

JULY 14, 2023

Remarks as Prepared for Delivery by First Lady Jill Biden at the National Governor's Association Annual Convening

Atlantic City, New Jersey

Thank you, Governor Murphy. I'm so grateful for the warm welcome to New Jersey by you and First Lady Murphy. Phil, under your leadership this organization has flourished.

I know Joe is grateful for everything you've done and the time and attention you and Tammy have put into this work.

I'm excited to congratulate the incoming Chair and Vice Chairs, Governor Cox and Abby and Governor Polis and Marlon, as they embark on what I'm sure will be a success-filled tenure. Joe and I look forward to the work ahead and we can't wait to get started.

I also want to thank the entire NGA leadership for inviting me to join you. I enjoyed hosting you earlier this year and getting to know many of your spouses. And we look forward to hosting you again this winter.

Finally, I'm happy to be joined at this meeting by our new Intergovernmental Affairs director, Secretary Tom Perez.

Today, I want to talk to you about how we can come together to build an economy with good American jobs that pay well. It's something I think we can all agree on.

When I was growing up, success meant one thing: getting a four-year degree. Many Americans still feel that way.

But I teach at a community college outside Washington D.C. And while some of my students are working towards their bachelor's degree, that path just isn't right for all of them.

Joe understands that, for most people, a high school diploma alone isn't enough to find a great career. But that doesn't mean there's only one path to success.

Students can take college courses in high school or enroll in Registered Apprenticeships.

They can train in growing industries and find great jobs with associate degrees.

Through the Biden Administration's Investing in America agenda, we're creating millions of those jobs in growing industries like clean energy and manufacturing. It's work that pays well and often doesn't require four years of college.

The Biden Education Pathway starts with free, high-quality universal preschool and creates a high school experience that prepares students for their next steps.

It provides two years of affordable community college and opens up avenues to a four-year degree.

This is Bidenomics—how we grow our economy from the bottom up and the middle out.

And in a time when it may feel like we struggle to find common ground, these efforts can bring Americans together.

I've seen how many of you are already making these types of programs successful in your states.

In Colorado, I talked with state legislators from both sides of the aisle about bills that would provide free and reduced-cost job training for in-demand careers. And Governor Polis signed those bills in May.

In Vermont, I saw how Governor Scott is supporting incredible partnerships between high schools, colleges, and employers like Beta Technologies to invest in young people learning about electric vehicles.

In Arizona, Governor Hobbs and I met a young woman earning a degree in construction management thanks to the programs at Mesa Community College. She will graduate into a field where workers could make nearly \$100,000 a year.

And right here in New Jersey and New York, Governors Murphy and Hochul are working with

the Federal Transit Administration to put billions toward the Gateway Hudson River Tunnel Project. This will change lives for the hundreds of thousands who need the tunnel to commute—as well as the thousands of skilled workers who will be a part of this project.

Governors understand that preparing our workforce is so much bigger than a blue issue or a red one. You understand that education is about the economy. And we want to work with you to get even more done.

So, I want to ask you to keep going.

Thanks to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the US Department of Transportation recently made it possible to use highway funds to train people for jobs.

Because bridges and highways can't be designed and built without skilled workers.

So, I'm urging you to follow Michigan and Wisconsin and Maryland's lead and put that money to work—whether that's creating Registered Apprenticeship programs, or providing childcare or emergency assistance for students in community college programs.

Let's find innovative ways to connect students and employers, so every student, in every community, can find the path that works for them.

In May, we announced what we're calling the Workforce Hubs Initiative. It focuses on five key cities—Phoenix, Columbus, Baltimore, Augusta, and Pittsburgh—that have received significant investments from legislation like the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law as well as private companies. In these cities, the Biden-Harris Administration is partnering with state and local officials, employers, unions, community colleges, high schools, and other partners to ensure a diverse and skilled workforce can meet the demand for labor created by these investments.

These efforts will not only strengthen these five cities, they'll create models we can replicate with partners across the country.

Yesterday, I visited the Workforce Hub in Columbus, Ohio, and the energy and enthusiasm were unmistakable. They're creating new pathways to local jobs that will change people's lives.

Joe's father used to say: a job is about a lot more than a paycheck. It's about dignity. Joe watched his dad struggle to find good work. He saw how a job could change a family's path.

I saw it too. My dad came from a family of Italian immigrants. His father delivered furniture for a living. Thanks to the G.I. Bill, he was able to get a degree and carve out a good life for my four sisters and me.

Joe understands the middle class because we're from the middle class.

And he's working to build the economy from the middle out and the bottom up. But he knows we can only do this with you, our governors, as his partners.

Together, we can fundamentally transform what it means to make a living and make a life here in America.

Thank you.
