Written by **Jack Kenny** on October 3, 2012

Biden Says Middle Class "Has Been Buried The Last Four Years"

Did Joe Biden forget momentarily which administration has been in the White House for these last four years? Or did he temporarily lose track of which ticket he is running on? He apparently misspoke when he addressed a crowd in Charlotte, North Carolina, but the gaffe-prone vice president — whom Republicans sometimes call "the gift that keeps on giving" — handed the Republicans a campaign gift October 2 when he referred to "the middle class that has been buried the last four years …"

"This is deadly earnest," Biden said about what he called the Republican plan to raise taxes on the middle class to make up for tax cuts for the wealthy. "How they can justify, how they can justify raising taxes on the middle class that has been buried the last four years, how in the Lord's name can they justify raising their taxes? We've seen this movie before," Biden said to a crowd of 1,000 at the Fillmore Charlotte music venue.

Viewed in context, it's clear Biden was putting the blame for the middle class woes on the tax and deregulation policies of the George W. Bush administration, which, Biden said, the Republican ticket of Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan want to bring back. But the "last four years" comment was eagerly seized by the Republicans as an opportunity to attack the economic record of the current administration with the vice president's own words. The Republican National Committee circulated the clip and the Romney campaign called Biden's comments a "stunning admission."

"Vice President Biden made a stunning admission today and we couldn't agree more: the middle class has been 'buried' under the last four years of this President's policies," Romney spokeswoman Amanda Henneberg said in a campaign statement. "Under President Obama, the middle class has suffered from crushing unemployment, rising prices and falling incomes. They can't afford to be 'buried' for four more years. Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan will take our nation in a new direction and are offering exactly what hardworking families need — real reforms for a real recovery.

Romney himself took time out of preparation for tomorrow night's debate in Denver to tweet a message of appreciation for the vice president's comment: "Agree with @JoeBiden, the middle class has been buried the last 4 years, which is why we need a change in November #CantAfford4More."

Running mate Paul Ryan echoed the sentiment, telling a crowd in Iowa that "we need to stop digging" and elect Romney. The Obama campaign called the Republicans' gleeful comments a "desperate and out-of-context attack." On its website, ABC News quotes an unidentified Obama campaign official pointing out that Biden has consistently blamed the Bush administration for burdens still borne by the middle class.

"As the Vice President has been saying all year and again in his remarks today, the middle class was punished by the failed Bush policies that crashed our economy — and a vote for Mitt Romney and Paul

Ryan is a return to those failed policies," the campaign official said. "With more than five million private-sector jobs created since 2010, the Vice President and President Obama will continue to help the middle class recover and move the nation forward."

Each campaign has accused the other of misrepresenting its position regarding taxes on the middle class. The Romney-Ryan campaign has disputed the claim that their tax plan would raise taxes on middle-income families, arguing that lower rates for upper-income Americans would be compensated for by the closing of tax loopholes. Biden charged October 2 that Romney has admitted taxes on the middle class have not been raised during the Obama administration, but has then gone back to claiming that they have.

"Then they come along and they say well we raised taxes on the middle class. How many times you hear Obama and Biden raise taxes on the middle class?" he asked the crowd in Charlotte. "They know it. The President didn't raise taxes on the middle class. Yet, turn on the ads," Biden said. "We cut taxes for everyone in the middle class."

But the vice president's statement about "the last four years" was not the only problem that arose during his speech in Charlotte. Relying on a teleprompter, he seemed to have trouble finding a comment by Ryan about a vote the representative from Wisconsin made in the U.S. House. Biden's stumbling comments were recorded by ABC News as follows:

> They still say we really urgently want to deal with it now. Basically, I think my opponent said something like, you know, I don't know, he said something about he has regrets or I don't know, something he wished he hadn't voted that way. OK? I don't want to, I don't want to mis-, I don't want the press saying I misquoted him, but … he went back and said I did that but I kind of wish I didn't, whatever.

It's hard to tell from that rambling statement, but Biden may have been trying to point to Ryan's description of the vote he cast in 2008 for the Bush administration's Troubled Asset Relief Program, more commonly referred to as the "bailout" for financial institutions considered "too big to fail."

"This bill offends my principles," Ryan said at the time of the vote. "But I'm going to vote for this bill in order to preserve my principles, in order to preserve this free enterprise system."

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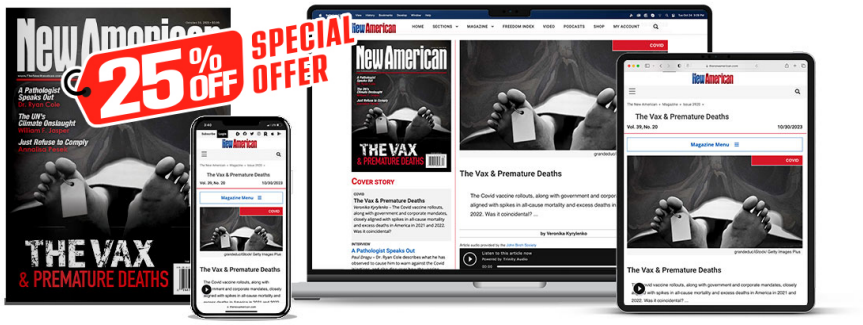

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