PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN'S INAUGURAL ADDRESS

"Chief Justice Roberts, Vice President Harris, Speaker Pelosi, Leader Schumer, Leader McConnell, Vice President Pence, my distinguished guests and my fellow Americans: This is America's day.

This is democracy's day. A day of history and hope of renewal and resolve through a crucible for the ages. America has been tested anew and America has risen to the challenge. Today, we celebrate the triumph not of a candidate, but of a cause, the cause of democracy. The people, 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. Democracy is fragile. At this hour, my friends, democracy has prevailed.

From now, on this hallowed ground, where just a few days ago, violence sought to shake the Capitol's very foundation, we come together as one nation, under God, indivisible to carry out the peaceful transfer of power, as we have for more than two centuries.

As we look ahead in our uniquely American way: restless, bold, optimistic, and set our sights on the nation we can be and we must be.

I thank my predecessors of both parties for their presence here today. I thank them from the bottom of my heart. And I know,I know the resilience of our Constitution and the strength, the strength of our nation. As does President Carter, who I spoke with last night, who cannot be with us today, but whom we salute for his lifetime of service.

I've just taken the sacred oath. Each of those patriots have taken. The oath, first sworn by George Washington. But the American story depends not on any one of us, not on some of us, but on all of us, on we the people who seek a more perfect union.

This is a great nation. We are good people. And over the centuries, through storm and strife, in peace and in war, we've come so far. But we still have far to go. We'll press forward with speed and urgency, for 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.

Few people in our nation's history have been more challenged or found a time more challenging or difficult than the time we're in now. Once-in-a-century virus that silently stalks the country. It's taken as many lives in one year as America lost in all of World War II. Millions of jobs have been lost. Hundreds of thousands of businesses closed. A cry for racial justice, some four hundred years in the making moves us. The dream of justice for all will be deferred no longer.

The cry for survival comes from planet itself, a cry that can't be any more desperate or any more clear. And now a rise of political extremism, white supremacy, domestic terrorism that we must confront and we will defeat.

To overcome these challenges, to restore the soul and secure the future of America requires so much more than words. It requires the most elusive of all things in a democracy: unity, unity.

In another January, on New Year's Day in 1863, Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. When he put pen to paper, the president said, and I quote, "if my name ever goes down into history, it'll be for this act. And my whole soul is in it."

My whole soul was in it today. On this January day, my whole soul is in this: Bringing America together, uniting our people, uniting our nation. And I ask every American to join me in this cause.

Uniting to fight the foes we face: anger, resentment, hatred, extremism, lawlessness, violence, disease, joblessness and hopelessness. With unity, we can do great things, important things. We can right wrongs. We can put people to work in good jobs. We can teach our children in safe schools. We can overcome the deadly virus. We can reward, reward work and rebuild the middle class and make health care secure for all. We can deliver racial justice and we can make America once again the leading force for good in the world.

I know speaking of unity can sound to some like a foolish fantasy these days. 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're all created equal and the harsh, ugly reality that racism, nativism, fear, demonization have long torn us apart. The battle is perennial and victory is never assured.

Through civil war, the Great Depression, world war, 9/11, through struggle, sacrifice and setbacks, our better angels have always prevailed. In each of these moments, enough of us, enough of us have come together to carry all of us forward. And we can do that now. History, faith and reason show the way, the way of unity. We can see each other not as adversaries, but as neighbors. We can treat each other with dignity and respect. We can join forces, stop the shouting and lower the temperature. For without unity, there is no peace, only bitterness and fury. No progress, only exhausting outrage. No nation, only a state of chaos.

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. If we do that, I guarantee you we will not fail. We have never, ever, ever, ever failed in America when we've acted together.

And so today at this time in this place, let's start afresh, all of us. Let's begin to listen to one another again. Hear one another see one another, show respect to one another. Politics doesn't have to be a raging fire, destroying everything in its path. Every disagreement doesn't have to be a cause for total war. And we must reject the culture in which facts themselves are manipulated and even manufactured.

My fellow Americans. We have to be different than this. America has to be better than this. And I believe America is so much better than this. Just look around. Here we stand in the shadow of the Capitol dome, as was mentioned earlier, completed amid the Civil War, when the union itself was literally hanging in the balance. Yet we endured, we prevailed.

Here we stand looking out in the great mall where Dr. King spoke of his dream. Here we stand, where 108 years ago, at another inaugural, thousands of protesters tried to block brave women marching for the right to vote. And today we marked the swearing in of the first woman in American history elected to national office: Vice President Kamala Harris. Don't tell me things can't change.

Here we stand across the Potomac from Arlington Cemetery, where heroes who gave the last full measure of devotion rest in eternal peace. And here we stand just days after a riotous mob thought they could use violence to silence the will of the people, to stop the work of our democracy, to drive us from this sacred ground.

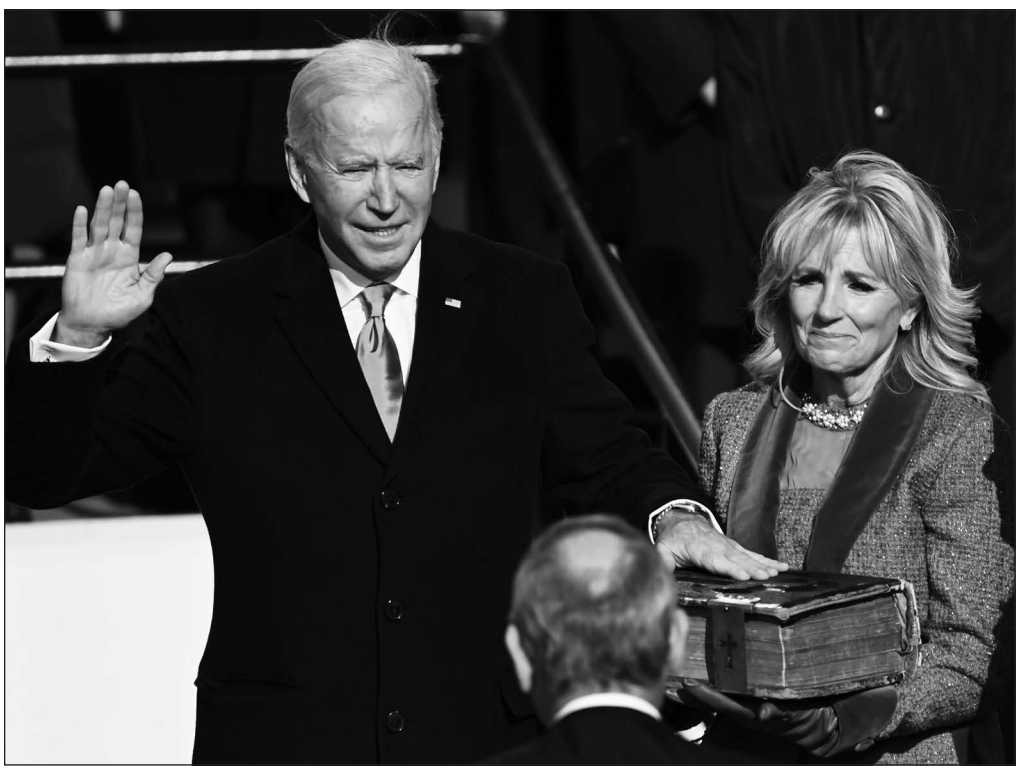
It did not happen. It will never happen. Not today, not tomorrow, not ever. Not ever.

To all those who supported our campaign, I'm humbled by the faith you've placed in us. To all those who did not support us, let me say this. Hear me out as we move forward. Take a measure of me and my heart. If you still disagree so be it. That's democracy. That's America. The right to dissent, peaceably, the guardrails of our republic is perhaps this nation's greatest strength.

Yet hear me clearly: disagreement must not lead to disunion. And I pledge this to you, I will be a president for all Americans. All Americans. And I promise you I will fight as hard for those who did not support me as for those who did.

Many centuries ago. Saint Augustine, a saint in my church, wrote to the people was a multitude defined by the common objects of their love. Defined by the common objects of their love. What are the common objects we as Americans love, that define us as Americans? I think we know. Opportunity, security, liberty, dignity, respect, honor and yes, the truth.

Recent weeks and months have taught us a painful lesson. There is truth and there are lies, lies told for power and for profit. And each of us has a duty and responsibility, as citizens, as Americans, and especially as leaders, leaders who have pledged to honor our Constitution and protect our nation, to defend the truth and defeat the lies.



Saul Loeb/Pool photo via AP

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 the U.S. Capitol steps Wednesday, just before the new president delivered his inaugural speech.

Look,I understand that many of my fellow Americans view the future with fear and trepidation. I understand they worry about their jobs. I understand, like my dad, they lay in bed at night, staring at the ceiling, wondering, can I keep my health care? Can I pay my mortgage? Thinking about their families, about what comes next. I promise you, I get it.

But the answer is not to turn inward, to retreat into competing factions, distrusting those who don't look like look like you or worship the way you do, or don't get their news from the same sources you do. We must end this uncivil war that pits red against blue, rural versus urban, rural versus urban, conservative versus liberal. We can do this if we open our souls instead of hardening our hearts. If we show a little tolerance and humility, and if we're willing to stand in the other person's shoes, as my mom would say, just for a moment, stand in their shoes. Because here's the thing about life. There's no accounting for what fate will deal you. Some days, when you need a hand. There are other days when we're called to lend a hand. That's how it has to be. That's what we do for one another. And if we are this way, our country will be stronger, more prosperous, more ready for the future. And we can still disagree.

My fellow Americans, in the work ahead of us, we're going to need each other. We need all our strength to to persevere through this dark winter. We're entering what may be the toughest and deadliest period of the virus. We must set aside politics and finally face this pandemic as One Nation. One Nation.

And I promise you this, as the Bible says, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." We will get through this together. Together.

Look, folks, all my colleagues I served with in the House of the Senate up there, we all understand the world is watching, watching all of us today. So here's my message to those beyond our borders. America has been tested and we've come out stronger for it. We will repair our alliances and engage with the world once again. Not to meet yesterday's challenges, but today's and tomorrow's challenges. And we'll lead, not merely by the example of our power, but by the power of our example.

We'll be a strong and trusted partner for peace, progress and security. Look, you all know, we've been through so much in this nation. And my first act as president, I'd like to ask you to join me in a moment of silent prayer to remember all those who we lost this past year to the pandemic. Those four hundred thousand fellow Americans, moms, dads, husbands, wives, sons, daughters, friends, neighbors and coworkers. We will honor them by becoming the people and the nation we know we can and should be. So I ask you, let's say a silent prayer for those who've lost their lives, those left behind and for our country.

Amen.

Folks, this is a time of testing. We face an attack on our democracy and on truth, a raging virus, growing inequity, the sting of systemic racism, a climate in crisis, America's role in the world. Any one of these will be enough to challenge us in profound ways. But the fact is, we face them all at once, presenting this nation with one of the gravest responsibilities we've had. Now we're going to be tested. Are we going to step up? All of us? It's time for boldness, for there is so much to do. And this is certain, I promise you, we will be judged, you and I, by how we resolve these cascading crises of our era.

Will we rise to the occasion, is the question. Will we master this rare and difficult hour? Will we meet our obligations and pass along a new and better world to our children? I believe we must. I'm sure you do as well. I believe we will. And when we do, we'll write the next great chapter in the history of the United States of America. The American story. A story that might sound something like a song that means a lot to me. It's called American Anthem. There's one verse that stands out, at least for me, and it goes like this:

"The work and prayers of a century have brought us to this day.

"What shall be our legacy? What will our children say?

"Let me know in my heart when my days are through.

"America, America, I gave my best to you."

Let's add. Let us add our own work and prayers to the unfolding story of our great nation. If we do this, then when our days are through, our children and our children's children will say of us: They gave their best, they did their duty, they healed a broken land.

My fellow Americans, I close the day where I began, with a sacred oath before God and all of you. I give you my word, I will always level with you. I will defend the Constitution. I'll defend our democracy. I'll defend America and I will give all, all of you. Keep everything I do in your service, thinking not of power, but of possibilities, not of personal interest, but the public good. And together we shall write an American story of hope, not fear. Of unity, not division. Of light, not darkness. A story of decency and dignity, love and healing, greatness and goodness. May this be the story that guides us. The story that inspires us and the story that tells ages yet to come that we answered the call of history. We met the moment. Democracy and hope, truth and justice did not die on our watch, but thrived. That America secured liberty at home and stood once again as a beacon to the world. That is what we owe our forebearers, one another and generations to follow.

So, with purpose and resolve, we turn to those tasks of our time. Sustained by faith, driven by conviction, devoted to one another and the country we love with all our hearts. May God bless America and may God protect our troops. Thank you, America.

■ *Transcript via The Washington Post*

THE OUTGOING PRESIDENT

'We will be back in some form': Trump bids farewell to Washington

BY JILL COLVIN
Associated Press

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. — His presidency over, Donald Trump said farewell to Washington on Wednesday but also hinted about a comeback despite a legacy of chaos, tumult and bitter divisions in the country he led for four years.

"So just a goodbye. We love you," Trump told supporters at Joint Base Andrews in Maryland where he walked across a red carpet and boarded Air Force One to head to Florida. "We will be back in some form."

Trump departed office as the only president ever impeached twice, and with millions more out of work than when he was sworn in and 400,000 dead from the coronavirus. Under his watch, Republicans lost the presidency and both chambers of Congress. He will be forever remembered for inciting an insurrection, two weeks before Democrat Joe Biden moved into the White House, at the Capitol that left five dead, including a Capitol Police officer, and horrified the nation. It was on Trump's on Inauguration Day, Jan. 20, 2017, that he had painted a dire picture of "American carnage."

The first president in modern history to boycott his successor's inauguration, Trump is still stewing about his loss and maintains that election won by Biden was stolen from him. Republican officials in several critical states, members of his own administration and a wide swath of judges, including those appointed by Trump, have rejected those arguments.

Trump refused to participate in any of the symbolic passing-of-the-torch traditions surrounding the peaceful transition of power, including inviting the Joe and Jill Biden to the White House for a get-to-know-you visit.

He did follow at least one tradition: The White House said Trump left behind a note for Biden. A Trump spokesman, Judd Deere, declined to say what Trump wrote or characterize the sentiment in the note, citing privacy for communication between presidents.

Manuel Balce Ceneta/AP

President Donald Trump and first lady Melania Trump board Air Force One at Andrews Air Force Base on Wednesday, bound for Florida. "It's been something very special," he told supporters. "We've accomplished a lot."

Members of Trump's family gathered for the send-off on the military base along with the president's loyalists, who chanted "We love you!" "Thank you, Trump" and "U.S.A." Four Army cannons fired a 21-gun salute.

Speaking without notes, Trump said his presidency was an "incredible four years." He told the crowd that he and first lady Melania Trump loved them and praised his family for its hard work, saying they could have chosen to have an easier life.

"It's been something very special. We've accomplished a lot," Trump said, citing the installation of conservative judges, creation of the space force, development of coronavirus vaccines and management of a robust pre-pandemic economy. "I hope they don't raise your taxes, but if they do, I told you so," he said of the incoming Biden administration.

He acknowledged that his was not a "regular administration" and told his backers that he would be returning in some form. He said the Trump campaign had worked so hard: "We've left it all on the field," he said.

In his final hours, Trump issued pardons for more than 140 people, including Steve Bannon, his former strategist, as well as rap performers, ex-members of Congress and allies of him and his family.

Trump also rescinded an executive order that had limited federal administration officials from lobbying the government or working for foreign countries after they leave their posts, undoing one of the few measures he had instituted to fulfill his 2016 campaign promise to "drain the swamp." Trump had signed the now-reversed order with much fanfare in an Oval Office ceremony in January 2017.

Trump will be in Florida with a small group of former White House aides as he charts a political future that looks very different now from just two weeks ago.

While Trump has left the White House, he retains his grip on the Republican base, with the support of millions of loyal voters, along with allies still helming the Republican National Committee and many state party organizations.

"I wish the new administration great luck and great success," Trump said. Just before leaving the dais, he said: "Have a good life, we'll see you soon."

■ *The Washington Post contributed to this report.*