to make residential telephone or broadband service more affordable to eligible low-income individuals and families. Eligible customers are those that meet eligibility standards as defined by the FCC and state commissions. Residents who live on federally recognized Tribal Lands may qualify for additional Tribal benefits if they participate in certain additional federal eligibility programs. The Lifeline discount is available for only one telephone or qualifying broadband service per household, which can be either a wireline or wireless service. Broadband speeds must be 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload or faster to qualify.

A household is defined for the purposes of the Lifeline program as any individual or group of individuals who live together at the same address and share income and expenses. Lifeline service is not transferable, and only eligible consumers may enroll in the program. Consumers who willfully make false statements in order to obtain Lifeline telephone or broadband service can be punished by fine or imprisonment and can be barred from the program.

If you live in a CenturyLink service area, please call 1-888-833-9522 or visit centurylink.com/lifeline with questions or to request an application for the Lifeline program.

