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Joe Biden

Address on Decision to Not Run for President and Cancer Moonshot

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As my family and I have worked through the -- the grieving process, I've said all along what I've said time and again to others, that it may very well be that that process, by the time we get through it, closes the window on mounting a realistic campaign for President, that it might close. I've concluded it has closed.

I know from previous experience that there is no timetable for this process. The process doesn't respect or much care about things like filing deadlines or debates and primaries and caucuses. But I also know that I could do this if -- I couldn't do this if the family wasn't ready. The good news is the family has reached that point. But as I've said many times, my family has suffered a loss and I hope there would come a time -- and I've said this to many other families -- that sooner rather than later, when you think of your loved one it brings a smile to your lips before it brings a tear to your eyes. Well, that's where the Bidens are today -- thank God. Beau is our inspiration.

Unfortunately, I believe we're out of time -- the time necessary to mount a winning campaign for the nomination. But while I will not be a candidate, I will not be silent. I intend to speak out clearly and forcefully, to influence as much as I can where we stand as a party and where we need to go as a nation.



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And this is what I believe. I believe that President Obama has led this nation from crisis to recovery, and we're now on the cusp of resurgence. I'm proud to have played a part in that.

This party, our nation will be making a tragic mistake if we walk away or attempt to undo the Obama legacy. The American people have worked too hard and we've come too far for that.

Democrats should not only defend this record and protect this record, they should run on the record.

We've got a lot of work to get done over the next 15 months, and there's a lot that the President will have to get done. But let me be clear that we'll be building on a really solid foundation. But it all starts with giving the middle class a fighting chance.

I know you in the press love to call me "Middle-Class Joe" and I know in Washington that's not usually meant as a compliment -- it means you're not that sophisticated. But it is about the middle class. It isn't just a matter of fairness or economic growth. It's a matter of social stability for this nation. We cannot sustain the current levels of inequality that exist in this country.

I believe the huge sums of unlimited and often secret money pouring into our politics is a fundamental threat to our democracy. And I really mean that. I think it's a fundamental threat. Because the middle class will never have a fighting chance in this country as long as just several hundred families, the wealthiest families, control the process. It's just that simple.

And I believe we have to level the playing field for the American people. And that's going to take access to education and opportunity to work. We need to commit -- we're fighting for 14 years -- we need to commit to 16 years of free public education for all our children. We all know that 12 years of public education is not enough. As a nation, let's make the same commitment to a college education today that we made to a high school education a hundred years ago.

Children and child care is the one, biggest barrier for working families. We need, as the President proposed, to triple the child care tax credit. That alone will lead to a dramatic increase in the number of women able to be in the workforce and will raise our economic standards. There are many equitable ways to pay for this. Often you hear, well, how do you pay for this? There are many equitable ways to pay for this. We could pay for all of this with one simple step -- by limiting the deductions in the tax code to 28 percent of income.

Wealthy folks will end up paying a little bit more. But it's my guess -- and I mean this sincerely -- it's my guess they'll be happy to help build a stronger economy and a better educated America.

I believe we need to lead more by the power of our example, as the President has, than merely by the example of our power. We've learned some very hard lessons from more than a decade of large-scale, open-ended military invasions. We have to accept the fact that we can't solve all the world's problems -- we can't solve many of them -- alone.



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The argument that we just have to do something when bad people do bad things isn't good enough. It's not a good enough reason for American intervention and to put our sons' and daughters' lives on the line, put them at risk.

I believe we have to end the divisive partisan politics that is ripping this country apart. And I think we can. It's mean-spirited. It's petty. And it's gone on for much too long. I don't believe, like some do, that it's naïve to talk to Republicans. I don't think we should look at Republicans as our enemies. They are our opposition; they're not our enemies. And for the sake of the country, we have to work together.

As the President said many times, compromise is not a dirty word. Look at it this way, folks - - how does this country function without consensus? How can we move forward without being able to arrive at consensus? Four more years of this kind of pitched battle may be more than this country can take. We have to change it. We have to change it.

And I believe we need a moonshot in this country to cure cancer. It's personal. But I know we can do this. The President and I have already been working hard on increasing funding for research and development -- because there are so many breakthroughs just on the horizon in science and medicine. The things that are just about to happen, we can make them real with an absolute national commitment to end cancer as we know it today. And I'm going to spend the next 15 months in this office pushing as hard as I can to accomplish this. Because I know there are Democrats and Republicans on the Hill who share our passion -- our passion to silence this deadly disease. If I could be anything, I would want it to be the President that ended cancer, because it's possible.

I also believe we need to keep moving forward in the arc of this nation toward justice -- the rights of the LGBT community, immigration reform, equal pay for women and protecting their safety from violence, rooting out institutional racism. At their core, every one of these things -- every one of these things is about the same thing. It's about equality. It's about fairness. It's about respect. As my dad used to say, it's about affording every single person dignity. It's not complicated. Every single one of these issues is about dignity.

And the ugly forces of hate and division, they won't let up, but they do not represent the American people. They do not represent the heart of this country. They represent a small fraction of the political elite. And the next President is going to have to take it on.

Most of all, I believe there's unlimited possibilities for this country. I don't know how many of the White House staff and personnel have heard me say repeatedly that we are so much better positioned than any country in the world. I've been doing this for a long time. When I got elected as a 29-year-old kid, I was called the optimist. I am more optimistic about the possibilities, the incredible possibilities to leap forward than I have been at any time in my career. And I believe in my core that there's not country on the face of the Earth better positioned to lead the world in the 21st century than the United States of America.



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Washington just has to begin to function again. Instead of being the problem, it has to become part of the solution -- again. We have to be one America -- again.

And at our core, I've always believed that what sets America apart from every other nation is that we, ordinary Americans, believe in possibilities -- unlimited possibilities. Possibilities for a kid growing up in a poor inner-city neighborhood, or a Spanish-speaking home, or a kid from Mayfield in Delaware, or Willow Grove in Pennsylvania -- like Jill and I. To be able to be anything we want it to be; to do anything -- anything -- that we want, that's what we were both taught. That's what the President was taught. It was real. That's what I grew up believing. And, you know, it's always been true in this country. And if we ever lose that, we've lost something very special. We'll have lost the very soul of this country.

When I was growing up, my parents, in tough times, looked at me and would say to me and my brothers and sister, "Honey, it's going to be okay." And they meant it. They meant it. It was going to be okay. But some of you who cover me, I say go back to your old neighborhoods. Talk to your contemporaries who aren't as successful as you've been. There are too many people in America today, too many parents who don't believe they can look their kid in the eye and say with certitude, "Honey, it's going to be okay." That's what we need to change. It's not complicated.

That will be the true measure of our success. And we'll not have met it until every parent out there can look at their kid in tough times and say, "Honey, it's going to be okay" -- and mean it. That's our responsibility. And I believe it's totally within our power. The nation has done it before in difficult times.

I've had the very great, good fortune and privilege of being in public service most of my adult life, since I've been 25 years old. And through personal triumphs and tragedies, my entire family -- my son Beau, my son Hunter, my daughter Ashley, Jill -- our whole family -- and this sounds corny -- but we found purpose in public life. We found purpose in public life. So we intend, the whole family -- not just me -- we intend to spend the next 15 months fighting for what we've always cared about, what my family has always care about, with every ounce of our being. And working alongside the President and members of Congress and our future nominee, I am absolutely certain we are fully capable of accomplishing extraordinary things.

We can do this. And when we do, America won't just win the future, we will own the finish line.

Thank you for all being so gracious to Jill and me for the last six or eight months -- and for our whole career, for that matter. But I'm telling you, we can do so much more. And I'm looking forward to continuing to work with this man to get it done.

Thank you all very much.