

Kamala Harris at the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute | September 18, 2024

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Summary by ChatGPT

- Personal Story: Harris shares her background, highlighting her mother's immigrant experience and the values of hard work and community service instilled in her.

- Advocacy for Vulnerable Groups: She discusses her commitment to protecting vulnerable communities, including victims of abuse and those affected by predatory lending.

- Economic Policies: Harris emphasizes the need for affordable living, advocating for lower

housing costs, healthcare affordability, and capping prescription drug prices.

- Immigration Reform: She calls for comprehensive immigration reform that secures the border while providing a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers.

- Reproductive Rights: Harris defends reproductive freedoms, condemning restrictive abortion laws and pledging to support legislation that restores those rights.

Kamala Harris

00:00:00

Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you. Good afternoon. Please have a seat, please have a seat, please have a seat. Oh, it's good to see so many friends.

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Um, I love you back.

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I want to recognize chair Barragan, where are you? My dear friend, fellow Californian, I want to thank you for all that you do and all that you have done. Chci, chair Espilat. Thank you for all that you are. You know, both of them have spent time with me at my house, and, um, we've shared a lot of good stories together and many meals together, and I just want to personally thank them both, because they really, as you know, are extraordinary people and extraordinary leaders, and they do so much on behalf of so many.

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So thank you both for your leadership and for hosting me this afternoon, and to all the incredible leaders here. It is an honor to be with you again and to everyone, happy Hispanic Heritage Month, which, in my book, is every month of the year.

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So this is a room of longstanding friends, and many of you know, my background. Um, my mother arrived in the United States when she was 19 years old by herself. And, um, I spoke about it recently, actually. You know, my mother, um, I was the eldest child, and as the eldest child, those of us who are, you know, you see a lot of things in terms of what your parents go through. And I would often see how my mother was treated.

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She was a five foot tall brown woman with an accent, and I would see how the world would

sometimes treat her. But I'm going to tell you something, and this is where I come from. My mother never lost her cool. She never defined her sense of dignity based on how others treated her. She was a proud woman.

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She was a hard working woman. She had two goals in her life, to raise her two daughters, my sister Maya and me, and to end breast cancer. She was a breast cancer researcher. And growing up, our mother taught us certain fundamental values. Uh, the importance of hard work, the power of community, and the responsibility that we have to not complain about anything much, um, less injustice.

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Right, because why are you complaining about it? She would say, do something about it. And that's how I was raised. Do something about it. And those values have guided me my entire career.

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Um, from, as you heard, being a young courtroom prosecutor in Oakland, California, where Bay Area 106.1 came, that was our local radio station for hip hop. Um, but doing that work, you know, part of the background on why I became a prosecutor was actually, when I was in high school, I, um, learned that my best friend was being abused, being molested by her stepfather. And when I learned about it, I told her she had to come live with us. And I called my mother, and my mother said, of course she does. And she did.

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And so I decided I wanted to start a career and do the work of, in part, just doing the work of making sure that we protect the most vulnerable. And so I started my career as a courtroom prosecutor, um, and took on those who would be predators against the most vulnerable. As attorney general of California, I took on the big banks and delivered \$20 billion for homeowners who were middle class families who faced foreclosure because of predatory lending practices. Um, I stood up for veterans and students who were being scammed by the big for profit colleges, um, knowing the many of whom had an immigrant background and were just simply trying to do the best they could to invest in themselves and their family for their future. And the subject of awful scams.

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I have stood up in my career for workers who are being cheated out of the wages they were due and for seniors who have faced elder abuse. And I say all that to say when I stand here before you today, this is not just something that I decided to do, but really is about a lifelong career that has been about fighting for the people, for the people. And for

years, I have been proud to fight alongside the members and the leaders of this incredible caucus.

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And almost all of that work and the work we have done together has been about so much I just talked about. It has been about defending workers rights. It has been about expanding healthcare for more americans, including dreamers. It has been about forgiving billions of dollars in student loan debt, including for many of the folks that we know, friends, relatives, who, again, have, um, been burdened by that heavy debt and just needed to be seen. Teachers, firefighters, nurses.

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Um, the work we have done together has been to create the National Museum of the American Latino.

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And, of course, last year, I was proud to be with a lot of the leaders here in Houston for the CHC on the road tour. So I say that. To say that, um, CHC, our work together, has always been guided by shared values and by a shared vision. However, at this moment, we are confronting two different, very, very different visions for our nation. One focused on the past, the other, ours, focused on the future.

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We fight for a future for affordable health care, affordable childcare, and paid leave. We fight for a future where we can build what I call an opportunity economy, understanding that, uh, the people of our country, the people we know, have extraordinary ambition and aspirations and dreams of. Of what they can be what they can do are prepared to do the hard work and put that hard work in, but don't necessarily always have access to the opportunities to achieve and realize those goals. So I see in America, where everyone has an opportunity to own a home, to build wealth, to start a business. I believe in a future.

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We together believe in a future where we can lower the cost of living for America's families so that people have an opportunity not just to get by, but to get ahead. And so with the work we have done together and going forward, we will continue to lower the cost of groceries, for example, by taking on something that I think is very important to deal with, which is price gouging on behalf of big corporations.

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You know, I've seen that happen before, many of you who. Who have, coming from states where we've seen extreme weather conditions in California, wildfires in other parts of the country, or even in the pandemic, where people are desperate because of these kinds of emergencies, desperate for support, and then some, you know, corporation, and it's very few of them that do this, but then jack up prices to make it more difficult for desperate people to just get by. We need to take that on. We need to lower the cost of housing. We don't have enough housing in our country.

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The supply is too low, and it's too expensive, both for renters and for folks who want to buy a home. So we will build together millions of new homes and give first time home buyers \$25,000 in down payment assistance, because, look, people just want to get their foot in the door. My mother worked hard. She saved up. It wasn't until I was a teenager that she was able to buy our first home.

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And the american dream is elusive for far too many people, increasingly. And that's why it is part of my perspective that let's just do the work of giving first time home buyers a \$25,000 down payment assistance. Let them get their foot in the door. We need to lower the cost of healthcare and continue to take on big pharma and cast the cap the cost of prescription medications. Yes, for our seniors, which we have done together, but for all Americans, because when we look at drugs like insulin, everyone here knows, first of all, Latinos are 70% more likely to be diagnosed with diabetes.

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And with the support of CHC, we were able to cap the cost of insulin at dollar 35 a month for our seniors.

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In fact, recently I was in Nevada. Um, I'm in these streets. Let me tell you, I'm everywhere. But I was recently in Nevada, and a woman came up to me with tears in her eyes, and she showed me the receipts for her mother's insulin, and it used, and she showed me many papers, and I said, tell me what these are. And she said, well, these are the receipts, and I want you to see where it used to cost us, uh, hundreds, if not \$1,000 a month, but no more.

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The work we are doing together, the very purpose of CHC, and all of the leaders here, includes having a real impact on real people. And I have the blessing of being able to travel our country and see it every day. It's extraordinary work that is happening because

of the leaders here. We, because of our work together, have finally given Medicare the power to negotiate lower drug prices with big pharmaceutical. And understand if my opponent, Donald Trump, wins, his allies in Congress intend to end Medicare and end Medicare's negotiating power.

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As they remind us again this week, they are essentially saying, check this out, because, you know, you have to ask why, right? So why would you want to end Medicare's negotiating power against big pharmaceutical? And essentially, they're saying that it's not fair to big pharma. That's essentially what they're saying. But I'll tell you what's not fair.

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What's not fair is that our seniors, for too long, have had to cut pills in half because they cannot afford their full medication. That's not fair.

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It's not fair that our seniors have had to choose between filling their prescription and putting food in their refrigerator or, uh, paying their rent. That's not fair. And that's why we will continue to do our work together, including Fight Project 2025, an agenda that would cut Medicare and increase the cost of health care in our country.

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Because we stand with the people and on the side of the people. Uh, we will also cut taxes for working families, including restoring and expansion, expanding the child tax credit, because we know this is the kind of work that must happen if we are to be true to our values and be true to understanding that parents, in particular young parents, need that support. We, when we extended the child tax credit, cut child poverty by 50%, by half. Think about what that meant for so many families. The vast majority of parents have a desire to raise their children well.

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They love their children, but don't necessarily have the resources to do everything their child needs. I grew up understanding the children of the community are the children of the community. And we should all have a vested interest in ensuring that children can grow up with the resources that they need to achieve their God given potential. So I know where I come from, and we have to always put. And I know CHC agrees with this, and this is part of our collective life's work.

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We have to put the middle class first. We have to put working families first. Understanding their dreams and their desires and their ambitions deserve to be invested in, and it will benefit everyone.

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And together, CHC, we must also reform our broken immigration system and protect our dreamers. Uh, and understand we can do both. Create an earned pathway to citizenship and ensure our border is secure. We can do both. And we must do both.

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And while we fight to move our nation forward to a brighter future, Donald Trump and his extremist allies will keep trying to pull us backward. We all remember what they did to tear families apart. And now they have pledged to carry out the largest deportation, a mass deportation, in American history. Imagine what that would look like and what that would be. How's that going to happen?

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Massive raids, massive detention campsites. What are they talking about?

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They will also give billions of dollars of tax cuts to billionaires and corporations. Massive tax cuts pardon January 6 perpetrators who attacked our capital not far from here. They would cut Social Security and Medicare. They intend to end the Affordable Care Act and threaten the healthcare of more than 5 million Latinos in our country. All based on.

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I'm sure many of you saw the debate. Um, so on that point about the Affordable Care Act, all based on concepts of a plan. Concepts. Concepts. Uh, their Project 2025 agenda would pull our nation backwards.

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But we are not going back. We are not going back. We are not going back. Instead, together, we will chart a new way forward, because ours is a fight for the future, and it is a fight for freedom. The freedom to vote, the freedom to be safe from gun violence, the freedom to live without fear of bigotry and hate, the freedom to love who you love openly and with pride, and the freedom of a woman to make decisions about her own body and not have her government telling her what to do and understand on that last point, how we got here, everyone here knows Donald Trump hand selected three members of the United States Supreme Court with the intention that they would do just what they did, which is to

overturn the protections of Roe v.

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Wade. And now, in more than 20 states, we have a Trump abortion ban, which criminalized healthcare providers in one state, providing prison for life. You guys may have heard the story. Many hear about the stories about the horrendous most recent stories about what happened in Georgia.

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Many of these Trump abortion bans that make no exception for rape or incest. It's immoral. It's immoral. And today, 40% of latinas in America live in a state with a Trump abortion ban. So imagine if she is a working woman.

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Understand that the majority of women who seek abortion care are mothers. Understand what that means for her to. So she's got to now travel to another state. God help her that she has some extra money to pay for that plane ticket. She's got to figure out what to do with her kids.

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God help her if she has affordable childcare. Imagine what that means. She has to leave her home to go to a airport, stand in a TSA line. Like, think about this. You know, everybody here is your policy leaders.

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I always say to my team, especially the young people I mentor on any public policy, you have to ask, how is this going to affect a real person? Ask how it would affect a real person. Go through the details. So she's got to stand in the TSA line to get on a plane, sitting next to a perfect stranger, going to a city where she's never been, to go and receive a medical procedure. She's going to have to get right back to the airport because she got to get back to those kids.

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And it's not like her best friend can go with her, because the best friend is probably taking care of the kids, all because these people have decided they're in a better position to tell her what's in her best interest than she is to know it's just simply wrong. And I think we all, um, know one does not have to abandon their faith or deeply held beliefs to agree. The government should not be telling her what to do if she chooses.

If she chooses, she will talk with her priest, her pastor, her rabbi, her imam, but not the government telling her what to do. And I pledge to you, when CHC helps pass a law to restore reproductive freedoms, as president of the United States, I will proudly sign it into law. Proudly. Proudly.

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So, friends, we have some work to do. In fact, a lot of hard work ahead of us. But we like hard work. Hard work is good work. Hard work is joyful work, I say, and I truly believe that America is ready to turn the page on the politics of division and hate and to do it.

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Our nation is counting on the leaders here. Your power, your activism. And so I thank you in advance for your work. To register people, to vote, and get people to the polls. Each of us has a job to do.

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As we celebrate this month, we know we stand on broad shoulders of people before us who have passed us now the baton, those heroes who fought for freedom, who have now passed the baton onto us. And the bottom line is, we know what we stand for, so we know what to fight for. And when we fight, we win. God bless you, and God bless the United States.