

Remarks by President Biden in a Farewell Address to the Nation

The White House, January 15, 2025

THE PRESIDENT: My fellow Americans, I am speaking to you tonight from the Oval Office.

[...]

This will be my final address to you from — the American people from the Oval Office, from this desk as president. And I've been thinking a lot about who we are and, maybe more importantly, who we should be. [...]

5 But we know the idea of America — our institution, our people, our values that uphold it — are constantly being tested. Ongoing debates about power and the exercise of power, about whether we lead by the example of our power or the power of our example, whether we show the courage to stand up to the abuse of power or we yield to it.

10 After 50 years at the center of all of this, I know that believing in the idea of America means respecting the institutions that govern a free society: the presidency, the Congress, the courts, a free and independent press. Institutions that echo the words of the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident." Rooted in the timeless words of the Constitution, "We the People."

15 Our system of separation of powers, checks and balances, it may not be perfect, but it's maintained our democracy for nearly 250 years — longer than any other nation in history that's ever tried such a bold experiment. [...]

In my farewell address tonight, I want to warn the country of some things that give me great concern. And this is the dangerous concentration of power in the hands of very few ultra-wealthy people, and the dangerous consequences if their abuse of power is left unchecked.

20 Today, an oligarchy is taking shape in America of extreme wealth, power, and influence that literally threatens our entire democracy, our basic rights and freedoms, and a fair shot for everyone to get ahead. [...]

25 Americans are being buried under an avalanche of misinformation and disinformation enabling the abuse of power. The free press is crumbling. Editors are disappearing. Social media is giving up on fact-checking. The truth is smothered by lies told for power and for profit.

We must hold the social platforms accountable to protect our children, our families, and our very democracy from the abuse of power. [...]

30 We need to amend the Constitution to make clear that no president — no president — is immune from crimes that he or she commits while in office. The president's power is not absolute, and it shouldn't be.

And in a democracy, there's another danger to the concentration of power and wealth. It erodes a sense of unity and common purpose. It causes distrust and division. Participating in our democracy becomes exhausting and even disillusioning, and people don't feel like they have a fair shot.

35 But we have to stay engaged in the process. I know it's frustrating.

A fair shot is what makes America, America. Everyone is entitled to a fair shot — not a guarantee, but just a fair shot, an even playing field — going as far as your hard work and talent can take you.

We can never lose that essential truth — remain who we are.

40 I've always believed and I've told other world leaders America can be defined by one word: possibilities. [...]

After 50 years of public service, I give you my word, I still believe in the idea for which this nation stands, a nation where the strengths of our institutions and the character of our people matter and must endure.

45 Now it's your turn to stand guard. May you all be the keeper of the flame. May you keep the faith.

I love America. You love it too.

God bless you all. And may God protect our troops. Thank you for this great honor.