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President Joe Biden at the Scranton Cultural Center at the Masonic Temple Tuesday. (Tom Gralish/TNS)

By John T. Bennett, CQ-Roll Call (TNS)

President Joe Biden pitched voters Tuesday in Pennsylvania—a crown jewel among swing states—on his tax record and ideas a day after Donald Trump posted a video on social media attacking the incumbent on that very issue.

“While you work hard and pay your taxes, Trump wants to give his billionaire friends the power to avoid paying even what they already owe, not what they should

be paying,” Biden said. “Folks, he’s coming for your money, your health care, your

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and invest less in the things that families really need, from schools, hospitals, health care, roads, bridges, and so much more.”

The day’s split screen was striking: Biden at his first stop in a three-day Pennsylvania swing—while Trump was back in a Manhattan courtroom as the defendant in a criminal hush money case.

“I should be right now in Pennsylvania, in Florida, in many other states, in North Carolina, Georgia, campaigning. This is all coming from the Biden White House because the guy can’t put two sentences together,” Trump said while entering the courtroom, though there is no evidence the president is involved in what is a New York state case.

While Trump was on trial, Biden was on the trail, where he also will be Wednesday with a stop in Pittsburgh and Thursday with another in Philadelphia. Pennsylvania’s primary is April 23.

Biden blames Trump’s and Republicans’ tax and economic policies for job losses in places like northeastern Pennsylvania.

“Because what happens when the factory closes in Scranton or anywhere around the country, when a school is underfunded, when inequity grows larger and larger, it puts the middle class further out of reach, and rips the dignity and pride and hope out of communities all across the country, including right here in Pennsylvania,” he said.

“Folks, trickle-down economics failed the middle class,” he said. “It failed America. And the truth is Donald Trump embodies that failure—he wants to double-down on trickle down.”

Biden even tried out a new derisive nickname for the expected general election foe:

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their vast divide in thinking about taxes.

Biden renewed his call for the wealthiest Americans and corporations to pay their “fair share”—meaning more than they pay currently. The former president continued to support new tax cuts for those same rich individuals and lucrative companies, arguing reducing tax rates for both would turbocharge the economy and create new jobs for middle- and lower-class Americans.

The views of the presumed nominees—which heavily influence their congressional conferences’ stances—will matter next year. That’s because parts of the 2017 tax law Trump signed when he was president are [set to expire](#) late next year. That means whoever is sworn in on Jan. 20 will help shape what, if anything, might replace the expiring provisions.

Several polls taken last month in Pennsylvania showed Trump either up a few percentage points or the two candidates tied in a head-to-head race. One survey, from Franklin & Marshall College, gave Biden a 10 percentage point lead.

An average as of Tuesday compiled by [RealClearPolitics](#) of the Franklin & Marshall poll and five others gave Biden a 2.3 percentage point advantage. But on economic and financial issues, respondents gave Trump the edge.

For instance, Trump had a 52% to 35% edge in the Keystone State when asked which candidate would better handle the economy, according to a [Wall Street Journal survey](#) conducted March 17-24. On inflation and still-high prices, which both candidates address regularly at public events, Trump had a 53% to 33% edge.

The [Franklin & Marshall survey](#) drilled down on the issue of taxes, with taxes coming in fourth among a list of responses when registered Pennsylvania voters were asked: “What do you think is the most important problem facing Pennsylvania today?” Eighteen percent responded “economy, finances,” while 14% responded

“government, politicians.” Ten percent went with “crime, drugs, violence, guns,” and

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proposals would target the biggest earners and wealthy corporations.

Trump used a video posted on his social media site Monday evening, on Tax Day, to hammer Biden over inflation. The 45th president contended Americans have been “paying (the) stealth tax of Joe Biden’s massive inflation, stealth tax like nobody’s seen before either. ... It’s been a disaster for the American taxpayer.”

Biden’s Tuesday speech was about more than tax policy. He also raged against Trump for, as president, canceling his own participation in a ceremony honoring American troops killed in France during World War II.

“Why? He said those soldiers who gave their lives were ‘suckers and losers,’” Biden said, raising his voice. “Who the hell does he think he is? Who does he think is?”

Meantime, about 130 miles away in the Manhattan courtroom, Trump mostly let his attorneys do the talking. But not the entire time. At one point, Judge Juan Merchan admonished the former president for making gestures and talking as potential jurors were being questioned.

“I won’t tolerate that,” Merchan told a Trump attorney, according to [media reports](#) from inside the courthouse. “I will not have any jurors intimidated in this courtroom. I want to make that crystal clear.”

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