Remarks by President Trump in Cabinet Meeting

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Remarks

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Cabinet Room

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THE PRESIDENT: Okay. Thank you very much. We have a Cabinet meeting. We'll have a few questions after grace. And, if you would, Ben, please do the honors.

SECRETARY CARSON: Our kind Father in Heaven, we're so thankful for the many blessings that you have bestowed upon us in this country. And we're thankful for the people of courage who have been here before us, who have fought hard for the rights of our country.

And we thank you for President Donald Trump, who also exhibits great courage in face of constant criticism. And we ask that you would give him strength to endure and the wisdom lead, and to recognize you as the sovereigns of the universe with the solution to everything.

And the people around the President — the Vice President, the Cabinet, the advisors — give us all an understanding heart and a compassionate heart. Those are the things that will keep America great. And help us all to recognize as a nation that separation of church and state means that the church does not dominate the state, and it means the state does not dominate the church. It doesn't mean that they cannot work together to promote godly principles of loving your fellow man, of caring about your neighbor, of developing your God-given talents to the utmost so that you become valuable to the people around you, and having values and principles that govern your life.

And if we do those things, then we will always be successful. And we thank you for hearing our prayer, in your Holy name. Amen.

THE PRESIDENT: All right, thank you, Ben. That was a great job. Appreciate it.

The economy is doing fantastically well. It's getting very close to another record. We've had many records since we won office. We're getting very close to another record. I don't know if anybody saw it: The household median income for eight years of President Bush, it rose $400. For eight years of President Obama, it rose $975. And for two and half years of President Trump — they have it down as two and a half years — it rose $5,000, not including $2,000 for taxes. So it rose, let's say, $7,000. So in two and a half years, we're up $7,000, compared to $1,000, compared to $400. And that's for eight years and eight years.

That's a number that just came out, but that's a number that I don't know how there could be any dispute or any — I've never heard a number like that, meaning the economy is doing fantastically well.

We need — for our farmers, our manufacturers, for, frankly, unions and non-unions, we need USMCA to be voted on. If it's voted on, it'll pass. It's up to Nancy Pelosi to put it up. If she puts it up, it's going to pass. It's going to be very bipartisan. It's something that's very much needed. It'll be hundreds of thousands of jobs.

Mexico and Canada have approved it; it's done. They're waiting for our approval. And we can't seem to get the votes. I call them the Do-Nothing Democrats; I mean that. They've done nothing. But this is something they can do very easily. We'll give them bipartisan approvals and credits — all the credits they want — but they have to be able to do it.

So the economy is doing fantastically well. We want to vote on USMCA. We have other trade deals that we've done. We've done South Korea, which is a fantastic deal for us; it turned out even better than we thought. South Korea was a terrible deal. The person in charge of that particular deal, Hillary Clinton — you've heard of her; she's the one that's accusing everybody of being a Russian agent. Anybody that is opposed to her is a Russian agent. So that's a scam that was pretty much put down.

Tulsi — I don't know Tulsi, but she's not a Russian agent. I don't know Jill Stein. I know she likes environment. I don't think she likes Russians. If she does like them, I know she's not a asset. She called her an "asset" of Russia. These people are sick. There's something wrong with them.

But I think that Tulsi Gabbard probably got helped quite a bit by this stir. I think we were helped because it shows, for two and half years, we end up winning. I had to go through two and a half years. If she would have done this earlier, people would have realized what a scam it is. Everybody is a Russian or a Russian agent or a Russian asset.

The economy, again, is at a level that it's never been. We are doing — whether it's household income, whether it's almost any chart — and I think maybe the best of all is unemployment. Unemployment has reached historic lows. African American, Asian American, Hispanic American reached numbers that nobody ever thought would be possible. Had the lowest ever in history.

So, if you're black, if you're Hispanic, if you're Asian — anybody — African American, Hispanic American, Asian: the lowest in history. For women, the lowest in 71 years. The best. When I say "lowest," I'm talking about the best. Both the best unemployment numbers and the best employment numbers — either way you want to cut it. You can say them both because it's best in both.

As far as employment is concerned, we have the most people working today than ever before in the history of our country. We've never had — there's close to 160 million people. So it's — some incredible things are happening.

Syria: We will be giving a much fuller report. Mike Pompeo, Secretary of Defense Esper, and the different people that are very much involved. Mike Pence, Vice President.

We are having very good news coming out. The ceasefire is holding. The Kurds are moving out to safer areas beyond the "safe zone," as we call it. Having the safe zone is not a bad thing; it's a good thing. And plenty of Turks have been killed because of conflict on their border. So, you know, you have to look at it both ways. But the ceasefire is absolutely holding. There's been skirmishes, but very little, relatively speaking. Of course, if you watch the fake news, it's like pretty — pretty wild. It's really holding.

I've watched these pundits that have been working on this thing for 20 years. They've been working on the Middle East for 20 years; they don't know what they're doing and they're telling me what to do. They're saying, "What did Trump get out of it? What did he get out of it?" I'll tell you what I get out of it: We won't be fighting, and we'll bring our soldiers back home. They were supposed to be there for 30 days, and they've been there now for 10 years, in Syria. Ten years. They were supposed to go in, do a quick hit on ISIS, and come out.

Now, as far as ISIS is concerned, when I took over — November, 2016 — ISIS was all over the place. I'm the one — meaning it was me and this administration, working with others, including the Kurds — that captured all of these people that we're talking about right now.

Because President Obama — it was a mess. And I was told and you were told, and everybody told it would be years before you ever did what I did in about a month and a half after I started. I went over to Iraq, I met with our generals, and we figured out a plan, and it was done within a month and a half. I'm the one that did the capturing. I'm the one that knows more about it than you people or the — or the fake pundits.

But I sort of have to smile to myself. I was telling a couple of people — I'm watching these people that I've been watching for 20 years. I've been watching the same faces; they're just a little bit older and a little bit grayer. I've been watching them for 20 years, saying about the Middle East. And they've been wrong on everything they've ever said.

And now, all of a sudden, people are starting to say, "You know, what Trump is doing is great." And we have tremendous — a tremendous power. Because since the election of 2016, November — since that beautiful day, our country has picked up in value trillions and trillions of dollars of worth. Trillions and trillions of dollars. Numbers that nobody would believe. Numbers, if I would have said it on the campaign trail, I would've been — I would've been excoriated by the fake media. Excoriated.

The numbers are far greater than anything that even I predicted. You hear that with the household median income. Four hundred dollars for eight years. Nine hundred and seventy-five dollars for eight years. Seven thousand dollars for two and half years — up. Nobody has ever seen numbers.

Larry Kudlow is going to speak in a minute, and he's going to tell you that's one of the greatest strengths of our country.

And, by the way, other areas and countries are doing poorly. Europe is doing very poorly. Asia is doing very poorly. China is doing very poorly — worst year they've had in 57 years. I wonder why. I wonder why. I'm sure you can't figure it out.

And we're doing great. We're taking in billions and billions of dollars in tariffs from China, and they're eating the tariffs because they devalued their currency. And they're pouring money into their economy because they don't want to lose the jobs, but they are losing the jobs. They've having a terrible year. Worst in 57 years, they say.

And if they say that, it means it's worse. And they announced that they have the worst numbers they've had in 20 years. They announced six. I don't think it's six; I think it's probably minus-something. It could very well be minus. It could very well be in negative territory.

But we're doing great. And, by the way, the deal with China is coming along very well. They want to make a deal because they sort of have to make a deal, I think. They have to make a deal because their supply chain is going down the tubes. Their supply chain is broken like you've never seen anything broken before. It's broken.

So, our soldiers — on Syria, they're moving out, very nicely. ISIS is being held by the Kurds. And I have an absolute commitment from Turkey that they're watching them, just in case. So we have a double: We have the Kurds are watching them.

As you know, most of the ISIS fighters that we captured — "we." We. Not Obama. We. We captured them. Me. Our country captured them, working with others, including the Kurds. And we helped them, don't forget. We helped the Kurds. Everyone said the Kurds helped us; that's true. But we helped the Kurds. They're no angels, but we helped the Kurds.

And we never gave the Kurds a commitment that we'd stay for the next 400 years and protect them. They've been fighting with the Turks for 300 years, that people know of. And nobody ever committed, "Gee, if you do this, we're going to do that, and we're going to stay with you forever." Nobody ever said that.

But when I watch these pundits that always are trying to take a shot, I say — they say, "What are we getting out of it?" You know what we're getting out of it? We're bringing our soldiers back home. That's a big thing. And it's going to probably work. But if it doesn't work, you're going to have people fighting like they've been fighting for 300 years. It's very simple. It's really very, very simple.

But we're going to bring our soldiers back home. So far, there hasn't been one drop of blood shed during this whole period by an American soldier. Nobody was killed. Nobody cut their finger. There's been nothing. And they're leaving rather, I think, not expeditiously — rather intelligently. Just leaving. Leaving certain areas. Leaving.

We've secured the oil. If you remember, I didn't want to go into Iraq. I was a civilian, so I had no power over it. But I always was speaking against going into Iraq. It was not a great decision. But I always said, "If you're going in, keep the oil." Same thing here: Keep the oil. We want to keep the oil.

And we'll work something out with the Kurds so that they have some money, they have some cash flow. Maybe we'll get one of our big oil companies to go in and do it properly. But they'll have some cash flow, which they basically don't have right now. Everybody is fighting. It's not a big oil area, but everybody is fighting for whatever there is. So we have a lot of good things going over there, and they're going very well.

As far as the continuation of the witch hunt, we beat the Russian deal. We beat the Mueller deal. Now I find out, as I said before, that they're trying to make other people into Russian agents, Russian assets. It has no credibility.

Now they have what should be extremely easy to beat, because I have a perfect phone call. I made a perfect call — not a good call; a perfect call. In fact, a friend of mine, who's a great lawyer, said, "Did you know this would be the subject of all of this scrutiny? Because the way you expressed yourself, this is like a perfect call. You must've known this was going to happen." No, I didn't. That's just the way I talk to the President of Ukraine — who, by the way, said there was no pressure, there was no blackmail, there was no anything.

And Congressman Hurd — I have to tell you, yesterday, he was great. He was great, what he said. I gained a lot of respect for him very quickly, because he said, "You know, with all of this going on, I haven't heard one Ukrainian saying there was pressure. I haven't heard one Ukrainian — not one — say that there was pressure of any kind." There haven't even been reports of it to our people. Nobody has even said it. And the reason you haven't heard it — because there is no pressure.

The conversation I had was perfect. And what happened is I released the conversation, and that threw Shifty Schiff off. Crooked — he was a corrupt politician. Schiff is a corrupt politician. That threw him off because he made up a lie. He made up what I said in my conversation. And he went before the United States Congress, and he said a made-up story; it was fabricated. He totally fabricated it. They said he's — he's a screenwriter. Well, this was screenwritten. It was a fabricated story.

So he made up a lie, and I released — they never thought that I'd do this — I released a transcription, done by stenographers, of the exact conversation I had. And now, the game was up.

And the other thing is, the whistleblower and the other whistleblower and the informer — all these people — they'd seemed to have disappeared. You know why they disappeared? Because they talked about another conversation — a conversation that I never had. They made up a conversation.

Now, if you look at the whistleblower report and you look at the actual transcribed conversation — the actual conversation that I had — and you couple that with the President saying that that was a perfectly fine conversation — I don't even know — he didn't even know what they're doing. He didn't even know about the money not being paid. Okay? I think that came out somewhere, that the money — he didn't know that. Then you also have his foreign minister saying, "No, it was a very good conversation." There was no anything asked for. There was no pressure whatsoever.

So this is a phony investigation. I watched a couple of people on television today talking about it. They were talking about what a phony deal it is, what a phony investigation it is. And Republicans have to get tougher and fight. We have some that are great fighters, but they have to get tougher and fight because the Democrats are trying to hurt the Republican Party for the election, which is coming up, where we're doing very well. We had a record crowd — the history of the arena — it's the biggest crowd they've ever had. And we had 20,000 people outside, at least. We're doing great on the election.

You saw what happened in North Carolina. We picked up two seats that people didn't think we were going to pick up. That was two weeks ago. Last week, a Governor that people thought was okay went down, and now he's got a big election. He was under 50 percent; nobody thought that was going to happen. We're doing very well.

But a lot of these stories that are made up, between a guy like Shifty Schiff — who's a phony guy, a corrupt politician — the media buys it. Because, unfortunately, the media is corrupt also. Much of the media — so much of it, such a big percentage of it. It's such a shame. Some great reporters and great journalists, but some really bad people. So, that's the story.

The economy is good. We're doing well with getting out, finally, after 10 years. Again, 30 days to 10 years. And we're getting out. Nobody — none of our people are injured. It's very smooth thus far. And I think that you're going to see something that's going to be good.

Remember this: If Turkey misbehaves — I don't think they will — but we have a power that nobody thought we had, to the extent. It's called sanctions. It's called tariffs. We'll tariff the hell out of their product coming here. They send tremendous amounts of steel to the United States and other things. We will tariff them and we will sanction them. But I don't want to use that as a threat because Mike Pence and our Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, they went out and they negotiated a very good five-day ceasefire. I'm sure if we needed a little extension, that would be happening. But our power is — our power of economics, it's very powerful.

We've rebuilt the military since November of 2016. Our military was totally depleted from being in stupid situations like this for so many years. Our military was depleted to a level that we had very little ammunition. I was actually told we had no ammunition. Now we have more ammunition than we've ever had. Our military is stronger — stronger than it's ever been. Probably stronger than ever. And in a few short months, as the equipment pours in from the money we spent — two and a half trillion dollars — it will be at a level that it's never even come close to. It's a big difference. All made in the USA. All made in the USA.

So, we're doing very well. And if anybody has any questions? Please.

Q   Mr. President, will you maintain a limited number of troops in Syria?

THE PRESIDENT: Excuse me?

Q   Will you maintain a limited number of troops in Syria?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, we don't think it's going to be necessary. I don't want to leave troops there. It's very dangerous there. You know, we had 28 troops, as it turned out. People said 50; it was 28. And you had an army on both sides of those troops. Those troops would've been wiped out. I don't think it's necessary other than that we secured the oil in a little different section, but we did secure the oil.

And the other reason — region where we've been asked by Israel and Jordan to leave a small number of troops is a totally different section of Syria, near Jordan and close to Israel. And that's a totally different section. That's a totally different mindset. So we have a small group there, and we've secured the oil. Other than that, there's no reason for it, in our opinion.

And, again, the Kurds are going to be watching. We're working with the Kurds. We have a good relationship with the Kurds. But we never agreed to, you know, protect the Kurds. We fought with them for three and a half to four years. We never agreed to protect the Kurds for the rest of their lives.

Remember this: When Iraq was fighting the Kurds, everybody thought we were going to fight with the Kurds. I said, "Well, it's a little strange that we're fighting with the Kurds when we just spent $4 trillion on Iraq and now we're going to be fighting Iraq." So what I did is I said, "We're not going to take a position. Let them fight themselves." I thought the Kurds would do very well. Everyone said, "Oh, the Kurds will do very well." Well, Iraq moved in and the Kurds left. They didn't fight because they didn't have us to fight with.

A lot of people are good when they fight with us. You know, when you have $10 billion worth of airplanes shooting 10 miles in front of your line, it's much easier to fight. But with that, they were a good help. But we were a great help to them too. They were fighting ISIS. You know, they hated ISIS, so they were fighting ISIS. But we never agreed. Where's an agreement that said we have to stay in the Middle East for the rest of humanity, for the rest of civilization, to protect the Kurds? They never said that.

And we have protected them. We've taken very good care of them. And I hope they're going to watch over ISIS, because that's — again, most of it is not in the safe zone, as we call it. Some places are called "demilitarized zone." In the old days, we'd call areas like this a "demilitarized zone."

And our relationship with the Kurds is good, and they're going to be safe. And I will say this: If shooting didn't start for a couple of days, I don't think the Kurds would have moved. I don't think, frankly, you would've been able to make a very easy deal with Turkey.

I think when it started for a few days, it was so nasty that when we went to Turkey and when we went to the Kurds, they agreed to do things that they never would have done before the shooting started.

If they didn't go through two and a half days of hell, I don't think they would've done it. I think you couldn't have made a deal. And people have been trying to make this deal for years. But we're close to making it. We'll see what happens. Again, they've been fighting for 300 years, that we know of. Three hundred years. So why should we put our soldiers in the midst of two large groups, hundreds of thousands, potentially, of people that are fighting? I don't think so. I don't think so.

Yes, Steve?

Q You said that Republicans need to get tougher and fight. What are you talking about, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think the Democrats fight dirty. I think the Democrats are lousy politicians with lousy policy. They want open borders. They don't care about crime. They want sanctuary cities. They don't care about drugs. They don't care about almost anything. They don't care about USMCA. How about that?

I think they're lousy politicians. But two things they have: They're vicious and they stick together. They don't have Mitt Romney in their midst. They don't have people like that. They stick together. You never see them break off. You never see somebody go out and — that's why I respected so much what I watched with Will Hurd today, because he was one of the few that didn't seem to be there and yet he made a statement, and he said, "Well, I haven't seen any complaints whatsoever from the Ukrainians." I mean, the Ukrainians didn't complain, and they didn't tell any of our ambassadors.

This thing is all about a letter that was perfect. You never hear the letter anymore. It was all about whistleblowers. You never hear — what happened to the whistleblowers? They're gone, because they've been discredited. What happened to the informant? And where's the IG? Why didn't the IG read the letter, read the transcript — he could have gotten it, I guess, I assume. I would have declassified it for him, if I had to do that. Why didn't he read this and then see that the whistleblower's account was totally different than the letter? Then he would've said, "Oh, there's no problem here." The whistleblower gave a false account.

Now you have to say, "Well, do we have to protect somebody that gave a false account?" You know, these whistleblowers, they have them like they're angels. Okay? So do we have to protect somebody that gave a totally false account of my conversation? I don't know. You tell me. Do we have to protect the informant? Now, I happen to think there probably wasn't an informant. You know, the informant went to the whistleblower, the whistleblower had second- and third-hand information. You remember that. It was a big problem.

But the information was wrong. So was there actually an informant? Maybe the informant was Schiff. It could be Shifty Schiff. In my opinion, it's possibly Schiff. Why didn't Schiff say that he and his staff, or his staff, or a whole group — why didn't he say that he met with the whistleblower? He knew all about the whistleblower. Why didn't he say?

He's a crooked politician. Very bad for our country. This whole thing is very bad for our country. In the midst of that, I'm trying to get out of wars. But we may have to get into wars too. Okay? We may have to get into wars. We're better prepared than we've ever been. If Iran does something, they'll be hit like they've never been hit before. I mean, we have things that we're looking at.

But can you imagine I have to fight off these — these lowlives at the same time I'm negotiating these very important things that should've been done during Obama and Bush and even before that. All right? So that's where we are right now.

Actually very fair question.

Go ahead.

Q   Mr. President, will the troops from Syria come home, or will you send them to other military bases?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, they're going to be sent initially to different parts, get prepared, and then ultimately we're bringing them home. Yeah. We're bringing our troops back home. I got elected on bringing our soldiers back home. Now, it's not very popular within the Beltway, because, you know, Lockheed doesn't like it, and these great military companies don't like it. It's not very popular.

Outside the Beltway — my largest cheer in Dallas — I had 25,000 people — close — in that arena. A record crowd. I had so many people outside of the arena. Thousands. My largest cheer that night was two things: We're building the wall; that's number one. And number two, and probably tied for number one, was we're bringing our soldiers back home. That was our largest cheer in Dallas. Great place. Great state — Texas. Tough state. They're tough.

When I said, "We're bringing our soldiers back home," the place went crazy. But within the Beltway, you know, people don't like it. It's much tougher for me. It'd be much easier for me to let our soldiers be there, let them continue to die. I go out to Dover and I have to — I meet parents. It's not a pleasant thing; it's the most unpleasant thing I do. Most unpleasant thing I do. When I see that big cargo plane open, and I see those coffins get rolled off, or when I go over to Walter Reed Hospital — where the doctors are incredible, by the way — saving people that could've never been saved even five years ago. You know that. But those people are horribly wounded. Horribly, horribly wounded. Wounded warriors. It's the toughest thing I do.

The toughest thing is sending letters. I send many letters home to parents, and I speak to parents. But I send many letters home to parents; their son or daughter has been killed over in the Middle East. For what? For what? There are times to fight and there are times not to fight. There are times to be smart.

We have tremendous economic power, and we're using our economic power — much more powerful, in certain ways, than playing with — with guns. And much better for our country, and much better for everybody, and actually much better for humanity. Okay?

Thank you all very much. I appreciate it. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Q Mr. President, on your decision to not hold the G7 — the G7 not at Doral? Are you planning to do it at Camp David now?

THE PRESIDENT: Doral — Doral was a very simple situation: I own a property in Florida. I was going to do it at no cost, or give it free, if I got a ruling, because there's a question as to whether or not you're allowed to give it because it's like a contribution to a country. I'd have to get a ruling. But I would have given it for nothing. It's a lot of — a lot of money I would have given away, like I give away my salary. I give away my salary. It's, I guess, close to $450,000. I give it away. Nobody ever said he gives away his salary. Now it comes up because of this. But I give away my presidential salary.

They say that no other President has done it. I'm surprised, to be honest with you. They actually say that George Washington may have been the only other President that did. But see whether or not Obama gave up his salary. See whether or not all of the other of your favorites give up their salary. The answer is no.

They say it's the only one. They think George Washington did, but they say no other. So I give up — it's a lot of money, $450,000, close to. And I give that up.

So I have a place that's in the best location. I'm very good at real estate. Very, very good. Much better than you even understand. When you see my financials, which I'll give at the right time, you'll say, "Man, he was much better than we even thought." This guy knows, right here — Mnuchin — because he was in the private sector. He knows — he knows very much what I have. He would tell you. Someday, maybe, he'll tell you.

But I'm very good at real estate. There's Miami — this facility. Everybody would have had their own building. Everybody in the G7 would have had their own building. It was so good. Florida loved it. They love economic development. It's — it's not because — it's a beautiful place, it's new, it's been totally rebuilt. It's new. Everything is new. It's got massive meeting rooms. Unlimited for security because it's on, you know, hundreds of acres. Best location. Right next to the airport, Miami International — one of the biggest airports in the world. Some people say it's the biggest. But one of the biggest airports in the world. It's only minutes away. It would've been great.

But the Democrats went crazy, even though I would've done it free, saved the country a lot of money. Then they say, "Oh, but you'll get promotion." Who cares? You don't think I get enough promotion? I get more promotion than any human being that's ever lived, I think, I get. I think I would have that — I think I can say that fairly safely. I think I get more promotion than any human being that's ever lived — some good, some bad. The people that like me give me only good. The people that don't like me give me only bad. But that's the way life is. I don't need promotion. I don't need promotion. Okay?

But I was willing to do this for free. And they would've had — it would've been the greatest G7 ever. And I would've said to my family — because they run my business now; I don't run my business. I actually put all the stuff in trusts. They run my — and I didn't have to do that. I was under no obligation to do it.

You know, I don't know if you know it: George Washington — he ran his business simultaneously while he was President. Many other Presidents — there weren't too many really rich Presidents, but there were a few — they ran their business. Hey, Obama made a deal for a book. Is that running a business? I'm sure he didn't even discuss it while he was President. Oh, yeah. He has a deal with Netflix. When did they start talking about that? That's only, you know, a couple of examples.

But other Presidents, if you look — other Presidents were wealthy. Not huge wealth. George Washington was actually considered a very, very rich man at the time. But they ran their businesses. George Washington, they say, had two desks: He had a presidential desk and a business desk. I don't think you people, with this phony emoluments clause —

And, by the way, I would say that it's cost me anywhere from $2 [billion] to $5 billion to be President — and that's okay — between what I lose and what I could have made. I would have made a fortune if I just ran my business. I was doing it really well. I have a great business. I have the best properties.

But between what I lose — and, in all fairness, some properties — Doral is an example. Doral was setting records when I bought it, because I owned it for a period of time. Setting records. It was going to — there was nothing like it. It was making a fortune.

And then what happened? I announced I'm going to run for office. Right? And all of a sudden — and I say, "We got to build a wall, we got to have borders, we got to have this, we got to have that." All of a sudden, people — some people didn't like it. They thought the rhetoric was too tough. And it went from doing great to doing fine. It does very nicely now. It's actually back, I understand, very strongly.

But Doral was setting records. And I knew this would happen. Most of the stuff that I have — because now, instead of having 100 percent of the market that loves you and they love your brand and it's luxury and it's great, now you have 50 percent of the market. That's called politics. I fully understood that.

So it's cost me between $2 billion and $5 billion. And if I had it to do again, I'd do it in an instant. Because who cares? If you can afford it, what difference does it make? If I had this to do again — because I'm making a big difference for the country.

The country is stronger now than it's been in many years — maybe ever. Out military is rebuilt. Our economy is hitting records. As I said, best unemployment numbers, best employment numbers. We're strong. We're bringing our soldiers back home from the endless wars. We're doing great.

So whether I lost $2 billion, $5 billion, more or less, it doesn't make any difference to me. I don't care. If you're rich, it doesn't matter. I'm doing this for the country. I'm doing it for the people that show up. I haven't had an empty seat at a rally. I will say, "Where's the rally?" "It's in a certain place." "Okay. Just get the biggest arena."

I go to these massive basketball arenas, like in Dallas, where the Mavericks play, and fill it up and set a record. I've set a record in almost every place I've been because we just need a little small stage. We don't need basketball courts, ice hockey courts. And I take less than musicians, because they have bands. I don't have band. I set the world record for somebody without a guitar. Okay? I don't have bands. All right?

So that's the story. And, you know, those people are the poll. And I had great polls. I have my best polls now. I think it's because people think that it's terrible what they're doing. Pelosi, Shifty Schiff, Schumer — these people are trying to destroy the country. It's a very bad thing, what they're doing.

The President of the United States should be allowed to run the country, not have to focus on this kind of crap, while at the same time doing a great job with Syria and Turkey and all of the other things that we're doing.

Korea — okay, maybe someday — but I'll tell you what: If somebody else became President, with that same mindset that they had, you'd, right now, be in a big war with North Korea. You don't hear too much about it. It could happen. Could happen. I don't know. I always say, "Who knows?" It's deals. Who knows?

But, in the meantime, North Korea is — I like Kim; he likes me. We get along. I respect him; he respects him. You could end up in a war. President Obama told me that. He said, "The biggest problem — I don't know how to solve it." He told me doesn't know how to solve it. I said, "Did you ever call him?" "No." Actually, he tried 11 times. But the man on the other side — the gentleman on the side did not take his call. Okay? Lack of respect. But he takes my call.

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

Q Sir, the G7 — so what's the plan for the G7 now, if it's not at Doral? What's the plan for the G7 now?

THE PRESIDENT: We'll look at other locations. I don't think it'll be as exciting. I don't think it'll be as good. It'll cost the country a fortune because it's very expensive.

I know France had a budget of many, many millions of dollars. They just did it. They did a great job, by the way. But France had a budget of many, many millions of dollars. It's going to cost, you know, a fortune for the country. I was willing to do it for free, but people didn't like that. They thought I may get some promotional value. I need promotional value so badly, right? I don't need promotion.

Go ahead. What did you say? What else? Steve? No?

Q Sir, could I ask you about Iran? Sir. Sir, on Iran —

Q Sir, is it a forgone conclusion that the House will impeach you?

THE PRESIDENT: On Iran, what? Say it? What? What do you mention the word "impeach"?

Q Sir, do you believe — do you believe it's a forgone — do believe that it's a forgone conclusion that the House will impeach?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think they want to. Any Democrat wants to because they're not going to beat me in the election. So, of course, they want to impeach me. Why wouldn't they want to impeach me? It's so — it's so illegitimate. It cannot be the way the Founders — our great Founders — meant this to be.

But I see this guy, Congressman Al Green, saying, "We have to impeach him, otherwise he's going to win the election." What's that all about? But that's exactly what they're saying. "We have to impeach because otherwise he's going to win." I'm going to win the election.

Look, I have the strongest economy ever. "It's the economy, stupid." Right? I have the strongest economy in the history of our country. Okay? And we're setting records. Over 100 times — I think it's like 118 — but over 100 times, we've had the highest stock market in history, since November 8th. Over 100 times.

And, by the way, the day I got elected — the following day — from there until January 20th, the market went through the roof. You know why it went through the roof? Because they got rid of Obama and they got rid of Clinton. And if anybody else — if any of these people that I've been watching on this stage got elected, your 401(k)s would be down the tubes. They'd go down not 20 percent or 30 percent; they'd go down 70, 90, 80 [percent], and destroy this country. You'd destroy the country.

So, I think they want to impeach me because it's the only way they're going to win. They've got nothing. All they have is a phone call that was perfect. All they have is a whistleblower who has disappeared. Where is he? He's gone. Then they have a second whistleblower. "The second whistleblower has got — oh, it's going to…" Where is he? He disappeared. Then they have an informant. "Oh, the informant is…" Where is he?

They're interviewing — they're interviewing ambassadors who I'd never heard of. I don't know who these people are. I never heard of them. And I have great respect for some of them. One of them said, just recently — a very, very highly respected man — I'm not going to get into their names, but a highly — said, “No, no. We were very, very bothered by Joe Biden and his son back during the Obama administration.” He said, “We were very…” He’s supposed to be their witness.

Don’t forget, many of these people were put there during Obama, during Clinton, during the Never Trump or Bush era. You know, you had a Never Trump or Bush. You have heard of those? Those people might be worse than the Democrats — the Never Trumpers. The good news is they’re dying off fast. They’re on artificial respiration, I think.

But, no, impeachment — they want to impeach and they want to do it as quick as possible. And that’s pretty much the story. Okay?

Q   What about Republican support? Do you — are you working behind the scenes to shore up support in the Senate?

THE PRESIDENT: I think I have great Republican support.

Q   Do you run the risk of alienating any of the Republicans in your Party?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I don’t think so at all. No, they — because, you know what?

Q   Some of them are very angry about the Syria decision.

THE PRESIDENT: Look — no, you don’t — I have to do what I have to do. I’ll tell you what: I want to bring our soldiers back home. If people want to leave them there, I’ll take that every day. All I know — you were at Dallas — all I know is the place went crazy when I said, “We’re bringing our soldiers back home.” Within this little area — this is a very unique area — they may feel that. But I have to do what I got elected on, and I have to do what I think is right.

Now, if I got elected on something and I think I was wrong, I’d second guess myself. I’d change. But they want our soldiers back home. And I think we can do as well, or better, frankly. Let them — they’ve got to — they’ve got to keep going at each other. It’s artificial to have these soldiers walking up and down between two big countries.

And, by the way, I’m just informed: Larry Kudlow is going to say a few remarks, if you want. Would you like to stay for Larry’s remarks?

Q   Sure. Sure. Yes, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: Because he is a great, great remark-maker. (Laughter.) Larry — after that whole thing, Larry, get up and go get it. I’m sure it’ll be great. Let them know how we’re doing, Larry. If we’re doing poorly, let them know. But I don’t think that’s going to happen.

MR. KUDLOW: Thanks, sir. I appreciate it very much. Here’s a point I want to make right at the start. You’ve put out some great numbers on some of the recent releases. You know, first and foremost, this is a middle class boom. I can’t emphasize that enough.

This is a middle class boom, even though perhaps some people won't give us credit for it.

You've been rebuilding the economy, re-incentivizing the economy, lower taxes, lower regulations, opening up the energy sector, tough trade reforms for level playing fields. So after two and a half years, average real family income: $65,000. In fact, it's really closer to $66,000. So $6,000 gains. About 8 percent. It's better than anything our predecessors have done, be they Democrat or Republican. I'm not being partisan here whatsoever.

THE PRESIDENT: Maybe ever, Larry. Right? Maybe ever — in history.

MR. KUDLOW: I'd have to go — I'd have to go back and —

THE PRESIDENT: Go check it. I don't think it's ever been done.

MR. KUDLOW: But it's a long ways, you're right. Sixty-five thousand — almost sixty-six thousand — that is the middle of middle. So, I think that's very important. And the increase of roughly 8 percent has never been done before.

And, actually, if you look at the composition of wage increases, sir, the biggest gains have come in the middle quintile, the fourth, and the fifth. The lowest 10 percent have had the biggest increases — not the highest wages, mind you — but the biggest gains, which is what really matters to individual people. So I think that's absolutely a key point. The policies have spurred a middle-class boom.

Now, 3.5 percent unemployment — the lowest in 51 years. 1.4 percent inflation. We've had a 50 percent increase, on balance, for the stock market. Household net worth — household net worth of $12 trillion dollars. So, we're about $103 trillion — $103 trillion dollars for American household net worth. Disposable income is now growing at 3 percent.

The reason these key points — inflation, stocks, income, wages — there's a model. There's a couple of these models. They're very interesting.

I'm going to talk about the Moody's model. It's been run by a friend of mine; he's an old friend of mine, Mark Zandi. Does not have much sympathetic views towards our administration — or me, for that matter. But, nonetheless — nonetheless, he's a good guy, personally. I don't take this stuff personally.

But their model is now showing, because of stocks, inflation, what he calls the "pocketbook model" — which is the average family income you talked about before — $66,000 — his electoral range is 289 to 351. 289 to 351. I believe you need 270 to win. And the most important one is the "pocketbook" — the "pocketbook model" gives you 351 thousand. My former boss, Ronald Reagan, used to call it "take-home pay." We're seeing it once again. We're seeing it once again.

Is this stuff going to happen? Well, their view is — and Oxford economics said the same thing — if we continue along this path, those are —

THE PRESIDENT: Are they predicting who is going to win the election, Larry? Is that what you're saying?

MR. KUDLOW: Those are the kinds of numbers that suggest a very substantial victory. A very substantial victory. Let me go on again. I'll be brief on the wrap-up here.

America is working. As you said, 6 million jobs, 500,000-some-odd manufacturing job increases since you took office.

Let me make this point. I've been working hard on this, trying to convince my former colleagues in the media. September payrolls — we're still work- — September payrolls, including the revisions, up 181,000. Okay? 7.1 million job openings. 7.1 million job openings. 5.8 million unemployed. We have more job openings than we have unemployed. This is the 18th straight month. That is a very rare economic stat.

THE PRESIDENT: Almost never happens.

MR. KUDLOW: But let me go under the hood, just for a second. Besides the payroll numbers, there's another survey from which unemployment comes from. Right? That 3.5 percent unemployment rate comes from something called the "household survey," which tends to ask individual family members, small businesses, entrepreneurs, and starters. Okay? Household survey in the last four months is exploding. And it is averaging close to 400,000 per month. In other words, payrolls came in at 180, and the household survey is averaging close to 400,000.

A lot of business and financial economists believe the household survey is your leading indicator. It tells me, sir, we could be in for another takeoff on the jobs story.

Wages — non-supervisory production wages up 3.5 percent.

One more leading indicator: the housing market — which has been soft for over a year, we're now seeing single family starts and sales, and pending sales have now shown several months of steady increases. That's a good leading indicator that the economy is going to be speeding up, not slowing down.

All of this in the face of a couple of years of very tight monetary policy and the fact that the rest of world is not growing — basically, Europe has been in recession. The rest of world has been in a virtual recession because of our incentive-minded policies. Because of our emphasis on trade and energy and deregulation, we are growing twice as fast as the rest of the world. And the numbers are telling me we may be ready for another pickup. We may be poised for another pickup after a quarter or two of softness.

So, I think we're in pretty good shape, sir. These are facts. My colleagues — or my former media colleagues may or may not agree, but I'm happy to go through the facts, which is what I'm really interested in here. And, of course, it's not breaking news that I'm a low-tax rate, supply-sider from the Reagan-Laffer years. (Laughter.)

But I do want to bring in my friend and colleague, Russ Vought of OMB, because part of this is the regulatory story —

THE PRESIDENT: Okay. It's true.

MR. KUDLOW: — the deregulatory story, which is helping jobs.

THE PRESIDENT: We've cut regulations more than any administration in history, and that's in two and a half years. So, in two and a half years, we've cut more regulation than any administration in the history of our country. And they've been — for eight years and, in one case, for more than that. So that's been pretty good.

Thank you very much, Larry. That was very good.

MR. KUDLOW: I'm going to give it over to Russ. Thank you, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: And Russ Vought —

MR. KUDLOW: Thank you, sir. Appreciate it.

THE PRESIDENT: Russ, if you could talk about regulation.

ACTING SECRETARY VOUGHT: Yeah, we're going like gangbusters, Mr. President, as a result of your commitment to the deregulatory initiative. Some numbers for our — the group here: nine to one. You set a commitment of two for — two deregulatory initiatives for every one. We're now at nine, at the close of our third year. That is $50 billion in cost savings, up from $33 billion. And that's just for those who are regulatory parties.

So if we — if you look at the economy-wide cost savings, it's $220 billion of savings for regulations — deregulatory initiatives in the pipeline. And that's in just the first round. Right now, we're going through a process to figure out what's next.

We want to be finishing the big deregulatory initiatives this year that you ran on. We're going to go forward this year with some exciting things to make sure infrastructure and permitting happens on a much quicker basis.

The Vice President is going to be leading a task force with governors to really multiply the efforts that they're doing on the state level — things like occupational licensing — to make sure that a hairdresser in Montana doesn't have to — when she moves, doesn't have to go through a thousand hours of training when she moves to Idaho. That's the kind of thing that we want to multiply between the states and the federal government to be able to really expand on the work that you've been doing.

So we're excited about that. And we can't think of deregulatory initiatives without thinking about the work that Andrew Wheeler is doing at EPA. So I would love if you want to talk to — about your initiatives as well.

THE PRESIDENT: Okay, good. I think I'll maybe start with you, Andrew, if you could. Please.

ADMINISTRATOR WHEELER: Thank you, Mr. President. I'm here to update you on the implementation of your executive order regarding the Waters of the U.S. As you know, under the Clean Water Act, EPA regulates the discharge of pollutants into the nation's navigable waters — also known as "Waters of the U.S.," or "WOTUS."

In 2015, the Obama administration illegally expanded WOTUS to include things such as dry channels that only flows when it rains, isolated ponds, ditches. That's meant — that meant that the vast majority of the nation's waters would have fallen under the federal control. The Iowa Farm Bureau estimated that 97 percent of the state of Iowa would have fallen under federal control. A North Dakota agricultural commissioner estimated that over 90 percent of North Dakota would have been under federal control.

The Obama EPA claimed that the rule was in the interest of water quality, but it was really about power — power in the hands of the federal government. The rule upset the federal-state partnership, and expanding WOTUS would have meant more landowners would have had to obtain costly federal permits for activities on private property.

The permit process can cost anywhere from $30,000 to $300,000 for a water permit, and it takes one to two years or more. So the 2015 rule was mired in litigation. Thirty-one states opposed it.

Mr. President, you knew that the Obama WOTUS power grab was trouble from the get-go. And when you took office, you immediately asked us to fix the problem. EPA and the Department of Army are implementing your WOTUS executive order, and it's due — two-step process.

Last month, Army Corps head R.D. James and I signed the final step-one rule repealing the 2015 rule. So the 2015 rule is no longer on the books. We've reverted back to previous water definitions prior to 2015.

We are working on finalizing step two: our new proposed WOTUS definition that we've proposed last December. The proposal will clearly define what is a federal wetland, as well as what is not, which is just as important. And it will limit where federal regulations apply.

Our overreaching goal is that a property owner should be able to stand on his or her property and be able to tell for themselves whether or not they have a federal waterway without having to hire outside consultants to do that for them.

We received over 600,000 comments on our proposal and we intend to finalize our proposal this winter.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. And I know you're working on the small refineries — getting that straightened away so that it's going to be terrific for the small refineries. They've been hurt for a long time, and we gave them waivers for this year. And that will — that's helped them a lot. But I want you to work on that. Make sure the small refineries are happy.

And for the farmers, ethanol now has been fully approved. We spoke with Joni Ernst. We spoke with — and, very importantly — and we spoke with Chuck Grassley. And the ethanol — the whole situation with ethanol that has been going on for so long, for so many years — we have that now where it's finished, approved, done, and we're getting things ready to sign.

Perhaps, Sonny, you could just talk about ethanol for our farmers for a couple of minutes, please.

SECRETARY PERDUE: You've done a couple of things, Mr. President. You've — you, first of all, committed to and fulfilled your promise of making the E15 year-round. That's what's really needed to build infrastructure. That's a 50 percent increase in domestic usage there, which will happen. Good for the economy, good for the air, and good for the ag farmers in that way.

You've also balanced up the smaller refinery waivers with the farmers and RFS. And once they fully understand what you've done here, they'll be fine, and — as they see it implemented.

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah, they seem to be very happy. They deserve to be happy. They've gone through a lot. They were targeted by China, as you know. And we took some of the money out of the tariffs — $16 billion and $12 billion for the two last years — and we gave it back to the farmer. They don't even want it; they just want a level playing field. But they were targeted unfairly by China.

And now China is buying tremendous amounts of product — agricultural product. They've started — maybe Bob Lighthizer could give us just a little update. I noticed that, today, China sent out a statement that the deal is coming along very well, that they expect to have a deal.

Do you want to talk about China for a couple of seconds?

AMBASSADOR LIGHTHIZER: Yeah, sure, Mr. President. We had — we had had deputy-level meetings this morning. Secretary Mnuchin and I were going to be talking to our counterparts on Friday, and we think we're making great progress. Our — as you say, our target is to have a phase-one deal done by the time you go to Chile. And while there are still some issues we have to resolve, we're working towards that goal.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, one little example is the farmers. So they were told and I was told, if we could get $20 billion a year in purchase — the biggest they've ever done is $16 [billion], is what I've heard and what they've said. If we could get $20 billion a year from China — that China purchases $20 billion a year of agricultural product — that would be a great thing. So my people had $20 billion done. And I said, "I want more." They said, "The farmers can't handle it." I said, "Tell them to buy larger tractors. It's very simple." (Laughter.) "They'll buy more land and they'll buy larger tractors. But I want more."

And I said, “We want $60 billion to $70 billion.” And we agreed to $40 [billion] to $50 billion. So they wanted $20 billion, and I got $40 [billion] to $50 billion. And they’ve already started buying. And that’s just the way it goes. So I want to thank China for that.

And they have started the buying. So while we’re papering the deal — and that’s going well — we hope to sign it probably in Chile, when we have a summit in Chile, or wherever that may be.
But we’ll be able to, we think, sign a completed document with China on phase one. Then we start working on phase two. And actually, things in phase two are easier than phase one, but it’s so big. Like, as an example, on the agricultural products, it’s so big that we thought doing phases would be good. But actually, the things in the second phase are, in many ways, a lot easier than the things in the first phase. So we’ll see how that goes.

SECRETARY PERDUE: Mr. President, I’m not sure who told you the farmers couldn’t handle it, but it wasn’t me.

THE PRESIDENT: I think they could. (Laughter.) I want the farmers to come tell me, “Sir, we can’t produce that much.” The farmers don’t know that language, right?

SECRETARY PERDUE: Right.

THE PRESIDENT: But we took it from $20 [billion] to potentially $50 billion. It will be bought — more — more agriculture will be bought — product — will be bought than any time in our history, by far. That’s on top of the Japan deal that we just made, where Japan is buying a tremendous amount of ag and other things from our country and our farmers.

Our farmers have been great. They never wavered. They said, “The President is doing the right thing. We’re sticking with the President.”

I tell you, I didn’t see anybody — they looked — some of the networks, they looked. They looked all over for somebody that can speak negatively about the President. And those farmers, Sonny, they stopped. They said, “Nope, he’s doing the right thing. It may be hurting us, but he’s doing the right thing.” And I think, in many ways, the farmer maybe is going to be the biggest beneficiary of what we’re doing — certainly one of them. I think our country is going to be the biggest beneficiary.

Secretary, could I ask you to talk a little bit about drug pricing? Because we’ve cut it down a lot.

SECRETARY AZAR: Mm-hmm.

THE PRESIDENT: And we had the first year ever where prices actually went down. And if we had Democrat support, we could get them way down, but we don’t have a lot of Democrat support. If you could talk about it, please.

SECRETARY AZAR: Sure. So we've had the third year in a row under President Trump's leadership, of historic levels of approving generic drugs. Those are the affordable alternatives to brand drugs. We're approaching 3,000 generic drugs approved under your tenure. That led to — just in the first 18 months of your term — $26 billion of savings for people from those more affordable alternatives.

And as a result, we have seen now, for the first time in 51 years, the largest decrease in prescription drug pricing under the Labor Department's inflation index — the largest decrease in 51 years.

We're working with Congress, of course, trying to craft a bipartisan package there. I think we're in agreement on about 80 percent of the items. We're probably the most flexible party in the negotiations between the Democrats and the Republicans, and try to deliver real savings for the American people.

But we're not stopping. We're continuing to work on your scheme to bring drugs in from Canada — to import drugs — and how we can make sure we're getting the same kind of deals for the American senior that other developed countries are getting. As you called it, "most favored nation status." So we're driving ahead.

THE PRESIDENT: So I've read for years that other countries have much lower drug prices than we do. So I said to a couple of our governors — including Ron DeSantis of Florida, who's very much into it: "Go to Canada, where the prices are 50 percent. Buy it from Canada. We'll give you the approval." And we're working on those final approvals now.

So Canada buys — because of arcane rules and because of protecting the middleman and protecting drug companies, frankly, other countries have prices that are much, much lower. You know, more than 50 percent, in some cases. Canada's pricing is much lower.

So I told Ron DeSantis, I told other governors, "Go to Canada. Go to other countries. Buy them." Same product. Same exact manufacturer. Many times, they're manufactured in the same plant, and a pill will cost you 50 percent or less than it does in the United States. That just shows you how bad people have run our country.

And we're going to get tremendous price cuts on drugs. And we're in the process. And I'd like you to speed that up, Alex, if you could. Really speed it up.

SECRETARY AZAR: Okay.

THE PRESIDENT: Because Canada is loving to sell it. I mean, we're buying the exact same product for 50 percent. That means people are going to get a 50 percent reduction in drug prices. So — and in some cases, substantially more. It's hard to believe how this country was taken advantage of by, frankly, everybody in every different way. Okay?

So, thank you. And I'd like to ask Gene Scalia to maybe speak. Gene is a highly respected gentleman and one of the best lawyers in the country. Focused on labor law. And he's now a Department of Labor Secretary. And it's great to have you at our first meeting.

And thank you. Your first meeting. I'm very proud of you. You got through. He got a — he passed with a massive majority of a votes. (Laughter.) What was the number?

SECRETARY SCALIA: 53-44.

THE PRESIDENT: That's considered a massive, massive — that's probably the largest number, if you can believe it. (Applause.)

SECRETARY SCALIA: Thank you, Mr. President. It's a great honor to join you, the Vice President, and the Cabinet in the important work you're doing for the American people, including on the economic front. You and Larry Kudlow mentioned some of those numbers, which really are virtually unprecedented. As you said, in some cases, unprecedented unemployment numbers — since we've been tracking — for African Americans or Hispanic Americans; the lowest unemployment rate for women in generations.

And as Larry said, for those at the lower end of the economic scale, they particularly are enjoying these benefits. Americans who don't have a high school degree have the lowest employment rate we've ever seen. And this has been, in part, because of your efforts to bring about deregulation to free employers to grow, offer more jobs.

I wanted to mention two that we're doing at the Labor Department, and they're both as a result of executive orders that you issued, Mr. President.

The first has to do with what we call association health plans. And this is for small employers who employ tens of millions of American workers. They're critical to our economy, but they find it hard to provide reasonably priced healthcare to their workers.

So what we did was we reduced some regulatory hurdles that stood in the way of small employers coming together, forming an association, working with the local chamber of commerce, for example, to provide healthcare through that association. That association can give the economies of scale of a larger company. It has leverage of a larger company. It has other ways that it can tailor the benefits available to these employees at the small — at the small employers.

The CBO has estimated that about 4 million Americans would benefit from these programs and that they'll have premium reductions of as much as $2,000 as a result of these plans.

I should say, some disgruntled state attorneys general — this has happened before, Mr. President — they've sued over one of your regulatory initiatives. But I'm also pleased to say that my favorite Attorney General — yours; my former boss — Bill Barr, his lawyers at the Justice Department are defending this litigation right now.

THE PRESIDENT: And we should win. (Laughter.)

SECRETARY SCALIA: And we've got a related plan, what we call association retirement plans. And this, again, was a result of an executive order you issued, Mr. President. Same concept: Let smaller employers come together, achieve economies of scale, exercise leverage in negotiating to offer 401(k) plans.

There are about 40 million Americans who don't have a retirement plan, who don't have a 401(k) plan. This will make it easier for them to get those plans.

So, Mr. President, those are two examples of steps that are helping the economy, they're deregulating, but as I've described, they're helping workers get healthcare, get retirement coverage.

THE PRESIDENT: That's a big thing on the 401(k), Gene, too. That's very important. Thank you.

Kellyanne, you were going to say about buy-back?

MS. CONWAY: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. President. Because of the focus that you and the First Lady and the entire Cabinet and this administration have placed on combatting the drug supply/drug demand crisis in our nation, we are happy to report the first decline in 30 years of overdose deaths due to drugs — a decline of 5.1 percent overall — falling off of its peak in some of our states, up to 24 percent. A 24 percent reduction in overdose deaths in Ohio and 23 percent in Pennsylvania. We've got about 19 percent in Iowa, 17 percent in Kentucky, 11 percent in New Hampshire, and 9 percent in the hardest-hit state of West Virginia.

THE PRESIDENT: Those are really incredible numbers, folks. I mean, you're not going to report them, so we're just wasting our time.

MS. CONWAY: Perhaps they will. But it may —

THE PRESIDENT: Those — those are great numbers.

MS. CONWAY: But this battleship is turning in the right direction, albeit slowly.

But, Mr. President, the most significant bipartisan accomplishment, in my view, of your presidency was HR.6. We're on the year anniversary of HR.6. Every single Democrat voted for HR.6, including the ones running for President. It is the largest investment of billions of dollars in prevention education, treatment, and recovery, and surveillance, and interdiction in our nation's history on any one drug crisis.

Part of the education and equipping America is called "Take Back Day." The Drug Enforcement Agency, the DEA, runs two Take Back Days each year. The next one is this Saturday.

Since the Trump administration got into office, we've collected 4.6 million pounds of unused prescription drugs. Let me repeat that: It's not four — just 4.6 million drugs; that would be something. 4.6 million pounds. That's the weight of 18 Boeing 757 aircrafts just collected. So it is a drug supply and a drug demand crisis.

We have partnered with over 5,000 law enforcement agencies. And due to private sector partnerships with CVS, Rite Aid, Google, Walgreens, Walmart, and the rest, we have 8,300 total sites nationwide now that Google will map out for us. So if you just type into the computer, "Take back my drugs," "return prescription opioids," they will show you locations in your area and tell you how to drive or walk there. And it's a safe way of returning your drugs. I think it's a more convenient and more compassionate way for people to return unused, unneeded, expired pills. That happens on Saturday.

The Cabinet has been so consistently and so deeply involved. And I want to thank each and every one of them for this effort, and Mr. President, as well as the First Lady and you.

Also, I'm happy to report that CVS has fulfilled its commitment to double the number of Take Back sites. And in our effort to make every day Take Back Day, people don't need to wait any longer for every six months. Walgreens, CVS, they've got sort of safe delay — safe site, safe safes, where you're delaying the distribution of pharmaceuticals to make sure it's going to the person it's intended to go.

I'm happy to report the NFL, two weeks ago, sent out a message to all of its NFL clubs, equipping them to show our Trump administration public service announcements on Opioid Take Back Day, along with graphics. And the NFL Network is involved.

And finally, Major League Baseball, last week, agreed to show DEA's Take Back Day public service announcement this Friday during the World Series.

Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Kellyanne. Take Back Day is a big deal. And they've been talking about it for a long time. Nobody has ever done it. But it is big.

And Alex wanted to mention just one additional thing. Go ahead.

SECRETARY AZAR: Yeah. Just on the deregulation agenda, deregulation is a — it's a key part of that great healthcare that you promised the American people, this vision of a personalized, affordable patient-centric system that puts you, the patient, in the center and in control, and treats you like a human being, not like a number. Because if you're focusing on the bureaucracy, that's not focusing on the patient.

So we've delivered $12.5 billion of regulatory savings. That's over half of the entire government. I'll give you an example. We have freed up 40 million hours of doctor and nurse time to not be doing paperwork. Forty million hours have been freed up that they can spend with patients instead. But there's been incredible change, and we're going to able to just keep delivering that level of deregulation each year.

THE PRESIDENT: And something that some people think could be as big or bigger than healthcare is transparency. We're doing transparency. And did you want to give just a one-minute update on that transparency in pricing and transparency on the quality of your doctor?

SECRETARY AZAR: Sure. Yeah. So, this is something — the President has often said that transparency — his initiatives on transparency could be bigger than any kind of healthcare — individual healthcare plan that you might have. What he means by that is, what we have proposed is making all of a hospital's rates — what they have negotiated with the individual insurer — transparent and available so that you, the patient, would know, before you go to the hospital, what something is going to cost you on your actual insurance plan.

And then we'll do that with insurance regulations so that your insurance company will send you, before you go to the doctor's office, an advanced Explanation of Benefits that tells you the list price, the negotiated price, and what you'll pay out of pocket. We're going to make this information available to you, as individuals. This is going to empower you. This will shake up the entire healthcare system to put the patient at the center so that you have the right to create a real consumer experience in healthcare, unlike what we've had for the last 50 years.

THE PRESIDENT: And just to end, as our — as our trade deals start kicking in — these trade deals are incredible. Whether it's North Korea, South Korea — North Korea is going to be — probably, something is going to be happening with North Korea too. There's some very interesting information on North Korea. A lot of things are going on. And that's going to be a major rebuild at a certain point.

And South Korea is getting much more involved with us than we ever thought in terms of the economy and in terms of the trade deal. A lot of money is being spent over there, and they're going to be doing it through us. They've been doing tremendous purchases. We had a tremendous deficit with them. And we're slowly eating away at these deficits. We had deficits with everybody.

But as the trade deals start kicking in with China, especially phase one with the farmers and with the banks — the banking system, financial services — as they start kicking in, you're going to see a tremendous difference in the economy. The economy is already, by far, number one.

So, if I weren't elected, by right now, China would be the largest economy in the world. It was expected. It was said by many people that China would, right now — they were expecting around the second year of this term. Not only aren't they the biggest economy in the world, but they are way, way, way far away. We are much bigger than the China economy. And we're getting bigger, and they're not.

Now, they have 1.4 billion people. I guess you'd call that an advantage. But we have an economy like no other. I think we have the strongest economy we've ever had. And I think if you add the economy, the military, and all the other things that we've done, there's nothing like it. But when trade deals start kicking in — and, as I said, the South Korea deal did kick in, and things are happening with that that are very positive. But as they kick in, you're going to see tremendous numbers, tremendous changes. Because the trade deals we had were so pathetic. They were so bad. I used to sit back and say to Lighthizer, “How did somebody actually negotiate these deals? How did they even negotiate them?”

This was done at a level that — it’s not even understandable why people were allowed to do it, how they were allowed, how they got passed. But we’re making great deals. And when they kick in, the economy, as good as it’s been doing — and I think, Larry, I can say, that as good as it’s been doing, it’s going to be even better than that.

So, our country is doing fantastically well, perhaps better than ever before. Thank you all very much. Thank you very much.

END

12:54 P.M. EDT