

Biden hails abandonment of social distancing, covers up Trump's coup attempt in Fourth of July speech

Patrick Martin
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President Joe Biden addressed a maskless crowd on the South Lawn of the White House Sunday night, delivering a Fourth of July address in which he pledged to continue dismantling protections to stop the spread of COVID-19 and covered up the fascist coup attempt of January 6.

Biden's speech took place as COVID-19 cases throughout the United States have increased 15 percent in one week, amid a global resurgence of the pandemic fueled by the new, deadlier "Delta" variant of the disease. In defiance of the World Health Organization and all leading experts, the Biden administration and its Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have urged the abandonment of mask mandates and called on unvaccinated people to end voluntary social distancing.

The central theme of Biden's speech was to declare America's independence from the social distancing measures necessary to stop the spread of COVID-19. The achievement of the past year, he said, was to reopen businesses and schools, leading the US economy to come "roaring back."

"245 years ago we declared our independence from a distant king," Biden said. "Today we're closer than ever to declaring our independence from a deadly virus... We can live our lives, our kids can go back to school, our economy is roaring back."

Biden praised how America has gone from "silent streets to crowded parade routes, lined with people waving American flags. From empty stadiums and arenas to fans back in their seats, cheering together again."

He continued, "Businesses are opening and hiring again. We're seeing record job creation, and record economic growth, the best in four decades, and I might add, the best in the world. Today all across this nation, we could say with confidence, America is coming back together... Today, while the virus hasn't been vanquished, we know this—it no longer controls our lives, it no longer paralyzes our nation."

The conclusion was clear. While cases and deaths may surge with the spread of the Delta variant, the Biden administration will continue with its program of reopening businesses and schools, no matter the cost.

Biden's declaration that the "economy is roaring back" was consciously taken from his predecessor, Donald Trump.

Precisely one year ago, on July 2, 2020, Trump declared, "Today's announcement proves that our economy is roaring back," noting that, "80 percent of small businesses are now open." One year later, Biden's declaration of "independence" from the pandemic is centered on the total reopening of the economy.

Biden briefly acknowledged the rise in the US death toll to 603,018, according to one official count, without mentioning that more than 400,000 have died since he was elected, and 200,000 since he took the oath of office. He said nothing about the rapidly mounting death toll internationally.

Biden's remarks on coronavirus were followed by the usual holiday tribute to the military and its "sacrifices" in countries around the world. He did not make any reference either to the specific countries laid waste by American imperialism over the past three decades or to the much higher death toll to be expected from the US war drive against China and Russia. He merely said of the soldiers, "It's the greatest honor to serve as your commander in chief."

The president then turned to the US political crisis, declaring, "Each day we are reminded there's nothing guaranteed about our democracy, nothing guaranteed about our way of life. We have to fight for it, defend it, earn it." He indirectly referred to the campaign by the Republican Party to restrict voting rights, recently endorsed by the Supreme Court, affirming the need to defend "the right to vote and have that vote counted."

But he said nothing at all about the "big lie" that underpins the campaign against voting rights—the claim by Trump and the bulk of the Republican Party leadership that the 2020 election was stolen and that Trump's electoral defeat, by a massive 7.5 million votes, was the result of fraud. This claim was the basis, not merely of changes in election laws, but of the failed coup attempt of January 6, when Trump unleashed a mob of his supporters to attack the Capitol building and shut down the certification of electoral votes by Congress.

In that regard, it is worth contrasting Biden's words on the Fourth of July and a similar passage in his inauguration speech on January 20. It was only two weeks after the January 6 coup, and Biden could not avoid addressing the subject. He said:

We've learned again that democracy is precious. Democracy is fragile. And at this hour, my friends: Democracy has prevailed! So 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.

The WSWS cited this passage at the time in a perspective column. We wrote:

Here, Biden acknowledged, in the most oblique way possible, that the entire political system in the United States came close to being overthrown two weeks ago. Trump, whom Biden did not name once in the entire speech, had been engaged in a systematic campaign to repudiate the results of the election and overthrow the Constitution. This culminated in the storming of the US Capitol building by a mob of fascists, incited by the president, aimed at blocking the certification of Biden's Electoral College victory.

It appears that the past six months have not been entirely in vain for the Biden administration. The president has found an even more oblique way to refer to the events of January 6. Or rather, to avoid referring to them at all, or making any mention of the threat of violence from the fascist right.

The Democratic Party-aligned corporate media downplayed the significance of Biden's Fourth of July remarks, with the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* each burying their reports on page 8. The *Post* noted that Biden had spoken "[w]ithout mentioning the divisive 2020 presidential campaign that has led to false claims about the election results, or the Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol." The *Times* did not even acknowledge the omission.

This is in keeping with the political stance of the Democratic Party and the Biden administration, which have sought to dismiss the significance of the January 6 coup and the emergence of an open fascist threat to American democracy, while they plead for bipartisan cooperation with the Republican Party, the political incubator of these fascist tendencies.

While Biden celebrates "the results of unity and purpose" in America, the Republican Party, which controls half the Senate and nearly half the House of Representatives, denies the legitimacy of his government. Its undisputed leader, ex-president Trump, is holding campaign-style rallies based on denunciation of the 2020 elections as illegitimate, a position shared by most House Republicans and many Republican senators, who voted against certification of Biden's electors,

even after the January 6 mob came close to killing them.

In a carefully-selected passage with a triple meaning, Biden declared, "Today all across this nation, we could say with confidence, America is coming back together." In the most immediate sense, Biden referenced the abandoning of social distancing measures.

But, more importantly, he meant his proclamation that "America is coming back together" as a declaration of bipartisan unity. "When we stand together, when we unite in common cause, when we see ourselves not as Republicans or Democrats but as Americans, there is simply no limit to what we can achieve," Biden said.

But this bipartisan unity is based entirely on the ruling class's program of subordinating human life to private profits – a central goal of the fascistic mob that stormed the Capitol on January 6.

As we wrote in the January 21 perspective, to which we have referred:

Biden's appeal to "unity" is, ultimately, a desperate effort to cover over a massive social chasm. This chasm does not separate the Democrats from the Republicans, who, whatever their differences, both represent the same oligarchy. It is the unbridgeable division between the capitalist ruling elite, on the one hand, and the working class, on the other. It is the fear of the open eruption of this conflict that drives Biden to his abstractions.

Since Biden's inauguration, the class struggle has come increasingly to dominate the political landscape in America, with bitter strikes by Volvo workers in Virginia, coal miners in Alabama, steelworkers, health care workers, teachers and many others. This movement must find a political outlet, outside of and independent of the Democratic Party. This requires the building the revolutionary party of the working class, committed to the struggle for a socialist society: the Socialist Equality Party.



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