

Biden outlines progress in "moonshot" for cancer cure

October 20 2016, by Philip Marcelo



In this Tuesday, Oct. 4, 2106, file photo, Vice President Joe Biden speaks during a meeting of the Cancer Moonshot Task Force in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building on the White House complex in Washington. Biden will speak Wednesday, Oct. 19, about the so-called "Cancer Moonshot" initiative at the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the U.S. Senate in Boston. (AP Photo/Carolyn Kaster, File)

Vice President Joe Biden said Wednesday that the White House's "moonshot" to find a cure for cancer has been making real progress in the past year, but more needs to be done as the nation prepares to elect a new president.

Speaking to a crowd of hundreds of health care professionals and researchers gathered in Boston, the 73-year-old Democrat touched on a range of initiatives the "Cancer Moonshot" task force he chairs has been working on since President Barack Obama announced the effort in his final State of the Union in January.

Biden, who lost his son, Beau, a former Delaware attorney general, to cancer last year, said the administration is trying to speed up the federal drug approval process and make it easier for [cancer patients](#) to take part in clinical trials.

He also said the administration is encouraging cancer researchers to share more information among themselves, something that he says doesn't happen as much as it should.

"We're just getting started," Biden said. "We're on the cusp of enormous, enormous progress."

He said more work also needs to be done to enhance [cancer prevention](#) and detection efforts, particularly among disadvantaged populations.

"This country has the capacity to do anything it sets its mind to," Biden said. "We're on the verge of some astounding breakthroughs, I promise you. Stuff that will absolutely take your breath away."

Biden chairs a task force comprised of the heads of at least a dozen federal departments and agencies, including the National Cancer Institute, the National Institutes of Health and the Department of Health

and Human Services.

The task force aims to double the rate of progress in cancer research and treatment, accomplishing what could be achieved in ten years in five.

Biden has been making a series of stops since providing the president with a progress report on the "moonshot" effort earlier this week. He told the Boston crowd that he was in New York just hours earlier speaking about the initiative at another event, which was the reason why he was more than an hour late.

Among the dozens of public and private sector initiatives highlighted in the "moonshot" report is a collaboration between Microsoft, Amazon and the National Cancer Institute to build an online repository for cancer genomic data.

The report also mentions commitments from Uber and Lyft to expand free or reduced ride programs to help cancer patients get to medical appointments, and a new study by the Department of Defense to investigate the "biological basis of cancer."

The report was meant, in part, to serve as a blueprint for future administrations. But Congress has so far yet to approve hundreds of millions of dollars in funding the outgoing Obama administration has sought for the effort.

Biden has promised he'd devote the rest of his life to finding a cure for cancer, though he's publicly dismissed the notion of working as a member of the next presidential administration on the effort.

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