

SPEECH

Transcript

Speaker:

JB Pritzker, Governor of Illinois

Be Like Larimer

Well, thank you all very much. Thank you so much to Tim. Thank you for having me here. Hello, Larimer County Democrats. How wonderful it is to be here. It really is an honor and a delight to share this stage tonight with Betsy Markey. It's true that Anne Caprara, of course, spent the last eight years telling me that Betsy was her favorite boss. Annoying, I can tell you. But there's nothing I admire more in this business, especially right now, than an elected official with the courage to stand up for what's right. Betsy, thank you. Thank you. So, I mean, how proud must you be to have elected Betsy Markey and Joe Neguse to the United States Congress?

I want to recognize my friend for three decades, your Governor Jared Polis, and say to all, let's give him a big round of applause. We were young. We met over the phone actually 30 years ago when I was thinking about running for Congress. And you know, nobody at that time had a website. It wasn't 30 years ago, but Jared Polis was helping candidates put websites up on the web. So, I read an article about him and I picked up a phone and called him and what do you know, he responded. So, we've known each other for an awful long time.

But I really want to say to all of the federal, state, and local leaders that are here tonight, whether you are standing up for Coloradans in the halls of Congress or in the state house or in the courts or town halls or really anywhere else. Thank you. Thank you. The fight for our country takes all of us and Colorado is helping to lead the way forward.

In the end, we need to win. And we can't do that without volunteers like tonight's award winners who knock doors and make phone calls and get out the vote. Never, never before has it been more important to honor the volunteers who show up again and again for our party and for our country. You are the heartbeat of America, especially in the moment when the future of our democracy is on the line. So, I want to thank all of you who volunteered for this party.

Now, when Tim extended the invitation to speak to you all tonight, Anne Caprara, of course, told me that I had to come because she said, "I would never find a more committed group of Democrats anywhere in the country than right here in Larimer County." And over the past two decades, the people in this room have turned Larimer from red to purple to blue. So my new slogan for national democrats is "Be Like Larimer."



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Folks, what a year this past month has been. I mean, it seems like every day we wake up to some new horror. ICE agents in our streets shooting peaceful protesters. Gas prices skyrocketing. First time home buyers can't afford a home even if they could find one for sale. Protections for our public lands and national parks suddenly at risk. An ill-advised and illegal war threatens our lives and our livelihoods and the lives of our men and women in uniform. A Twitter attack on the first American pope who's advocating for peace. A secretary of war who refuses, sorry a secretary of war who confuses, the Bible with pulp fiction and every story about RFK Jr. and wildlife. And leading all of it, the most corrupt president in the history of the United States.

I used to think that everything that Donald Trump said and everything that he did was in service of his own ego. I was wrong. I now realize that everything he says and does is in service to his own bank account. So, I guess it's kind of inspiring that Donald Trump's second term is frankly the most profitable business he's been in. The problem is that while Trump is lining his own pockets, he is stealing money right out of your pockets.

In 12 days, 9,000 Coloradoans are going to lose SNAP benefits. SNAP benefits they use to feed their families. Reports from the Middle East are that sailors on our battleships are having to ration food. Medicare and Medicaid have been cut and healthcare premiums are going through the roof. Cancer research has been slashed. Forest rangers are being laid off. Tariffs are killing family farmers and their farms. And the war in Iran is driving up the cost of fertilizer just as planting season starts. Government corruption has a cost. And we're seeing greed and graft at a scale never dreamed of before.

No money for food or relief at the pump or help for our farmers or a decent meal for our soldiers. But there's plenty of cash apparently for Kristi Noem's personal jets, for Kash Patel's large entourage and Pete Hegseth's lobster dinners at the Pentagon. Republicans had no trouble finding tens of millions of dollars to send masked agents with assault weapons onto the streets of my great city of Chicago and Minneapolis, Minnesota to terrorize Americans.

They had no trouble making you pay for an illegal war in the Middle East. They had no trouble scrounging up cash for a gilded ballroom or a 250 ft arc de Trump. No trouble cutting back on regulating cryptocurrency and prediction markets so that Don Jr. and Eric Trump can make billions of dollars getting paid off like modern-day robber barons.

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Look, I've been a Democrat my whole life. There's never been much that I've agreed with Republicans about. But there used to be a time when the GOP had a set of moral principles, like when they were willing to impeach Richard Nixon when he broke the law. Now, it seems like they have only one principle, and that's keep Donald Trump happy.

I get asked a lot by politicians why I was so early and loud in confronting Donald Trump and his administration. And my answer is "Why haven't you?"

Every day we Democrats aren't standing up against Trump, authoritarianism is winning and the American people are losing. I was elected during Trump's first term and one thing I learned early on is this. You can't give this man an inch. Early on, when the pandemic hit Illinois and our hospitals, we were desperate for life-saving equipment. So, I picked up the phone and called the president of the United States. And I asked him to help the thousands of people who were getting sick from COVID19 in my state. And I told him that I needed thousands of ventilators and N95 masks. And in return, he demanded that I appear on the Sunday talk shows to praise him. I mean, I dislike everything about him, but honestly, to save lives, I'd be willing to wear a sandwich board and to sing a song on top of the White House extolling his virtues. That's what it would have meant to me to have that equipment delivered to save lives in my state. But you know what? He delivered none of it after promising he would. I'll never forget that. And I'll never forgive him for that.

So, he's in his second term now, and I know who I'm dealing with. We all ought to know who we're dealing with. When he demanded every state drop our commitments to protecting our LGBTQ communities. When Kristi Noem and ICE invaded the streets of Chicago and attacked black and brown people no matter their citizenship status. When Pam Bondi and the DOJ ordered us to hand over privacy protected voter data, I told them Hell No. And I told him, "If you come for my people, you come through me."

The future of our republic rests on our willingness to stand up, to speak out, and peacefully push back. A lot of powerful institutions have had the chance to stand in Trump's way, to do the right thing – law firms, corporations, universities, and many have simply submitted.

But you know who hasn't capitulated? Everybody in this room.

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And in Chicago and in Minneapolis, neighbors protected neighbors from Trump's ICE invasion. Suburban moms in the suburbs of Chicago blew their whistles to warn people when masked federal agents came into their blocks with unmarked vehicles. Parishioners formed human chains around churches so immigrants could worship. People volunteered. People volunteered to be rapid responders where neighborhoods were under threat.

Everyday Americans took out their cell phones and they filmed all the attacks and posted them online so that the nation could see what was happening in our big cities. We exposed the lies of Kristi Noem and Pam Bondi and Stephen Miller. And we made the Trump administration's violence and corruption impossible to ignore.

Kristi Noem is out of a job now. So is Pam Bondi and Stephen Miller is next. Across the country, Americans have chosen courage. People of all walks of life have come together in three historic days of protest to reaffirm that after 250 years, our country will accept no kings. And last month, Colorado helped lead the way with 72 No Kings protests, including right here in Fort Collins and in Loveland and in Estes Park.

The slow march of authoritarianism is a hard yoke to bear, but we are starting to shake it off in this country. Democrats are getting elected in states that haven't voted blue in a generation. We put a Democrat in the governor's mansions in Virginia and New Jersey. We elected another one to the Supreme Court of Wisconsin. And in special elections all across this nation, new young and progressive candidates are stunning Republicans in their own strongholds.

But every one of those battles, every single one, has been a hard fought one. If we want to win this November, we need to think about these midterms not as the finish line. Not the finish line, but just the first water station on a long and punishing marathon. To win, we must campaign for a vision working families need that isn't just about survival.

We need to campaign about raising wages.

We need to campaign about lowering gas prices.

We must bring home ownership within reach for people.

We need to ensure that food is affordable and education attainable.

We need to put a stop to health insurance companies operating more like organized crime and less like guardians of wellness.

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And we need to remind Silicon Valley that technology is meant to serve humanity, not destroy it. Once your business becomes less about entrepreneurship and more about using your wealth and power to control people's lives, it's time for a government of, by, and for the people to step in and stop you.

We must be a party that protects everyday people and helps working families afford the everyday costs of their lives. But we also need to be a party that thinks bigger than just survival. Of all the things that we have lost in the Trump era, all of them, we Democrats need to restore in America joy and kindness in our lives and civility in our public square.

Of course, survival comes first, but our lives are not just about surviving. There is so much despair out there right now. So much. And it's not all because of what we're seeing in Washington. As the essentials of life have become more unaffordable, so have the joys of life. Families can no longer afford to take that summer vacation because everything from the car big enough to fit your family in for a road trip to a few days at Disney World are now priced only for the top 1% of earners. People can't afford to go on vacation anymore.

Private equity is buying up little league teams and ice-skating rinks and charging parents to video their kids home run hits and hat tricks. Watching a football game, watching a football game, at the stadium can cost over a thousand dollars for a family of four. Ticket brokers and dynamic pricing have made seeing your favorite band live completely out of reach. Life shouldn't be just about getting out of bed, going to a job, and grinding it out until you die. Life ought to be about all of those moments of joy that happen in between surviving.

No wonder everybody is miserable. No wonder everything that makes us happy is drifting out of reach. And despair gives way to cruelty. When life gives you nothing to smile about, people often look for someone to blame.

This problem didn't start with Donald Trump. He just made a career out of it.

Trump knows that the more unhappy he keeps the country, the more divided we remain and the more likely he can control us. Dictatorships thrive on depression and cruelty grows in gardens of despair.

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We need to make kindness a virtue again.

We need to extol the value of empathy.

We need to lionize compassion.

We need to make it shameful for the tech bros and cabinet secretaries and presidents to hurl schoolyard insults at the people they disagree with.

We need to say out loud that sometimes it's okay to help people just because they need help.

We need to shake off the primal urge to blame all of our nation's problems on our most vulnerable people.

It's not weak to be kind. In fact, being kind can sometimes be the very hardest thing you can do.

Cruelty is easy. It only requires you to give in to our basest of urges as humans. Kindness requires you to have an evolved mind and one that sees someone in need and finds a way to empathize rather than demonize.

Now, that's the future that I want, that I want for Democrats to build toward.

That's the future that I want to fight for. It's one where we can all survive and also thrive in a country that knows joy and values kindness.

So my fellow Democrats, is that a future worth fighting for?

Then let's keep up this fight through November. We have to and beyond. Let's send Colorado Democrats to the US Senate and the House. Let's make sure that Colorado elects another Democratic governor and Democrats up and down the ballot. Our future is bright only if we make it so. Even despite the challenges, there are opportunities ahead, but we will have to fight for it. So, I have one question for you, Larimer County Democrats, are you ready for the fight?

Larimer, everyone, thank you very much. Thank you.