

Remarks at an Inaugural Luncheon

January 21, 2013

Sen. Charles E. Schumer. Mr. President, Dr. Biden, and your whole wonderful family and family, I now rise to toast the Vice President of the United States and my former colleague and my friend, Joe Biden.

Mr. Vice President, you've been an extraordinary leader of this Nation and a true partner to our President these past 4 years. You play many roles: adviser, advocate, implementer, persuader, strategist, and most important of all, friend. We're confident this unique partnership between you and our great President will only grow stronger and more productive over the next 4 years.

Mr. Vice President, on the surface, we don't share a common ancestry, but on a deeper level, we do share a common story, an American story, of achieving our dreams thanks to the sacrifice of our immigrant forebears.

As you embark on your well-deserved second term, in the spirit of those who came before us, and on behalf of all Americans, we offer you all our support and warmest wishes, and we say to you, *Slainte, l'chaim, salud, cent'anni*, and cheers. To our great Vice President.

[At this point, a toast was offered.]

Vice President Joe Biden. Mr. President, and to all the Presidents assembled: I always enjoyed this lunch more than anything we did in the Capitol. For the 36 years I served in the Senate, I had the great honor of being included in this lunch of former Presidents and Vice Presidents and—because it really is the place where we get together in a way unlike any other time when we gather. It's always a new beginning every time we're in this room. And there's a sense of possibilities and a sense of opportunity and a sense—sometimes it's fleeting—but a sense that maybe we can really, really begin to work together.

And, Chuck, we may come from different ancestries, but as all our colleagues know over the years, we're cut from the same cloth: that we share that same common, absolute conviction that was expressed by Harry Truman when he said: "America was not built on fear. America was built on courage, on imagination, and an unbeatable determination to do the job at hand."

That's what you've done throughout your career, and that's what almost everyone in this room has done. At the end of the day, it's an absolute confidence—absolute confidence—there's not a thing—a single thing—this country can't do.

I spent too much time with all of you not to know you feel it with every fiber in your being that there's nothing—nothing—this country is incapable of.

I must say, the President kids me occasionally—I know Harry Reid always calls me a Senate man. I am proud to have been a Senate man. I am proud to be President of the Senate. But that pride is exceeded only by the fact I'm proud to be Vice President of the United States, serving as Barack Obama's Vice President. It's been one of the great privileges—*[applause]*—one of the great privileges of my life.

As a matter of fact, if the President will forgive me, as we were walking out and he was, as he said, savoring the moment, looking out at the crowd and all those Americans assembled, I

found myself—surprised me, even—I turned to him saying, thank you. Thanks. Thanks for the chance. Thanks for the chance to continue to serve.

And so, folks, I raise my glass to a man who never, never, never operates out of fear, only operates out of confidence—and I'm toasting you, Chuck. *[Laughter]* And a guy who I plan on working with—you can't get rid of me, man. Remember, I'm still part of the Senate.

[Laughter]

God bless you, Chuck. You've done a great job. And, Lamar, you have as well. To Chuck Schumer. Good to see you, pal.

[A toast was offered.]

Sen. Schumer. The best parts of these events are unscripted. *[Laughter]*

I'd now like to introduce our Senate Majority Leader, my good friend and, really, foxhole buddy, a great man, Harry Reid, to offer the official toast to the President.

Senate Majority Leader Harry M. Reid. Americans today are wishing the President Godspeed for the next 4 years. People all over the world are looking at us, and our exemplary democracy, and wishing the President the best in the years to come.

I've had the good fortune for the last many years to work on a very close, personal basis with President Obama. I've watched him in the most difficult challenges that a person could face. I've watched him do this with brilliance, with patience, with courage, wisdom, and kindness, for which I have learned a great deal.

So, Mr. President, I toast and pray for you, your wonderful family, and our great country: Four more successful years.

Barack Obama.

[A toast was offered.]

The President. Michelle and the Speaker of the House came to a meeting of the minds that I may be delaying the proceedings too much. And so I'm just going to be extraordinarily brief and say thank you: to my Vice President, who has not only been an extraordinary partner, but an extraordinary friend and to Dr. Jill Biden, who has partnered with my wife with an extraordinary generosity on behalf of our men and women in uniform.

To the entire Cabinet that is here, I am grateful to you. Some of you are staying, and some of you are leaving, but I know the extraordinary sacrifices that you and my team have made to try to advance the cause of progress in this country, and I'm always going to be grateful to you for that.

To the Speaker of the House and Nancy Pelosi, to Democratic Leader Harry Reid, as well as Republican Leader Mitch McConnell, and to all the congressional leaders and all the Members of Congress who are here: I recognize that democracy is not always easy, and I recognize there are profound differences in this room, but I just want to say thank you for your service, and I want to thank your families for their service, because regardless of our political persuasions and perspectives, I know that all of us serve because we believe that we can make America for future generations.

And I'm confident that we can act at this moment in a way that makes a difference for our children and our children's children. I know that former President .Carter, President Clinton, they understand the irony of the Presidential office, which is, the longer you're there the more

humble you become and the more mindful you are that it is beyond your poor powers individually to move this great country. You can only do it because you have extraordinary partners and a spirit of good will, and most of all, because of the strength and resilience and fundamental goodness of the American people.

And so I would like to join all of you not only in toasting the extraordinary work that Chuck Schumer and Lamar Alexander and others have done to create this special day for us, but I also want to thank each and every one of you for not only your service in the past, but hopefully your service in the future as well.

And I would like to offer one last toast, and that is to my extraordinary wife, Michelle. There is controversy about the quality of the President, no controversy about the quality of our current First Lady. [*Laughter*]

Thank you, everybody. God bless you, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:35 p.m. in the National Statuary Hall at the U.S. Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to Jill T. Biden, wife of Vice President Biden; and Sens. Charles E. Schumer, chairman, and Lamar Alexander, ranking member, Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, in their capacity as members of the Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies.

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