

## Biden offers history lesson, donates papers to UD | The News Journal |

VP: Like predecessors, we'll survive tough times

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The audience applauds after Vice President Joe Biden's speech Friday announcing the donation of his senatorial papers to the University of Delaware library as well as giving the James R. Soles Lecture on the Constitution and Citizenship in Mitchell Hall. THE NEWS JOURNAL/SUCHAT PEDERSON

Vice President Joe Biden said Friday that the country is enduring a "temporary period of political paralysis," and indirectly urged Congress to take the lessons of history and apply them to today. In an hour-long speech at the University of Delaware's Mitchell Hall, the 1965 graduate delivered the first of what will become an annual lecture named for one of the university's most prominent political minds.

Biden's remarks on government, politics and the nation's institutions of government marked the inaugural James R. Soles Lecture on the Constitution and Citizenship.



ABOVE: Vice president Joe Biden announces the donation of his senatorial papers to the University of Delaware library and gives a lecture to a packed house at UD Friday. THE NEWS JOURNAL/SUCHAT PEDERSON

In his speech, Biden said he believes the system of government devised by the framers and enshrined in the Constitution will pull the United States through what's become an era of extreme partisanship and legislative gamesmanship.

"If we trust the process, let the system function as it was designed, and focus on factual disagreements rather than on personalities, this generation like every generation before us will get through this," he said.

Comparing the current divisive political climate to the McCarthy era, Biden said the nation's government can pull itself out of hostile environments.

He also said that in his 36 years as a senator, he saw lawmakers change and mellow, specifically mentioning the late South Carolina Sen. Strom Thurmond, who began his career as an avowed segregationist but decades later voted in favor of civil rights legislation.

"The experience of watching men change in the Senate, the experience of watching reason prevail over reaction gives me faith," he said. "We've found a way to moderate the extreme reactions that threaten to tear us apart."



James R. Soles "influenced an entire generation," Biden said.

In his lecture, Biden also memorialized the late Soles, who was roundly regarded as the state's top political scientist and is credited with nursing the aspirations of numerous Delaware politicians. "Jim influenced an entire generation of public servants. That's his legacy," he said.

Joe Pika, UD political science and international relations professor, said the vice president's speech in honor of Constitution Day was a fine tribute to Soles, who died in 2010.



The audience laughs during Joe Biden's speech. THE NEWS JOURNAL/SUCHAT PEDERSON