

Arbeitsblatt

Joe Biden

“Battle for the Soul of the Nation”

(*November 20, 1942)



Personal life

- He was born and raised in Scranton, Pennsylvania, and New Castle County, Delaware.
- He was the first of four siblings of a Catholic family of English, French, and Irish descent, he had a sister and two brothers.
- His father Joseph Sr was wealthy but had suffered several financial setbacks by the time his son was born, but later became a successful used car salesman.
- Biden was a poor student academically but was considered a natural leader among the students and elected class president during his junior and senior years.
- He played football and baseball both at school and law school.
- He received his law degree from Syracuse University and became a lawyer in 1969.
- He found law school "the biggest bore in the world" and was accused of plagiarizing five of fifteen pages of a law review article.
- He married two times (educator Neilia Hunter, 1966-72, died in 1972, 3 children, educator Jill Tracy Jacobs, since 1977, one daughter).
- In 1988 he had two brain surgeries because of two brain aneurysms.

Political career

- He was elected to the New Castle County Council in 1970.
- He was elected to the U.S. Senate from Delaware in 1972, becoming the sixth-youngest senator in American history.
- In the mid-1970s, Biden was one of the Senate's leading opponents of race-integration busing.
- In the 1990s, he voted in favour of laws against homosexuality in the military and same sex marriage.
- He was a long-time member of the U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary, chaired it from 1987 to 1995, dealing with issues related to drug policy, crime prevention, and civil liberties.
- He was involved in crafting many federal crime laws, for example the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), which contains a broad array of measures to combat domestic violence.
- He was a long-time member and eventually chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee
- He opposed the Gulf War in 1991 but supported the expansion of the NATO alliance into Eastern Europe and its intervention in the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s, where his engagement led to a successful NATO peacekeeping effort.
- He supported the resolution authorizing the Iraq War in 2002 but opposed the surge of U.S. troops in 2007.
- He ran for the 1988 Democratic presidential nomination, but stumbled over the plagiarizing incident at law school.
- He ran for the 2008 Democratic presidential nomination, but had difficulties raising funds, struggled to draw people to his rallies, and failed to gain traction against the high-profile candidacies of Obama and Hillary Clinton.
- He was 47th U.S. vice president, 2009–2017.
- He was United States Senator for Delaware from 1973 to 2009.

Vice Presidency

- He oversaw infrastructure spending in 2009 to counteract the Great Recession.
- His negotiations with congressional Republicans helped the Obama administration pass legislation, e.g. which resolved a taxation deadlock / a debt ceiling crisis.
- He led the Gun Violence Task Force created to address the causes of gun violence in the United States.
- He led the efforts to pass the United States–Russia New START nuclear arms reduction treaty.
- He supported military intervention in Libya.

Political agenda

- He is characterized as a moderate Democrat.
- He opposes capital punishment.
- He earned a reputation for being a "drug warrior".
- He has supported gun control measures.
- He supports the increased infrastructure spending proposed by the Obama administration.
- He supports reproductive rights; same-sex marriage; and the reduced military spending.
- "Secure our border, while ensuring the dignity of migrants and upholding their legal right to seek asylum. ... enforce our laws without targeting communities, violating due process, or tearing apart families."
- He is a supporter of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), the Obama administration's signature health care reform legislation.
- He has called for "a major diplomatic push to raise the ambitions of countries' climate targets."
- He is in favour of "a U.S.-led, rules-based international order with an emphasis on reducing trade barriers and setting global trade standards."
- He works on "returning the United States to its traditional role as the leader of a world order based on promotion of democracy, multilateralism, alliance-building and diplomatic engagement".
- He announced Afro-American U.S. Senator Kamala Harris as his running mate in the election.

Public image

- During his years as a senator, Biden acquired a reputation for loquaciousness and "putting his foot in his mouth".
- The New York Times wrote that Biden's "weak filters make him capable of blurting out pretty much anything".
- The political writer Howard Fineman has said, "Biden is not an academic, he's not a theoretical thinker, he's a great street politician. He comes from a long line of working people in Scranton—auto salesmen, car dealers, people who know how to make a sale. He has that great Irish gift."
- He has been accused of inappropriate contact with women at public events, such as embracing, kissing, gripping, or placing a hand on their shoulder. He has described himself as a "tactile politician" and admitted this behaviour has caused trouble for him in the past.



Imagine you are Joe Biden discussing with your opponent at a panel discussion.

1. Use the information on this sheet to get prepared for the discussion.
2. Use the information about Donald Trump to be ready to attack your opponent.