Discussion

- Doug Burgum, Governor of North Dakota
- John P. Walters, President and CEO

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A video of the event is available: https://www.hudson.org/events/presidential-speech-series-doug-burgum

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Hudson seeks to guide public policy makers and global leaders in government and business through a vigorous program of publications, conferences, policy briefings, and recommendations.
John Walters:

Welcome to the Betsy and Wally Stern Conference Center at Hudson Institute. I'm John Walters, Hudson's president and CEO. Governor Doug Burgum is serving as the 33rd governor of North Dakota. He brings business leadership’s approach to his leadership of North Dakota, diversifying the economy, creating 21st century jobs and transforming citizen interaction with state government. Governor Burgum seeks to embody the spirit of innovation, patriotic leadership and community engagement that lies at the heart of the American dream.

After gaining national experience as a consultant, Governor Burgum returned to North Dakota and joined Great Plains Software. At the time, a very small startup company in the computer software industry. He guided Great Plains through a strategic acquisition by Microsoft for $1.1 billion, and at that time the largest acquisition by Microsoft. He then served as a senior vice president at Microsoft. After leaving the company, Governor Burgum returned to his entrepreneurial roots, starting and running several other companies.

However, he found himself drawn to politics. He was elected governor of North Dakota in 2016. He was reelected in 2020. Under his leadership, North Dakota has been a national leader in innovation, creating a boom across the energy, agriculture, and technology sectors. Governor Burgum cut government spending, balanced the budget and enacted the largest tax cut in North Dakota's history.

Governor Burgum's commitment to national security and his vocal stance on the threats posed by communist China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea underline the urgency of our decisions regarding foreign policy and he obviously knows that. He has stated his belief that the United States is now in a cold war with communist China and he wants to bring manufacturing jobs back to the US under the current international circumstances. We are honored to have Governor Doug Burgum join us in Hudson's 2024 Presidential series. And I'd also like to say we're honored to have First Lady Kathryn Burgum here with us.

He's now joined other candidates in this series, former Vice President Mike Pence, Senator Tim Scott who spoke yesterday. Later in the coming weeks, Vivek Ramaswamy and Governor Chris Christie are confirmed for next stages of this series. But now please join me in welcoming Governor Doug Burgum. You need some? Okay.

Doug Burgum:

Well, let me begin with gratitude, starting with the Hudson Institute for hosting me here today. I want to thank Sarah May Stern chairman of the board and all the board of trustees that were meeting here earlier today. Thank them for their service to this great institution. And John, thank you for that wonderful introduction and the entire Hudson team that's here today for the important work that you do every day.

We gather here today at a time of great uncertainty. Some moment where escalating global convicts are colliding with our current president who is utterly unprepared to meet that moment and who the actual strategies of this administration are empowering our adversaries, making American people less safe and less prosperous. We're in a cold war with China. We're in a proxy war with Russia. We're having an invasion of our country through the southern border. And now with the events of the last few days, many Americans are still coming to terms with the images that we've seen coming out of Israel.
Iran and its terror proxies have shown the world their true face, which is pure evil. Despicable, unprovoked attack on innocent people celebrating a joy-filled Jewish holiday. Our hearts and prayers go out to all of those in Israel, whose lives have been affected and shockingly who have any of us a week ago thought that we'd be seeing headline after headline as the world heard the unthinkable as we learned that Hamas had cut the heads off of babies. And now we know about American citizens that have been killed and many more held hostage.

Unlike President Biden yesterday who didn't mention the word Iran. This is Iran's war on Israel and it's a war on America. Hamas is a proxy of Iran. We need to put an end to Joe Biden's Iran appeasement immediately, locking down all the money that he's made available to Iran over these past few months, not just the last 6 billion, but all of it.

And we also need to fully enforce our oil sanctions. It's not a coincidence that Iran would green light a massacre like this after getting billions of dollars out of the United States. Biden has turned a policy of maximum pressure into maximum concessions. He's basically begging the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism to reenter a deal and that deal that would've guaranteed Iran pathways ultimately to nuclear weapons.

But instead of negotiating longer and strongly, he's given access to billions of dollars just to try to get them to hold off on crossing the nuclear threshold with no real guarantees that they won't. I think everybody in this room and everybody watching knows rule number one, don't negotiate with terrorists. Could any of you ever imagined or imagine yourself in a negotiation situation where you're going to trade five on your team for five on the other team? But the best deal you can come up with is you're going to throw in $6 billion on top of the five for five trade.

1.2 billion per hostage. There's a new price tag that's been put on every American student, every tourist, every American professional or business leader traveling or living abroad. And I said these words minutes after I heard about the $6 billion deal. Our own team will tell you, we sat around the room and said, wow, I guess if now we put a price on kidnapping, we're going to see more of that. And where do we find ourselves a few weeks later? But we find now that kidnappings are part of the tool of the war that's fighting right now.

But there's more than just those six. There are billions being funneled for Iran's use. 10 billion that was freed up back in June from Iraq, that was like on page 18. Even more money that was on the way. But most disturbingly, because we can't separate our economy and energy policy from national security is that Biden has looked the other way and allowed Iran to dramatically increase its oil exports, estimated that they may receive as many as 25 billion in the coming year from their increased oil exports and who's buying that oil? China, helping Beijing, fill its reserves with the Iranian oil and letting Iran generate tens of billions of dollars to further its terror agenda.

And of course, interestingly that China's filling up their strategic reserve when Biden drained ours by half ahead of the midterms to get the price down at the pump for political purposes. But policy choices have consequences, and now we see the very painful consequences of appeasing Iran. Biden's easement must end today. And I just want to throw too because I'm sure as many of you as shocking as the images are coming from around the world to see our own university officials talking heads on TV that somehow try to draw moral equivalency between Israel and Hamas. I just say to all of them, your words are abhorrent. Taking sides with the barbarism that we've seen versus those fighting for democracy and the right to exist.
When I’m your president, we’ll work with Israel to destroy not just Hamas, but the entire Iranian terrorist infrastructure. And not just in the Middle East, but around the globe. Hamas and Hezbollah, they have agents around the world and none of those agents anywhere should be able to find safe harbor. Countries like Qatar and Turkey that support Hamas should have 24 hours to give up their agents, close their offices, and cut off all support. We, the United States should close our airspace to cut our airways and Turkish airlines if they refuse to comply. I would call on the United Kingdom, Prime Minister Sunak and the European Union to designate the IRGC as a terrorist organization.

We need to not just go after the subsidiary companies, Hezbollah and Hamas, we have to go after the parent company. And by designating United Kingdom and the EU designating those as the IRGC as a terrorist organization that would enable and empower law enforcement in Europe to disrupt financing propaganda and the organizing of Iran’s terror infrastructure. I said we need to go after the parent company, not just the subs.

I’d call on the UK, Germany, and France, members of the UN Security Council to do the right thing and trigger the snapback of all sanctions on Iran immediately. And they should do that right now this week. No wait till I’m president, do it right now because the UN missile embargo on Iran is scheduled to expire next week, we should not let that happen. Importantly, the US must establish a credible military threat to deter Iran from crossing the nuclear threshold while we work to crush its terror infrastructure.

Remember that this regime in Iran has got two goals, death to America, death to Israel. We must also provide Israel with maximum political and military support in the weeks and months ahead providing whatever ammunitions that Israel needs. And as Hamas and Hezbollah use human shields, which we know they will, strategically launching rocket attacks from civilian locations, we must stand up and tell the world that it’s Iran that has blood on its hands, not the Jewish state that’s fighting for its right to exist.

But today we have a White House that’s obsessed with tearing down the democratically elected Prime Minister of Israel in building up the terror sponsoring regime of Iran. Let there be no doubt that Joe Biden’s decision to try to put distance between Washington and Jerusalem put Israel’s security in danger and empowered not only invasions by Hamas, but it empowered the boycott divestment sanctions campaign that’s targeting the world’s only Jewish state.

I was proud to sign this last spring, North Dakota’s anti-BDS bill into law. The BDS campaign is inherently anti-Semitic and I will continue to fight it as President. Jerusalem is the eternal and undivided capital of the Jewish people. Its fate belongs to the democratically elected government of Israel and enjoys full sovereignty over an undivided city that guarantees the freedom of worship for all religions. We will put an end to Biden’s attempts to undermine Israel sovereignty over Jerusalem. And the same goes for the Golan Heights where Biden refuses to acknowledge Israeli sovereignty to this day. I would ask Congress to send me a lock, codifying that recognition in order to stop any future president from putting Israel security at risk by executive action. And we’ll stop bypassing the Taylor Force Act to put an end to the Palestinian pay to slay.

We’ll stop funding organizations like ANERA from the UN that promote antisemitism, fund terrorists, and keep Palestinians trapped in protracted refugee status for generations. And let me say this here and now, Biden’s Iran appeasement strategy is making America less safe. It’s making it less safe now and making it less safe in the future. It’s empowering our adversaries.
Biden's appeasement policy towards Iran, if it's still going, it'll end the first day that I'm in office. And unlike Joe Biden, on my first day, I'll also extend an invitation to the Prime Minister of Israel to visit the White House. While our hearts and prayers are in the Holy Land this week, including those of us that everyone's been touched, we've got a group of 84 North Dakotans that are in Israel right now, Christian Tour Group that was visiting the Holy Land.

I spoke to Father Ackerman two days ago. They weren't sure how or when they were going to be able to leave the country. But as all of us who are praying for the victims of this horrific massacre, our eyes can't avoid the mounting problems that we're facing here at home. The most unreported problem we have in our country every day, the crisis, humanitarian crisis, the security crisis is our southern border. You may think we talk about it a lot, but the average American has no idea that in the month of August over 200,000 more people crossed into our country illegally. 6,000 arrests every single day, 1,000 known escapes every day.

We've also got our debt that's piling up. The interest costs on our $33 trillion in national debt will soon eclipse our cost of our national defense. When we went from billions to trillions, we used to think billions was a big number. Now we say trillions, and the average human cannot comprehend that. But if I said, I'd like to sit down with you and give you a trillion dollars, and I was faster than any Vegas car dealer and I could give you $1 every second and peel them out. A dollar every second would take me 31,709 years to hand you over a trillion dollars. It's unthinkable.

We don't have a revenue problem in our country. We got a spending problem in our country and we need a business leader in the White House to fix that. But while all of this, the one thing that could help us fight inflation and grow our economy more than anything that's troubling right now is that the thing that would lower cost to help stabilize the world, take power away from dictators and help clean up our environment, that would be American made energy. We make it cleaner, safer, smarter and better than anywhere else in the world. And when the assault of the Biden administration attacks US energy, it doesn't lower demand. It just takes away supply, which drives the price up, and that supply gets filled by foreign entities that don't care about the environment.

Joe Biden has replaced American exceptionalism with American self-doubt. He's replaced deterrence with deference. Ronald Reagan's peace through strength has been replaced with conflict through weakness. Unlike circling sharks, American adversary sense historic moment of US vulnerability due to weakness abroad and political chaos at home. Without a fundamental change in direction of strategy, we're headed towards a century dominated by the Chinese Communist Party and its axis of anti-American regimes including Russia, Iran, and North Korea.

This moment demands a president focused on unleashing American potential, not on directing America's decline. We're beginning an era of unprecedented technological breakthroughs. These breakthroughs will improve every American life. With our human capital and our natural resources, we can create another American century, but it's going to take a leader who understands the economic challenges, who's worked in the economy, who's created jobs, who's made payroll, someone who understands the technological opportunities and the innovation of this moment and how to use that to deliver results.

We don't need to look very far to see what's broken. Border security is national security and our national security is compromised every day that we do not have control of our own borders. My home state, we've been doing our part. Our National Guard members have been not only on the
border helping out the state of Texas, we've also had brave men and women down there flying helicopter missions from San Diego to the Gulf Coast.

When I was down in the border just recently, I spoke to those brave men and women on the front lines. And one of the things that was most alarming about what I heard was that the increase of the people on the Terror Watch List entering our country, they're exploiting Biden's policies to stay in the country. Things as simple as the we don't do family separate leave. The Border Patrol during a briefing said yes, we've had people that have come from countries, and individuals on the Terror Watch list, but if they've got an adolescent with them, they can claim it's a family and we can't separate them.

We've seen a 54% increase in the last year alone of people on the Terror Watch List entering our country. As your president, I'll visit the southern border within two weeks of taking office, not two years like Joe Biden. I've been there more times since he's been elected than he has, and I'll keep going down there until we get the job done, supporting our brave men and women in law enforcement. The border remains the most unreported crisis in America. The term known got away when I was down there. I thought that was the craziest thing I'd ever heard. We know about them, but they got away. How does that happen? Well, we see them on a camera, but there's nobody out there to stop them. Why? Because they're all doing paperwork. Border Patrol is not on the border. The Border Patrol is actually processing paper for the millions of asylum seekers that have come into our country.

But how many known got aways do we have? 1.6 million. How many of those are on the Terror Watch list? We don't know. We know they're not all coming from Latin American countries because the ones that have been apprehended in the sector, I was in that small sector in Texas, there was people from over 100 countries, including everybody I've mentioned right now, China, Iran, Syria, Russia, all coming in.

6 million plus known encounters where we've processed people since Joe Biden took office. Think about that. That's the combined population, that's every man, woman and child in Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, throw in his home, state of Delaware, throw in Rhode Island, and then throw in the state of Montana to get to 6 million. That's the number of people. Think of the services, think of the schools. Think of the hospitals in those six states. That's the amount of influx we've had in two and a half years.

The policies that encourage open borders and they overwhelm our defunded border patrol because it's essentially what this administration is defunding and demoralizing. Anybody in the Border Patrol that can take early retirement that I talked to is already gone. And I know that we've got a border in North Dakota that's 365 mile long with an 18 port of entries. Why stay in an organization where you feel completely unsupported? The cartels are a clear and present danger to the United States, that's full stop. These transnational criminal organizations are better funded than our border patrol. I stood on a section of the border, people walking across a low water crossing. I go, wow, we've got North Dakota troops right here. Why would they walk right into us? They're walking right into us because that's where the cartel's and they can walk across. And the cartel extracts every last dime they have in their pocket.

Post crossing interviews suggest that some of these immigrants that have risked their lives to get to the freedom of the United States end up giving their last dime, thousands of dollars in some cases handed over to the cartels extorted. And if they don't have money, that's where the human trafficking and the sex trafficking begins. They are better funded, tens of millions of
dollars of revenue they’re extracting before we get handed before they come over to our side. And with that, the steady flow of fentanyl is driving a deadly opioid crisis that can no longer be tolerated.

China, Russia, Iran terrorist groups like Hezbollah operating in Latin America, the border security becomes an issue far more than about migration. This is a national security issue right now. Joe Biden’s doing nothing today. Mexico under AMLO reverts backwards towards authoritarianism. Joe Biden has no strategy to pressure Mexico to crack down on the fentanyl flow. His policies give a green light across Central America to run to the American border. His abandonment of the people in Cuba and Venezuela, these are both countries in crisis that could be at some point be allies of the United States. But Venezuela, seven and a half million people have fled that country.

It makes it easier for our greatest strategic adversaries to gain footholds in our own backyard. As president, border security will be a top national security priority. I’m prepared to surge troop the southern border, employ the military in response, responsible and effective ways to stop the flow of people and drugs into our country. And we’re going to reverse Joe Biden’s Open border policies. We’ll end catch and release, reinstate, remain in Mexico, restore asylum cooperation agreements. We’ll work with Congress and take legal action to eliminate the perverse incentives that drive sex trafficking and child deaths.

These policies will save lives and deny the cartels millions that they make every day on trafficking. Guess what? They’re also going to save the taxpayers billions of dollars. You say, how is that possible? Well, part of this unreported crisis is the amount of money that the Biden administration is spending down there on hotels, on tents, on emergency food, on relocation. And what the states are spending? Billions of dollars they’re spending to try to pick up the tab that the federal government is sticking them with. And now even liberal cities like New York City are understanding what the cost of supporting an additional seven and a half million people entering our country illegally is.

One example, when I was down there, a legal port of entry that lacks the security needs $2 million of capital improvement. The Border patrol leadership says we can’t get this dollars expended through Congress. But over here at this soft sided facility, aka a tent, they’re spending $20 million a month, the Border Patrol doing the paperwork. And I’ve said before, it’s not computer work, it’s paperwork. They’re doing paperwork to try to get people relocated. And again, we’re defunding. We are not supporting the actual, there’s a way to enter our country legally. There’s a way to support legal points of entry. There’s a way to have that work. It’s not happening.

So we’ll boost recruitment and retention effort of the Border Patrol, we’ll prioritize policymaking based on the input advice of those people that know how to secure the border, law enforcement. We won’t get our advice from left-wing ideologues. We need to be adding more Border Patrol agents, not more IRS agents. People think the Border Patrol is a huge organization. There’s only 19,600 or so FTEs open, thousands of positions open they can’t fill. And the Biden administration just said, “Hey, we need 87,000 more IRS agents.”

How about we have, instead of attacking Americans that are paying their taxes, why don’t we use this to secure our own border? We’ll order the expedited completion of the wall, we’ll increase Coast Guard and naval water patrols where necessary. We’ll hold sanctuary city and states accountable for contributing to the border crisis by limiting their access to federal funds.
And when I say build the wall, I don't just mean a physical, I mean also mean technological because in many cases when I've been down there, the cartels have better drone, they've better surveillance, they've got better intel on the ground than we do. It has to be a full technological as well as physical approach.

We'll also issue national security directive one, ordering maximum pressure campaign on the cartels and their Chinese supplier, directing every department and agency the US government to immediately bring forward every possible tool, whether it's law enforcement, executive action, financial sanctions, rewards for justice, special ops, covert actions and more to shut down the flow of fentanyl in the United States and make sure it's the narco terrorists that are threatened, not American families.

And you'd say, why would you feel like you should throw the book at them? Understand what's going on in our country right now in visibly every day. We've lost the equivalent in terms of mass casualties of five Vietnams since Joe Biden took office. 270,000 Americans have died of overdose deaths since Joe Biden took office. That's 300 a day. These are sons and daughters and nieces and nephews and moms and dads. 70% of those overdose deaths are fentanyl poisonings. Some of these folks have never even had a chance to understand the disease of addiction. They've never had a chance to go to treatment. They buy one... We've met people in our travels as part of this campaign where they come up and share that their son or daughter bought one Percocet for $30 and went to bed and they didn't wake up in the morning, and they went upstairs and thought they were sleeping in and found their child dead in their own bedroom.

These are fentanyl poisonings, but every state's become a border state under Joe Biden. Every community is feeling the cost and pain of his failed policies. We're taking these mass casualties right now. If we were losing 300 people a day in an airline crash, then we lost 300 tomorrow and an airline crash and 300 the next day in an airline crash, I'm telling you, by the time he got to day four, no American would be flying, and everyone would be calling for action. But when it silently happens one individual at a time, and then throw in the stigma associated with the disease of addiction.

And again, but these are mass casualties, and the Chinese Communist Party is fully complicit in providing these fentanyl elements that are coming through with the cartels. So yes, we're in a cold war with China. And the list of challenges we face from the CPP is long and growing. Cyber attacks on government agencies, private corporations, espionage at our university's military bases, national labs, theft of intellectual property. And I'm not just talking about computer software, but Chinese scientists digging up advanced seed technology and fields in Iowa and trying to take those home. Unfair trade practices, dramatic military modernization, threats against US allies.

And you think cyber attacks aren't like a big thing, it's just like a buzzword took office in North Dakota. This has been declassified. We had the North Koreans were in a K-12 school district a few miles from the Canadian border, digging around in the PowerSchool system that keeps the kids' grades. What in the world would they be in our system for? Well, they knew that the parents of those kids worked for the North Dakota National Guard. And the North Dakota National Guards got a permanent ground-based mission protecting the anti-ballistic missile system in our state, which is pointed at North Korea.
This is not some small thing. These are tens of thousands of people a day in China, North Korea, Russia, and Iran that go to work to attack our country. We need a president that understands the technology and understands how to defend ourselves from those attacks. Many in the Biden administration continue inventing new phrases to avoid acknowledging the reality we face. The words like strategic competition are thrown around to avoid making hard decisions, that has consequences. Because if it's strategic competition, that's why you do export control, sanctions, investment things. They all get watered down by loopholes that are so big you could drive a giant tractor through them. It's why we put off making investments in our military, we accept delays in arm sales to our allies.

But hey, we're at a point right now, Americans are demanding this. This isn't think tank talk. Americans can see that spy balloons are flying across our skies. They know that this military base has been set up by China in Cuba. They know that they're stealing our IP. They know that they're threatening our military around the world. They know that they now have the largest navy in the world. So let's just call it what it is. Why is the Biden administration the last one to admit what we have? We're in a cold war, but this is a cold war that we can win and a cold war that we must win and we've got to win it before it becomes an actual war like things are breaking out around the world. Chinese Communist Party is ideological.

It imagines a world made by China for China, not for us. Technology standards controlled by Beijing, economic flows that they control, ideas censored under the threat of military force and economic coercion. And why would I say all that? Because that's how they treat their own people. It's how they treat their neighbors, and it's how they'll treat the free world if they're given the power and the platform to do it.

I'll never forget, my first trip to China was when I was a student in 1980, my second one was in 1989 as a young entrepreneur. I heard that there was software, US software being sold in the street market. And I went down there and just on a lark, I said, "Hey, do you have any great, plain software?" They said, "Sure." They walked over, five and a quarter inch floppy, a buck a disc. That was $25,000 of our software back in 1989. They've stolen every piece of software I've ever been involved with across dozens of companies for the last 34 years that I'm aware of. Some people are just now figuring out that China's a threat, but theft of American intellectual property, the illicit transfer of American technology remains core to their strategy of dominating the west.

But their tools and tactics to challenge America leadership has really expanded. Their economy has grown dramatically over the last two decades. Their power and military power has grown, and they're a very different challenge to us than they were in the year 2000. The modernization of their military power, and their coercion of diplomatic strategy around the world. They've co-opted multiple UN agencies, World Health Organization. It's the cyber and economic war against the US and our allies which I talked about, all make it clear that the Communist Party is looking way beyond the Taiwanese Strait. But by the way, 30% of global economy transits its way through that South China Sea, and they're in a position to control all of that. That would disrupt the global economy like we can never imagine. It's not just about chips from Taiwan, it's about their ability to disrupt the entire world economy.

China's on pace to overmatch our US military. Cost of interest on our national debt is now on pace to overmatch our defense budget. Under Joe Biden we're losing both economic and military superiority, and that's going to produce unacceptable and far-reaching consequences for you and your kids and your grandkids, all Americans.
First and foremost, we've got to get our fiscal house in order. You can't win a cold war unless you've got a strong economy. Ronald Reagan taught us that. We've got to unleash the unmatchable engine of the American economy, and we do this in what we say every day in our administration back in North Dakota, as we focus on innovation, not regulation. Innovation is what's always driven prosperity in our country. Regulation is the thing that chokes it right now and raises the cost of every product.

Regulations that are maybe well-intended, maybe they're ideologically driven, but most regulations, by the time someone sees a problem, comes up with a rule, goes through the rulemaking, puts it through all the processes and sends it out, and then says, "Okay, now we finally have a new federal rule that we're going to jam down on all the states and all the companies and all the industries. But boy, we need to have somebody out there checking to see if it's actually being implemented this new regulation. So now we need a person in a pickup with a clipboard that's going to drive around and try to go to thousands of sites across just even in our little state to see if someone's doing it." And meanwhile, that might take eight years.

I came from an industry where Moore's Law drove everything. Moore's Law, it's going to be half the cost and twice the power 18 months from now. By the time these rules even make their way into these industries, the cost of regulation is high, the actual impact is low, and there's likely an innovative solution that actually solved the problem. And I could give you dozens and dozens and dozens of examples. So in North Dakota, you want to solve an environmental problem? It's not with more regulations. You want to take care of CO2? Not more regulations. It's all innovation, and we're on track to do all of that. We're leading the nation and growing our economy, balancing budgets, cutting wasteful spending, cutting taxes, cutting red tape. We passed 51 more red tape reduction bills this year. We even crowdsourced ideas on how to cut red tape from the public. We cut 27% out of the budget my first four months in office.

You're saying, how is that possible? Well, take a business leader that's been in the software business, in the tech business and put them in government, and look around and you can attack in any direction. There's so much waste in every single job you can take out, and you know who's the happiest? The team members that work for our state, because they know that the work that they were doing, that 20% of it might've been some mind-numbing, soul-sucking work that doesn't accomplish anything for anybody. And if we say the taxpayer is actually the customer, then let's take care of the customer. And how do you take care of the customer? You deliver them better service at lower cost, and that's what we've been doing. We passed the largest tax cut in North Dakota history. 60% of North Dakotans that now have no income tax, the rest of them are paying the lowest flat tax in the nation, below 2%.

And again, we're leading the nation in real GDP growth, six times higher than the nationwide increase. We've got the highest GDP of any Republican-led state, and we've got the highest workforce participation. Workforce is a problem everywhere. We've done innovative things to invest in workforce in our state, and that's making a real difference. So as we expand our economy which we know how to do, we know how to wipe out inflation, we know how to unleash the power and potential of American-dominant energy, making America the energy superpower of the world.

And if you say, what's the one thing that would sum up, you're going to take one thing away from this. America we have an opportunity, and on day one, we're going to go in a direction where we can start selling energy to our friends and allies instead of forcing them to buy it from our enemies.
Right now, we're heading in the wrong direction. We're playing right into China's hands on this. Energy policy is a cornerstone of successful national security. Each theater of this new Cold War, American energy policy will be one of the biggest factors on whether United States or our enemies prevail. And why do I say that? Just look at the numbers. Who's the largest importer of oil and gas in the world? China. Who's got the most food insecurity in the world? China. Who has the potential to actually use food and energy as great diplomatic tools? The United States, but we have an administration that's bent on destroying US energy, as opposed to using it to the tool that will help stabilize the world, lower inflation, and reduce aggression around the world. Joe Biden today, instead of being at war with the folks we should be, he's at war with American-made energy, and he supports Russia, Iranian and Venezuela energy instead.

And you say, "Oh, he doesn't support Russian energy." Well, actually he did and he does. How else in the world did we get all of Western Europe buying Russian energy? I mean, Biden was empowering the world's largest state sponsor of terrorism, Iran, to send more oil to China. We talked about that, directly undermining our national security. His tacit embrace of the anti-American regime in Caracas will make our homeland less safe and less secure. And this is personal to me because at a time when we had the energy price collapse during COVID and Biden was worried about the price of gas at the pump, he didn’t come to Alaska, Montana, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Wyoming, Texas and say to any of those states, could you produce more? But no, the State Department went to Venezuela, a corrupt regime, and said, "Could you produce more energy?" He himself went to the OPEC and said, "Could you produce more?"

And of course they said to him, "No, actually we've got a better idea, we'll actually reduce it. We'll reduce supply as opposed to increase it." But literally we had our own state department going to our adversaries to get them to increase energy versus talking to American-made energy. The hypocrisy is huge because again, the whole administration is around that their energy policies is somehow going to save the planet, when in fact it's making it less clean, and our environment less safe.

Areas like New England and Southern California in our country remain dependent on costly or dirtier foreign fuels because politicians, regulator and protestors won't allow pipelines to transport clean US natural gas, or they won't allow transmission lines expansions to enhance grid resiliency or lower consumers' costs and reduce CO2 admissions. And you know who supports those protestors? The Biden administration, I've seen it firsthand. Seen it firsthand in our state, and I've seen it around the country.

At the time that Russia invaded Ukraine, we were offloading 400,000 barrels of oil a day equivalent of dirty heating oil to go into New England. The highest number of percentage of homes in the country that are heated by heating oil? New Hampshire. Do we have clean natural gas in the eastern part of the US? Absolutely. With the advent of technology and innovation, the Marcellus Shale could provide all of the natural gas needed, clean natural gas in New England for heating homes. Reducing our dependence on foreign supplies. But can you get a pipeline built through the state of New York to New England? That's a national security threat that we allow the protestors for us to have an energy infrastructure internally to our country that is dependent on imports, as opposed to us using our own. It would be better for the environment, better for security, better for consumers, better for everything.

As I said, Putin would've never invaded Ukraine if Europe wasn't so reliant on Russian energy. And now with these flawed sanctions that they put in place belatedly, not right away, months later, Russian energy went down for a while on the world market, and who was the beneficiary?
China. Russia became China’s discount gas station. Biden’s electric vehicle fantasy, the scam that we’ve got going on, has pushed Americans to become even more dependent on China. You want to switch from using clean US fuels, we can decarbonize liquid fuels in America, we’re doing it here in North Dakota. We’ve got carbon negative barrel of oil through enhanced oil recovery. You can completely decarbonize ethanol very easily, that’s all happening right now in our country with innovation, not regulation. But when we put these sanctions on Russia and their price goes down 20%, who bought it? China. China was getting discounted oil and gas 20% off.

Every farmer in Iowa would like to get their diesel at 20% off, every lobsterman in New Hampshire, Maine would like to get it 20% off. I’ve talked to lobstermen, it’s choking their business models because they spend almost everything they make just on fuel to go out every day. So we need to stop enabling Putin, stop empowering China. America should be the energy superpower of the world. We also need to incorporate China’s strategic dependence on foreign energy, indoor national security making. And instead, we’re over there. We had four members of the Biden administration that went to China this summer, three of them didn’t even get a chance to meet with President Xi. One of them that did, Kerry, talked to him about CO2 reductions. China’s CO2 is increasing CO2 every week, every month, they’re opening up a coal plant every month, they’re opening up a coal plant every month, they’re the biggest polluter in the world.

We’re the country that’s taken the most CO2 out of the air, and yet we’re trying to build our transportation future around getting batteries from China when they control 85% of the rare earth minerals, and those batteries are made in a factory powered by coal. The Washington Post itself last week wrote an article praising China for their conversion to electric vehicles. They didn’t mention the source of the electricity that was powering those vehicles, it’s being powered by coal.

And why would China pursue that? China would pursue that because they don’t want to be dependent on 10 million barrels of oil imports a day. They don’t want to be dependent on Russia. They don’t want to be dependent on the Middle East, but the thing they have is coal, and they’re importing coal from Australia. They can stockpile coal on the ground, and they can run all their car fleet on electricity. Their strategy is completely different than ours. It has nothing to do with trying to stop emissions. They’re about trying to electrify, get electricity to the people that don’t have electricity in their country, and it’s about how they’re going to try to get their dependence off of oil and gas, of which they have none. These are things that we could exploit in our competition with China.

As of July of 2023, 246 coal-fired units were under construction in China. 246, another 409 that are announced or permitted. You could shut down every coal plant in the United States. Ones like the ones that I know that are run with 2023 clean energy, taking all the socks, the knocks and the CO2 out of the air, and then China will build more than we can shut down on the US. And what we’ve accomplished is we’ve not helped the environment at all, but we’ve completely destabilized our grid, we’ll drive manufacturing to other countries. So it’s not just our transportation fuels energy strategy, it’s our electrical strategy that’s completely off under the current administration. China got growing in food security. They’re dependent on imports for roughly one third of its food demand. At the same time, however, we got to evaluate our own vulnerabilities. We’ve got to safeguard our energy infrastructure from potential threats.

And I’d go back to starting with grid resiliency and security to defend against the cyber attacks or other forms of technological attacks. But alongside energy dominance, we must also promote
technology dominance too. And let there be no doubt as America leads in the AI revolution, Beijing will try to steal every innovation we develop. It's long past time that we unify our tools of economic statecraft inside the federal government to properly defend our country and increase our leverage over our competitors. No more loopholes, no more half measures. We need to de-risk and decouple our own strategic vulnerabilities wherever possible. We need to protect our strength and exploit China's weaknesses, including, as I've said, our energy and food dominance. We need a leader who understands that relieving financial pressure on China's access partners like we've seen what the Biden administration is doing with Iran and Venezuelan and Cuba, that that's actually relieving pressure on Beijing itself.

And we need a trade policy that incentivizes countries around the world to unhook from China's supply chain and hook onto an American supply chain instead economic statecraft must be coupled with historic investment in our military and defense industrial base. That means getting more people educated and recruited into high paying jobs to make more and smarter weapons and military platforms at a much faster pace. People talk about our defense budget being too high, but only 15% of it's actually going into acquisition of materials. The rest of it's going towards important things like healthcare and retirement.

We've got to figure out a way. When Ronald Reagan in his speech in 1980 said, "We know too well that war comes not when the forces of freedom are strong, but when they're weak. It's then when tyrants are tempted." That was 43 years ago. And what do we see right now, what's happened? Tyrants like Putin, tyrants like Iran and Hamas tempted when the forces of freedom were weak, and that's the position we've been put in right now. Joe Biden's weakness from a disastrous Afghanistan resolve, to his tacit, in an absurd press conference where he essentially gave a green light to Putin's invasion of Ukraine, to nonstop appeasement going back to the Obama era of Iran. He's tempting Xi Jinping to challenge the United States like never before. The challenges that China is facing, massive unemployment among their youth, a housing crisis, a banking potential banking crisis, debt issues, the economic challenges that they're having.

Wouldn't you think this would be a good time to just get everybody focused on a, let's go invade Taiwan? That's what tyrants do when their economies are falling. That's what Putin did. If Taiwan falls to the Chinese Communist Party, the follow-on effects will lead to American-led century to an early sunset. For those who understand maritime roots, the flow of commerce, the broader impact of Taiwan falling into Beijing's hand, you'll understand the potential domino effect on economic and national security, and the immediate surge of power and influence for Beijing. And you don't have to go any further than the Hudson Institute because it was Riley Waters right here at the Hudson Institute who wrote just this July that losing Taiwan would have the negative impact on the US economy greater than the 2008 financial crisis and COVID lockdown of 2020.

To avoid a war with China, we got to be prepared to win a war with China. We've got to convince the leadership, and they have to understand that if they fight a war, they'll lose that war at great cost. And that starts with us arming Taiwan to the teeth and preparing to seize on China's most critical economic vulnerabilities. It would mean that we continue ramping up our own military spending to keep our edge over China. Earlier this year, the defense department finally announced it would sell 400 anti-ship missiles to Taiwan, harpoon missiles.

This is two and a half years after Congress was first notified about the possibility of the sale. Two and a half years. Expected delivery date for what they're now saying they're going to do is
2029. This delayed date setting is like a personal invitation from the White House on White House stationary saying to President Xi, boy, if you're going to invade Taiwan, you better do it before 2029. A deterrent is not telling people what you're going to do five years from now, it's letting them know what you did yesterday. So expect to see a blockade or invasion before then. A superpower national defense is only as strong as its defense industrial base. We need to put more people to work building the military to keep our edge on China and defend the United States.

Well, the work building the military to keep our edge on China and defend the United States. Right now, we spend only about 3% of our GDP on defense. When Ronald Reagan was winning the Cold War against Russia, we were spending 6.5%. Some defense thought leaders have proposed aiming for a 5% near-term goal to give us a fighting chance to win the Cold War. Our administration would seek to make that the new floor, but it's not just the percentage GDP, it's how effectively you spend it. There's too much red tape. It takes years and years. The weapons program that estimated 40% of small defense contractors have gone out of business because they can't manage all the red tape and lawyers that they need to manage the procurement process. We've got to get innovation and American ingenuity and American entrepreneurship back into our defense industrial base.

Anyone who won't pledge to work with the Reagan standard isn't serious about the threat we face from China, and those who refuse to invest in our military are putting China first and America last. Joe Biden is certainly putting America last. And as China continues to modernize its nuclear forces, it's time to seriously invest in our own, including production and scientific infrastructure. The lessons of the first Cold War are staring us in the face. Only today, we face multiple potential threats, not just one. We can't live in a fantasy world, where in America that is outmatched and nuclear forces can somehow maintain peace and security in the decades to come. Nor can we believe that America is safer without a robust missile defense architecture on both coasts that is fully integrated with space-based capabilities.

We must defend ourselves from growing missile threats from China, Russia, Iran, to North Korea. And if you think I'm just spouting out words on a page, the First Lady and I were part of a group that was on a trade mission to Japan last October. We had an opportunity that week to meet with over a trillion dollars in market cap over 150 companies from all the largest trading partners in Japan and lots of small companies that were interested. We've got energy and food that we can sell to a country that has no oil and gas production, and they have to also have to import about 30% of their calories. 226 million people living the size of two Iowas, and we're in a meeting with one of the largest trading companies and they all start buzzing around the text. They're getting a text, an automated alert texting system that North Korea had launched a missile heading towards Japan.

I've been in more international business meetings I can count. I've only been in one where people were saying, "There's a missile coming." There's nothing at that point that anybody could do. It sailed over the top of Japan and landed harmlessly in the ocean, but we're up against people that have the capability to strike against us and our allies, and they could do that at any point in time. My administration will push forward with third missile defense site on the East coast. We'll invest in space capabilities, provide effective missile defense of the homeland against ballistic missiles and hypersonic weapons, and we'll work with our allies in Israel to build on the successes of the past. We will build a new generation of missile defense technologies. And we're not alone in this new Cold War, and we shouldn't. We've got strong democratic allies
in the Pacific who want to work with us, and we need to push our European allies to support them too.

NATO needs to recognize that China is a threat to all western democracies, something that too few countries across the Atlantic understand today. With close allies like Japan, Australia, the Philippines, and South Korea, they perceive and understand the direct Chinese threat better than most European nations, and we should press European nations and NATO to focus on this threat as well. And when it comes to the threat we face from China, India emerges as one of our most important partners. The closer the US-India relationship becomes, the better for our national security. The radical left's incessant attacks on President Modi and Hindus must be condemned and countered. We also need to be smart diplomatically across the globe, recognizing that China is building a global sphere of influence from Asia to the Middle East to Africa, and yes, even Latin America.

It took breaking news about a Chinese base in Cuba to wake up the political class in Washington to the threats we face in our own backyard. Countering China, Russia, and Iranian influence in our own hemisphere must be a top priority. We must never allow these regimes to bring missiles to Cuba, Venezuela, or anywhere else in this hemisphere, a doctrine I would enforce using all means necessary. With espionage, on American college campuses and inside American corporations continuing, we must restore the China initiative at the Department of Justice. And as China now threatens American business officials with its new so-called espionage law, let me be clear. Any hostage taking of an American citizen by the Chinese Communist Party will be met with severe consequences for both the CCP and for every individual involved. And that policy goes for Putin and the Ayatollahs well. The days of the United States paying for hostages will come to an end at 12 noon on January 20th, 2025.

We must also wake up the China's strategy of co-opting traditional US allies and US funded organization, and we must reverse policies that enable it. Example number one, Saudi Arabia. Traditional American security partner, scorned by the Biden White House for the last two years, driven straight into the arms of Xi Jinping, opened up a major beachhead for China in the Middle East. Biden administration’s investment of taxpayer money and broken UN agencies exploited by China’s another example, China using the UN Human Rights Council to whitewash their genocide in Xinjiang and their brutality in Hong Kong.

China’s influence over the World Health Organization lets Beijing cover up the origins of Covid-19 and threaten the world with future pandemics. China’s use of UN Peacekeeping operations to secure its investments goes unchecked, and China uses UN Food and Agriculture Organization to mitigate a massive strategic vulnerability. All the while, Taiwan gets locked out of every single international meeting. As the largest UN donor, we talk about the US, it’s the US taxpayer. The US taxpayers are the largest UN donors. America taxpayers deserve a say. Engagements for engagement’s sake is not a strategy. We shouldn’t be writing blank checks to the UN. Assistance should come with strict conditions to ensure taxpayer money is advancing American interest, not China’s.

But it’s not enough to defend against China’s influence campaigns and information operations. We need to recall Reagan’s strategy of waging our own information war. It was long before the internet, but recognizing the CCPs great firewall, their attempt to control information inside their own country, but then infiltrate us, attempt to control what its population sees and hears, but influence us, it's a vulnerability for our country and we need to say ourselves. It's a time that we use the technology to reimagine what programs like Voice America and Radio Free should look
like, to meet the challenge of a 21st century where misinformation campaigns should look like and what they do look like.

Because meanwhile, while we can't even have websites displayed inside China, almost every American youth has taken their supercomputer and put TikTok on it. A device that could have control, applications could have control from the Chinese party. My friends, the formula for winning this Cold War isn't complicated. Diplomacy that is supercharged by economic dominance, energy dominance, technological dominance, military dominance, information dominance, including robust cyber defense. But it takes leadership to set the vision, it takes leadership to build strong partnerships and strong allies, and it takes leadership to deliver victory in this Cold War for the American people.

While China is our greatest long-term threat and defeating that threat must be a top priority every day we serve, we cannot pretend to live in a world where China is our only threat. As we look abroad, the daily threats we face from Russia, Iran, North Korea cannot be cast aside as problems we'd rather not confront because these threats must not be deterred and they must be rolled back whenever and wherever possible. And of course, these countries are all coordinating with each other against us. Vladimir Putin, the way that Vladimir Putin's treated in the press most days is we act like he's an actual president of a country. That somehow there's equivalency that here's someone who's been elected in leading a country. But let's understand. He's a mob boss, he's a thug, he's a murderer, and now he's a murderer and a mob boss and a thug that could be worth $100 billion, because that's how much he may have skimmed off of their economy.

He gets a cut out of every barrel of oil that's sold in that country. You got an enemy like Prigozhin, use them until you don't need them and then kill them. I mean, we have to understand who we're dealing with here. This is not country to country diplomacy. Were actually dealing. The Wagner group had 65 shell companies, and when they went in to help, like in Syria, they got 25% of the oil production. When they went in to help in the Central African Republic, they took over an entire gold mine and shipped those back. And now, when we put these sanctions on Russia and they start selling to China, we now for the first time have got oil transactions that are occurring outside the US dollar, the reserve dollar. The US as the reserve currency for the world is at risk when it starts to erode and we're not doing petrodollar exchanges in the dollar anymore.

I mean, the cataclysmic collapsing of what's happening from these Biden policies is a huge, huge threat. And Putin is a thug and he's running this massive mafia state. He's like a mafia mob boss, but he's got a Navy and he's modernizing his nuclear force. He'll never be satisfied with just taking Ukraine. In his own mind, he's the czar of the Russian Empire, and left unchecked, Reagan's Cold War victory would quickly be undone. And Putin, as we know, close ally of Xi Jinping. There've been 40 high level meetings between these two leaders and their leadership teams, and of course, Putin's meeting with North Korea and North Korea is supplying them, and Iran is supplying weapons to Russia. I mean, they're all on the same team, and it's team anti-USA. Putin and Xi are tied at the hip. Their goals bring down the United States, threaten democracy. I'm running against people that say we shouldn't worry about Ukraine, we got to focus on China. They're completely interconnected. A win for Putin is absolutely a win for China. Putin's victory is China's victory. Putin's loss is China's loss.

We only spent 3.44% of US spending... Of what we spend at the Pentagon, only 3.5% of that went towards Ukraine. And with that, we've taken out 6,700 Russian tanks. We've taken out an
estimated potential, one-half of their capability. 180 Russian fighters and helicopters, three Russian nuclear capable strategic bombers. We took out a Russian guided missile cruiser, Russian attack submarine, and we never sent a single soldier. This is the bargain of a century. If you’d have said to anybody two and a half years ago that somehow that we could spend less than 4% of our military budget and take out over half of Russia’s capability, as a fiscal conservative, you’d say, "Wow." As someone who wants a stable world, you’d say, "Wow, that’s a fantastic deal. Take that one every day." And yet, we’ve got people in my own party that are saying that we somehow need to abandon our support of Ukraine.

Biden could have stopped this war before it started. Instead, he sent every signal to Putin to go forward. Gave Putin two early gifts. He lifted sanctions on the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, granted an extension in the New START Treaty without any modifications, delayed arm shipments to Ukraine. To avoid provoking Moscow, AKA helps greenlight Moscow, he went to Camp David, refused to take calls from allies as the Taliban marched on in Afghanistan as we had the collapse in Afghanistan. He gave a disastrous press conference tacitly approving the limited incursion into Ukraine. He pulled our military trainers and closed our embassy in Kiev on February 14th, 2022, 10 days before Putin invaded. Anyone who denies that Biden gave a green light to Putin to invade Ukraine has just engaged in revisionist history.

In the early days of the conflict, Biden dragged his feet on approving javelin missiles, real-time battlefield intelligence. He took more than 16 months to approve cluster munitions, almost a year and a half to approve F-16s. Even longer to improve the ATACMS, the army tactical missile systems. All of these actions could have allowed us to already have won this war. The State Department claimed it would be making Putin a pariah while it published a laundry list of exceptions for diplomats to keep meeting with the Russian counterparts, including working together on the disastrous nuclear deal for Iran. And now Biden, as I said earlier, approves tens of billions of dollars to subsidize the Iranian budget as Iranian continues to send armed drones to help Russia terrorize Ukraine. The White House is essentially funding both sides of the conflict. If we're funding Iran and they're providing drones to Russia, we're doing both sides. We've got to stop. Pick your side. Let's go with democracy.

The Russian sanctions regime, we haven't place today, it's pathetic. The effectiveness of sanctions is not based on the number of press releases in the issue, but on what economic damage you actually inflict. From day one, this president has shied away from using secondary sanctions to cut off Putin's revenue streams from places like China. Putin today is making more money under this flawed sanctions regime, not less. Diesel shortages that are occurring, partly because here in the US, because of our anti-energy, you can't get new refineries built or approved, and around the world, there is a diesel shortage. It's why you drive by a gas station, you see the new prices, diesel used to be when I was a kid, it was lower. Now it's a buck higher. Diesel shortages are allowing Putin to actually sell some of his oil above international market prices. He's making more money than ever.

While Biden attacks our domestic ability to even move liquid natural gas, that was a new executive order recently, stopping LNG movement by train, blocking off parts of our country in monuments where we could mine uranium to get our nuclear capability going for nuclear baseload power. Putin keeps cashing in on LNG and uranium sales. To run our nuclear, our 93 nuclear facilities in the US, do you know who we buy uranium from? We buy it from Russia. Nevermind that American LNG has become Europe's lifeline. We had over 600 ships from one company last year that sailed to Europe. Each one of those ships could heat a million homes for a month. Europe would've starved or they would've frozen last winter, not starved. They
would've frozen last winter if not for US energy exports. Without thousands of American shiploads, I mean, factories also would've been shuttered as well. I mean, German manufacturing has been severely damaged by their lack of energy power, coming from this conflict with Russia.

But as I said earlier, we should be selling more energy to our friends and allies, not buying from adversaries, and we should not let our allies become completely dependent on our adversaries for energy. President Biden pledged that he would help Ukraine defend itself for as long as it takes. That's the wrong promise. As president, I would pledge to help Ukraine win as quickly as possible. That's the cheapest, fastest way to move this thing forward. That objective drives a different set of policy options that Biden refuses to consider. Russia's reign of terror against Ukraine isn't the only kind of terrorism we need to be worried about today. If we forget the lessons of 9/11, we doom ourselves to repeat history. We need to wake up to an unsettling reality.

Joe Biden's disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan has dramatically increased the risk of foreign terrorism across the United States. Afghanistan has returned to be the staging ground of terror against the West. Whether it's ISIS posing as an imminent threat or the Taliban enabling Al-Qaeda to fundraise, train, and recruit, the war on ISIS in Syria continues while threats still emanate from Al-Shabaab and Somalia and Al-Qaeda in Yemen. We must remain focused on winning the Cold War with China and deterring other state adversaries from doing us harm. But that focus must not come at the expense of counter-terrorism or Homeland Security. In closing, I want to say, most important of all, beyond all these policies, we need a leader that actually believes in America. You have to believe in this country to be able to defend it. As an entrepreneur, when I had people working for me in over 120 countries around the world, had people that worked for me that didn't have the right to vote and the right to assemble. When you see that firsthand growing up, you start to understand the importance of American greatness in the world.

When I was a small company, we had young people working for us that worked in the North Dakota National Guard. The wall had not yet been fallen, but the North Dakota National Guard airmen from the happy hooligans that were flying F-4s were asked to fulfill a mission for six months flying on the East and West Germany border. I traveled over there. I flew on a C-135 transport from Fargo to Ramstein Air Base, and we had a chance to actually go through checkpoint Charlie into East Berlin. I had a chance to see, as a young person, one side that was BMWs and Audi and Volkswagens and Mercedes and lights and high rises, and then we went to the other side, and there were buildings that still had pock marks from World War II bombing on them. Unchanged, driving two cylinder cars on the other side. The contrast could not have been stark, they were all the same German people and they were split by two forms, one communism and one freedom.

And the economic disparity between the two is just as great today when you look at what happens in North Korea and South Korea, look at the GDP of those two countries divided. We have examples of how this works and how it doesn't work. And when the Berlin Wall fell, one of the first calls we got was from a young entrepreneur in Poland who called our offices. He'd read about our company in PC Magazine and he said, "I want to create a Polish version of Great Plains Software." He and his two partners took turns sleeping in an office space because they didn't have it. There was no cloud base, there was no backup, there was no hard drive. Every investment they had was building that version of software, and they never left sight of that
I've seen what happens when freedom and liberty and economics and open markets happens, where it can transform lives and transform communities, and help build a free and safe and prosperous world. I've seen that firsthand. And today, what we do, we get leadership that may not even believe in America. They don't believe it enough to defend it. And America won the Cold War under Ronald Reagan using a wide variety of tools, but one of them was Reagan's optimism and a daily affirmation in the American way of life, of freedom of liberty, the rule of law, democracy, and the power of capitalism. It gave us strength and optimism to believe, to endure and win.

I understand how this works because I've had a chance to live the American dream myself, coming from a small town of 300 people with gravel streets and no computers, a dad that was a World War II vet that passed away when I was a freshman in high school, I had a chance to literally bet the farm, 160 acres of dry land farm ground to be the seed capital for Great Plains Software, and we built that into a company of 2,000 people with customers in 132 countries. Today, we face an onslaught of attacks on the premise of American exceptionalism, but name another country where you could have had the amazing opportunity that I had. That's why the capital that wants to come to our country, the talent that wants to come to our country, we have an opportunity in this next century to be the place where all the capital and all the talent wants to come because our commitment to liberty and freedom, our commitment to capitalism is our commitment to innovation, not regulation, is going to give us the winning edge in any battle that we face.

And today, we see this attack on the premise of American exceptionalism everywhere. It's even indoctrinating, whether it's indoctrinating students or the next generation of leaders that America is deeply flawed and broken, but I reject that. When Reagan spoke of the shining city on the hill, hundreds of millions yearned for the American way of life. They fought to get to our country. America doesn't need to be perfect to be exceptional. We've got flaws. We started this country with a couple of major flaws, but we've worked in an aspirational way. We're the most aspirational country in the world, and our constitution provides that foundation for the never ending work to achieve that historic vision presented by our founding fathers. So, to defeat our adversaries, all of which don't believe in freedom, they believe in authoritarianism, we must have a leader who understands the power of free societies and free markets.

We've got to have someone who understands the power of how a [resident can lift America up at both home and abroad. We have to have a president who understands how technology is changing every job, every company, and every industry. It needs to change the military and it needs to change how we deliver government services. But by believing in ourselves and with leadership that people can trust, we will reach our unlimited potential, and we will win the new Cold War, and we will make America safer and more prosperous.

Thank you Hudson Institute for hosting me today. God bless you all and God bless the United States of America.

John Walters:

We still have a few more questions.
Doug Burgum:

Yes.

John Walters:

Get you off your feet. Thank you. Thank you for those remarks. I can't help but be struck that the governor of North Dakota comes to Washington, DC and has a more powerful and clearer view of the global situation than most of the people working in our institutions that should be working on these problems. So, thank you for that. That was terrific. I have to ask you that regard though, you know that what you're saying is so counter to what many are saying. Not only what the policy of the Biden administration has been, but also a significant number of Republican candidates have been much less willing to face up to some of these threats or to take the responsibility of the United States and the Middle East and Ukraine and in the Indo-Pacific as seriously.

How do you, as think about your own, offering yourself as a leader, how do you see kind of-

John Walters:

Offering yourself as a leader, how do you see kind of bringing the confidence back here? The vision is important, but it is striking how on both parties, the confusion and as you said, the lack of belief in ourselves is so powerful. How do you think about turning that around?

Doug Burgum:

Well, I'll focus on... Obviously, we'd need a leader that can unify the country, but I'll focus on the Republican Party since we're in a primary contest right now. I understand why many primary voters are concerned about too many fronts and America extending power in too many places because they have been told, there's been a thesis that's been presented that somehow that with the... Because they're facing economic insecurity. Under Biden with inflation, they're much worse off than they were two and a half years ago. They're paying 700 bucks more per month for your basic goods, for food and gas in the car. Their savings have been robbed through inflation, and when they're in that spot and you're economically insecure, and if someone tells you, "Well, hey, I'm going to make your life more prosperous and more safe and more secure if we're not in Ukraine, if we're not in Israel, if we just give up Taiwan," that's it, if people that are concerned about economic security and they believe that that's what's being told to them, they may buy into that.

But it's actually the opposite because half of our economy is dependent on the trade and inter-exchange that we have with free markets, with our allies. And so, if everybody wants to take a 50% pay cut in their economic capability in our country, that's the part they're not telling them. If you want to go all isolationist, we will have a smaller economy and people will be less prosperous and things will cost more and prices will be higher and revenue will be lower, and we won't be able to have the government services. We'll be in a downward spiral. The way this thing works is when the economy works and the economy has to work, it's us plus our allies. And so when our allies are safe and prosperous, we're safe and prosperous. The president has the bully pulpit. He needs to communicate that. He needs to draw the link about where we extend power, when we support an ally, how that benefits every American here, and how it makes Americans safer at home, but that connection has been lost.
It was well understood during World War II in my mom and dad's generation, when they got up and went to war and we were fighting world wars in both Europe and in the Pacific, they knew that they were doing that for a more prosperous America and a safer America. And guess what? We did. We had 70 years coming off the back of World War II where everybody's now sort of taking that for granted. I never thought we'd be talking about World War III. I started talking about it to my kids almost a year ago, and it seems like every day in this last weekend we just keep getting closer and closer to that because the policies of the Biden administration are destabilizing the world, they're empowering dictators, they're raising the price of goods at home. They're making us less safe and less secure, and we have to go in the other direction.

**John Walters:**

And you know that there are both Democrats and Republicans, but there's a significant number of Republicans in Congress that are saying, "If you send money to Ukraine..." We haven't seen what's going to happen with regard to support for Israel, "If you send money to Ukraine, you're taking money away from border security, you're taking your money away from domestic problems," that's not your view here. And how do you think we can better create an argument that the American people can see the value of the point of view that you're talking about?

**Doug Burgum:**

Well, it's a simplistic, but false trade-off where people believe that we can't do A and B at the same time when actually we can and we can do that, but also, there's another interesting twist that we have right now, and that's the whole... Again, because we're out there talking to Republican primary voters, there's a lot of people that don't believe that the war in Ukraine has to do with fighting for freedom or supporting a democratic partner or pushing back on Putin or getting China or Putin. You go out and talk to Republicans that are trying to make their paychecks and they call it Hunter Biden's war. So they believe it's... There's a conspiracy theory around the origins or what's going on, and so that's also a challenge.

People start believing things, and that all could be true. You can have corruption in a political family in our country, but it still doesn't mean that we shouldn't be fighting for a free democracy that's taking the casualties, taking the losses, and actually doing the work that NATO said they would do. If Putin attacks, we're all going to band together and fight back. That's why NATO's been around since 1949, and now we've got a country where we don't have NATO troops. It's Ukrainians that are out there fighting and doing the job. We need to get behind those folks.

**John Walters:**

Aside from the horrific images we saw from the Hamas attack on Israel that you referred to, as bad as those are, in addition to that, what's been troubling to me, I'll speak for myself, but many of my colleagues at Hudson is some of the demonstrations in American cities and in cities around the country praising Hamas, supporting Hamas, the antisemitic demonstrations that have sprung up in this kind of ugly and horrifying manner. I haven't seen any major leaders, any major city mayors, I haven't seen our national leadership confront that. All right, we're a country that believes in free speech, but it doesn't mean we can't criticize heinous speech or we can't criticize the praising of butchery and terror. How would you respond?

**Doug Burgum:**
Well, again, I think it's the bully pulpit of the presidency is we just have to call it out. There is free speech, people are entitled to say what they want to say, but it's abhorrent that people would take the side of people that are murdering and butchering innocent people, including babies. It's hard to even think about, but there is no moral equivalency here, and yet people are trying to make that case.

John Walters:

Let me ask you one last question because especially your background in business and what you’ve talked about in terms of what we need with our economy, a lot of Americans have become much more skeptical of free trade, much more skeptical of... President Trump made a number of arguments about trade deals taking American jobs and being bad deals. We still have a lot of trade. We saw during COVID, there were some problems with strategic dependence on particular places and supply chains that became problematic during the pandemic, but I think one of the things in talking to foreign leaders as we do here at Hudson, European as well as Asian, is trying to create a politically acceptable and economically acceptable set of standards for trade that are good for the workers of our country and other countries, and reestablish the ability to use international trade to continue to build wealth across, especially democracies in the world. Do you have a sense of how to restart or what principles we could use to reestablish a global system of trade that would be seen as a win-win for everybody?

Doug Burgum:

I do, and of course that starts with someone who's actually competed in a global economy, worked in a global economy and had people working around the world for that, but I think that it's been too simplistic where we think we can do these trade deals and it's like, "Let's make a deal." It's like a TV show. I can cut a better deal, I can do whatever, and we've been on the wrong end of some of that. The naivete to say, "Hey, we're going to stick it to China and we're going to tell them you can't buy our soybeans." What did China do? Started buying soybeans from Brazil. American farmers, including those in my home state were out of luck. "Oh, don't worry. We've got a big tariff on other stuff that's coming in. We're going to write you a check on the backend."

This kind of simplistic idea that you can manipulate markets and make it all work, it just gives up a competitive advantage for us and our farmers in that case perhaps for decades. It helps a competitor that's supplying the same good. And so again, when you've got things like commodities, trying to do sanctions on commodities like the failed sanctions on oil, the failed sanctions... If you've got a sanction on the product and we're the only one that makes it, maybe that would work, but you have to have a basic understanding that these are tools that don't work across all products and all categories, especially undifferentiated commodities. So, it's just absurd to me. The day some of these things get announced, you're kind of like, "Well, that's not going to work." Every note that hangs out like, "Well, he figured that out on day one, this wasn't going to work."

But it takes an understanding of how the global economy is, but you're absolutely right, John, we can create a system that benefits our country, our workers, our democracy, our economy, and our allies. That wouldn't be that hard to do. We just have to be smart about how we think about doing that, but this idea that some of the stuff that even the Biden administration is doing is not helping because the Biden administration on some of these projects with the infrastructure
money, we had a project in North Dakota to build a water filtration plant that was part of a federal project, moving water out of the Missouri River, and something we've been working on for decades. We finally get to the last piece and we got $35 million, very small piece of this thing left, and then we bid it out under the new IRA rules and the bids came back and it was 65 million.

I said, "Well, I knew that we were bidding roads at 30% above because steel and concrete and rebar was higher and labor was higher because of the inflation of all the federal money that was being shoved at the states, and all projects were increasing," but I said, "Why is this one 100% higher?" And they said, "Well, because the rules, because we can't buy from a German pump manufacturer, and they're the only one that makes this precision pump that actually takes the microbes out that you need when you're moving one water from one basin into another over a continental divide."

Well, who in America makes that? Well, nobody. Well, is somebody going to make it? They're going to start, but then they also have to have union labor, and so then it could be four or five years. So then we take a project, which is the federal money... We're here to help, but then it extends the thing four or five years or indefinitely and all the economic cost of not finishing that and not having the clean water, and I guess, what, we're penalizing Germany, our ally who's manufacturing has taken it in the tank because of what's going on with the Ukraine war?

None of that makes any sense. Germany's not happy about that, and North Dakotans aren't happy about that. Hey, we can't buy from our allies? So, the ideological layering that goes into the federal dollars creates all kinds of distortions and economic outcomes, which aren't seen, but of course it drives inflation, and that's the thing that's killing us all over. And the last thing I'd say on inflation is on the road thing, when we got the bids back this spring and it was 30% higher, and the Biden administration says, "Oh, don't worry. Inflation's going down," which means prices are raising less lower, it's only two or three or 4%. Well, if we had high interest rates and interest rates are at a 23-year high, if I'm a private sector developer and I got high interest rates and I got 30% increase in my cost, guess what? I cancel the project.

I don't build the single family housing. I don't build the multifamily housing. I don't build the new whatever it is. We don't need more office buildings right now. We have too many of those, but it's like you just stop and they're choking out private sector investment. Guess what? State and federal government, we're roaring ahead. What did we build? Did we stop building roads? We got six months to build roads in North Dakota every year, if we're lucky. So what, do we take the federal money instead of building a hundred miles a road with 30% inflation, we built 70 miles a road. And so, you're going to continue to have all of this money that's getting shoved into the economy will continue to drive inflation on the non-consumer side because there's no incentive. Higher interest rates don't stop a state from building roads or building infrastructure.

And so this rosy economic picture they're painting, I'm looking at it very differently and I'm like, "Wow, they could keep raising these interest rates through the roof and kill the entire private sector. We might still have inflation because we're sucking up the concrete, the rebar, all the building materials to go do the trillion dollars of infrastructure that everybody is supposed to go build before a timeline," but we've also got to do it under a certain set of guidelines with labor and other things that's also raised the price for every American. So, it's a completely naive approach to economic stimulus. It's not just the dollar amount was wrong, it's all the rules and the red tape that come with the dollars. They're going to continue to have problems going forward. Other than that, I don't feel passionately about it.
John Walters:

One last question because you've been very generous with your time. One of the things that my colleagues and I are working on national security policy analysis are always struck by in the last two administrations frankly, is a kind of failure of our leadership to talk to the American people about issues as you have here, that there's an announcement of decision or the use of executive orders or a failure... We're at war and multiple places at risk, and to have a kind of traditional speech from the leader of the United States or even a Secretary of State or a defense secretary about this is what's happening, this is what's at stake.

And even in the debates that I know you've been frustrated by so far, the turning to slogans rather than trying to try to seriously articulate a set of this is what I'm going to stand for in office, so that there are choices that people can make intelligently. As you go around the country making your case, what's been the response of the American people? Because I think people think... American people don't want to hear about specifics or they don't want to hear about your view of the world or the economy and so forth. What they really want is just something that's going to make their passions ignited like they're listening to social media live. What's your experience as you make this pretty sophisticated case, clear, powerful? What's been the reaction?

Doug Burgum:

Well, I've got a strong belief in the American people, and I actually believe that it's the networks that want the sound bites because it's the business model. The networks that are controlling the political discourse today are... A long segment is six minutes. It's divided into the opinions of the person that's interjecting their point of view. They're not journalists. Depending on what station you're on, they've got a different narrative that they're trying to drive and they're trying to drive. And if you agree with them, they have you on more frequently. If you don't agree with them, you don't get on. If you attack other candidates, you get on more frequently. If you don't attack other candidates, you don't get on. So, if you have message discipline around policy, you have less access to the traditional media networks.

And even what you call the debates, I think most Americans that we talked to are super frustrated. They're like, "We loved everything you said. Why didn't you get more time? You were the one that was actually answering the questions," but at least the first two were designed to promote inter-candidate conflict because that's what sells. And it's not inter-candidate conflict that goes on for minutes because they get the conflict, they stir up, and then they drop it into a soundbite that could be eight seconds long and then tune in and see the clash between A and B. And that's kind of the... It has the name that should have political gravitas, which is a presidential debate where we're actually talking about who's going to lead the most important country in the world, the most important job in the country, and we're going to actually learn more about the capabilities of those candidates.

But instead, it is actually reality TV. It's not surprising that people that have had experience in reality TV do well in today's political environment because this is what it's become, and it's actually designed to generate this in real time moment. It's a disservice to the American people because they're not getting a chance to actually understand the capabilities of the people in how they would approach and solve problems. But your question is, do we worry about it? When the first lady and I are out in Iowa, in New Hampshire talking to real Americans, the thing that's quite inspiring is that people are very willing to actually be curious about, as all of you were here
today and those listening, be curious about long form answers because most Americans understand that, well, we need leadership that has a clear idea to solutions that can be articulated.

They understand because of their own families, their own challenges, their own facing of addiction in their family or economic hardship, they understand that things are complicated and they want someone who’s got the experience. I grew up working on the farm, the ranch at the grain elevator, some of the world's dirtiest jobs and worked as a chimney sweep through college, someone who's had jobs where you take a shower at the end of the day, instead of the beginning of the day, someone who, when my dad died, my mom went back to work. I understood what economic insecurity was because she had to go back to work to help make sure we could pay the bills and pay the mortgage. They want someone basically they can trust, someone that can communicate to them, and we've been thrilled with the individual reception we've had with people.

Our biggest challenge is we’re the least known person in the field. I'm competing with people that have run for... Held national office, run for national office, have been in large media markets. They're all from the East Coast where all the media is, and then we're coming in, but we like our position. We got super high favorables with the people that have met us and we've got low name recognition. That means we got them... As a venture capitalist entrepreneur, we got the highest upside of anybody in the field. And when I look up and down that group, and I say the economy... The election in 2024 is going to be on the three things we announced on June 7th, it's going to be on economy, energy, and national security. And we've got more capability and more experience across those three categories. I've created more jobs than everybody else on stage.

I've been making payroll every two weeks since I was in my mid-20s. I know what job creation is, and I understand the things that are coming. We haven't talked about AI today, but that's going to revolutionize every industry, and some of the other folks haven't even thought about it. We're already figuring out how we can apply it into state government to make government more efficient and more effective against all the challenges that we have. So, I'm super optimistic that there is the... And particularly for the young people that are listening, we're going to have breakthroughs in technology, in healthcare, and biotech where every one of you that if you're under 35, you're likely going to live to 100.

So, think about things differently because your lifespan will be very different than our generation because entire disease classes are going to get completely solved. And so it's a very exciting time, but we're trapped in this lurching from one international conflict to another. We're trapped in this economic malaise. We're trapped in all these issues, and it kind of reminds me of 1980 where we were adrift. We had leadership that wasn't strong, it was weak, and then we had a Western governor that rode in on a horse and did a pretty good job, and I think we could do that again. That'd be a great thing for this country.

John Walters:
I first came to Washington to work for Ronald Reagan, so I am aware of what you're talking about. Well, thank you, Governor, for the time. Thank you for your remarks and the service to the country that you have performed. So, thank you for being with us.

Doug Burgum:

Well, and I thank you. I want to thank everybody at the Hudson Institute, and you started this off by a little bit of surprise that somebody from North Dakota would have a grasp, but I just want to say to everybody listening, if you're a farmer in North Dakota, you're selling into a global market. If you sit around the cafe, they know what the price of soybeans is in Brazil. They know what tariffs are, they understand all this stuff. If you're an oil field worker, what's going on in terms of global and world markets. So it's, again, there's this thing that I see from the liberal lead on each coast where they always underestimate what people that are actually working in the economy understand, but particularly those that are in the Midwest that are involved in these global markets, they really understand it.

And of course, we're one of the only states that's got two of the three legs of the strategic triad because we've got both missile bases and bomber bases in North Dakota. And the one thing we're trying to get, if we can get a submarine in Lake Sakakawea we'll all three legs of the strategic triad in North Dakota, so that would be a good thing. And then if our state were to secede from the nation, we'd be among the largest nuclear powers in the world. We'd have it all dialed in then.

John Walters:

What I'd like to do is have some of my think tank friends at other places, and some of the people in Congress sit down with you for a while, and they have something they could learn, and you'd be a great teacher, so thank you.

Doug Burgum:

Well, thank you, John. I appreciate it.

John Walters:

You're welcome.