

Remarks During a Cabinet Meeting

June 12, 2017

The President. Good morning. We have much great news to share with the American people today as we continue to deliver on our promises.

Due to a record-long delay in confirmation and the confirmation process by the Senate Democrats—which I call the obstructionists; maybe they'll change, but I doubt it for a while. But they are truly obstructionists—this is our first Cabinet meeting with our entire Cabinet present. The confirmation process has been record-setting long—and I mean record-setting long—with some of the finest people in our country being delayed and delayed and delayed. But that's—much of that is over, and now we are—we're going through, as you know, the regular process with people at other levels of Government. And that's a very long process also, including Ethics Committee, which has become very difficult to deal with.

All of that being said, we now have our Cabinet finally approved. And I want to welcome Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue—thanks, Sonny; Secretary of Labor Alex Acosta; Director of National Intelligence Daniel Coats—thank you, Dan; and U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer.

There is an incredibly talented group of people in this room: generals, Governors, Congressmen, entrepreneurs, business leaders, and many, many others. I choose each person at this table, and I chose them not only because of their remarkable experience and success, but because they've all united by one shared goal. What they want to do is one very simple but very beautiful goal: serving and defending our beloved Nation.

Together, we're working every day—and we've been working very hard together—for our country: to protect their safety, bringing back jobs into our country, and putting always America first.

And when I ran, it was "Make America Great Again," and that's what we're doing. Believe me, we're doing it, and we're doing at a much faster pace than anyone thought. I will say that never has there been a President, with few exceptions—in the case of FDR, he had a major Depression to handle—who's passed more legislation, who's done more things than what we've done, between the Executive orders and the job-killing regulations that have been terminated; many bills—I guess, over 34 bills in Congress signed; a Supreme Court Justice who's going to be a great one, that will be a great Supreme Court Justice; and many other things. We've achieved tremendous success. And I think we've been about as active as you can possibly be and at a just-about record-setting pace.

And we're achieving these goals by eliminating these job-killing regulations, unlocking American energy, rebuilding our military, pursuing fair and reciprocal trade deals, achieving massive reductions in illegal immigration, transforming the Department of Veterans Affairs, and building a new partnership among nations to defeat terrorism, which we have to do.

In just a very short time, we're seeing amazing results. And in fact, there are a couple of major stories today in the newspapers about mines that are opening, and the miners are going back to work. Actually, they're pretty big stories. People are surprised. It's kicking in very fast. More small businesses are planning to hire than at any point in over a decade. And last month, unemployment fell to its lowest point in 16 years.

I recently returned from a trip overseas that included deals for more than \$350 billion worth of military and economic investment in the United States. These deals will bring many thousands of jobs to our country—and, in fact, will bring millions of jobs, ultimately—and help Saudi Arabia take a greater role in providing stability and security in that region.

One of the big things that we did—and you're seeing it now with Qatar and all of the things that are actually going on in a very positive fashion—we are stopping the funding of terrorism. They are going to stop the funding of terrorism. And it's not an easy fight, but that's a fight we're going to win. They will be—you have to starve the beast, and we're going to starve the beast, believe me.

Secretary Price has been working very hard to repeal and replace Obamacare. The House passed a bill; the Senate has it right now. Mitch McConnell is working very, very hard, as are the Republican Senators. We will have zero backing from the Democrats, even though they should get in and do something. But we expect to get zero. If we had the greatest bill in the history of the world on health care, we wouldn't get one vote from the Democrats, because they're obstructionists. That's what they want to do. That's the game. They think that's their best political game. They're looking to '18. So far, we've had two races, and we've won both of those races. They've spent millions and millions of dollars on congressional races. We have another one coming up, and we've been doing very well. But they're obstructionists, and that's sad. But we are coming up with something that I believe will be very good, with zero support from the obstructionist Democrats. Sad.

Secretary Mnuchin is helping us put together one of the biggest tax cuts in American history. It may be the biggest single tax cut in American history. And that also includes a great deal of tax reform, simplification, and other things.

Director Mulvaney has led our efforts to introduce a new budget that cuts wasteful Washington spending and protects the taxpayer. And that will come out. And believe me, we'll take care of the people that have to be taken care of. So that's the first step. But we will be taking care of the people that have to be taken care of. On a human basis, that's very, very important.

Today we're going to hear from Secretary Tillerson and Secretary Mattis on the ways that we're combating ISIS and defeating terrorism. We've had tremendous success against ISIS in our fight in the Middle East, where we're doing very, very well. We're going to be having a news conference in 2 weeks on that fight, and you'll see numbers that you would not have believed. And frankly, if you look back to even 6 months ago, you wouldn't have believed it was possible.

Secretary Shulkin will give us an update on his tremendous work to make sure that our veterans are finally given the care that they deserve, one of the most important things to me on the campaign trail. We've also been strongly pushing for passage of the VA Accountability Act, to ensure employees at the VA can be held accountable if they fail our great veterans. It's passed the Senate, and the House is voting tomorrow. So tomorrow we have a big vote coming up, David, and I think we're going to be in good shape. But that's something that is going to be great for our veterans.

We're also going to hear from Secretary Acosta about a major announcement that I'll be making later this week, expanding apprenticeships and getting our people back to work. While we have the lowest number in terms of unemployment in many, many years, at the same time, I've always argued with that number because it doesn't take into account millions and millions

of people that have given up looking for jobs. And we're going to be doing something about that. And we're going to get those people back to work. And it's already starting in Ohio, and it's starting in Pennsylvania and North Carolina and South Carolina and Florida. You see the numbers. And they're starting. I call them the forgotten men and women, but they're not going to be forgotten much longer, believe me.

There are millions of good jobs that lead to great careers, jobs that do not require a 4-year degree or the massive debt that often comes with those 4-year degrees and even 2-year degrees. These jobs require advanced skills and technical training, and we're going to start that. The apprenticeships—a very good word from the Trump standpoint, the word "apprentice"—[laughter]—apprenticeships are going to be a big, big factor in our country. They're people with tremendous talent, maybe a mechanical talent or maybe a talent for fixing an engine or a motor. Met a lot of people that graduated high in their class at the best colleges in the world, have no clue, and they would never be good at it. It's a different kind of an ability, but it's a great ability nevertheless.

We're going to help get our young people the technical training that they need to pursue really exciting careers and careers that they can make good money. They can really earn a great, great salary and maybe even open small businesses.

If everyone in this room continues to do their jobs, then we can restore American prosperity and make millions and millions of dollars, and we can make for these people—and the American Dream come true. We're going make the American Dream come true for a lot of people that will not have had that experience without the election results that we had on November 8.

So we're here to change Washington, return power to the people. We're here to give people a great shot at a great, great job and even opening small businesses and employing other people.

I look forward to hearing all of the reports from the different people in the room today. We have done, as I said, about as much as anybody ever in a short period of time in the Presidency. That's despite tremendous opposition from the other side. We have done something that's very special. And you see it in the economic numbers, because the economic numbers have been incredible. One just came out: Almost \$4 trillion in worth has been created in the stock markets of our country. You just take a look at that. Seven-hundred thousand jobs have been created in a very short period of time since the election—700,000 jobs.

If we would have said that on November 8, nobody would have believed the number. If we would have said that almost \$4 trillion in the stock markets has been created, everybody would have laughed at us. They would have said, oh, that's ridiculous. But that's what it is.

So we're very proud of it. We have a phenomenal team of people, a great group of talent, and we are really now seeing the early fruits of their labor. Some of them won't be able to kick in because, statutorily, you have to wait periods of time before you're allowed to do the final.

We'll be having some major legislation very soon on the dumping of steel in our country, which is absolutely killing our workers and our steel companies. We're going to be having some very major legislation on the dumping of aluminum and various other things into our country, which is killing our workers. And we'll be announcing that very soon.

So I think what we'll do—most of you know most of the people around the room, but I'm going to start with our Vice President. Where is our Vice President? [Laughter] Our Vice

President, there he is. And I'll maybe start with Mike, and we'll just go around, and just your name, your position, and then we'll ask these folks to go back and have a good day, and we're going to discuss our various reports.

Mike.

Vice President Michael R. Pence. Thank you, Mr. President. And just the greatest privilege of my life to serve as Vice President to a President who is keeping his word to the American people and assembling a team that's bringing real change, real prosperity, and real strength back to our Nation.

The President. Thank you, Mike.

Attorney General Jefferson B. Sessions III. Mr. President, it's great to be here and celebrate this group. We are receiving, as you know—I'm not sure the rest of you fully understand—the support with law enforcement all over America. They have been very frustrated. They are so thrilled that we have a new idea that we're going to support them and work together to properly, lawfully fight the rising crime that we're seeing.

The President. That's good.

Attorney General Sessions. And it's an honor to be able to serve you in that regard. You've set the exact, right message, and it's being responded—the response is fabulous around the country.

The President. Great success, including MS-13. They're being thrown out in record numbers and rapidly. And they're being depleted. They'll all be gone pretty soon. So you're right, Jeff. Thank you very much.

Alex.

Secretary of Labor R. Alexander Acosta. Mr. President, I am privileged to be here, deeply honored. And I want to thank you for keeping your commitment to the American workers. This week is a full schedule for you, focusing on the American worker. We're very excited at the Department of Labor. And the apprenticeship program that you're going to be announcing, I think, is going to make a real difference.

The President. Thank you. Congratulations.

Secretary of Energy J. Richard Perry. Mr. President, honored to be on the team. This last week I had the great privilege to represent America in China at the Green Energy Ministerial. Good timing. They needed to hear why America was stepping away from the Paris accord—and they did—and that America is not stepping back, but we're stepping into place and sending some messages that we're still going to be leaders in the world when it comes to the climate, but we're not going to be held hostage to some Executive order that was ill-thought-out. And so my hat is off to you for taking that stand and for sending a clear message around the world that America is going to continue to lead in the area of energy.

The President. Thank you, Rick. Thank you.

U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations Nikki R. Haley. Thank you, Mr. President. It's a new day at the United Nations. We now have a very strong voice. People know what the United States is for, they know what we're against, and they see us leading across the board. And so I think the international community knows we're back.

The President. Thank you, Nikki. That's true.

Office of Management and Budget Director John M. "Mick" Mulvaney. Mr. President, thank you for your kind words about the budget. You're absolutely right, we are going to be able to take care of the people who really need it. But at the same time, with your direction, we were able to also focus on the forgotten man and woman who are the folks who were paying those taxes. And I appreciate your support and your direction in pulling that budget together.

The President. Thank you, Mick.

Environmental Protection Agency Administrator E. Scott Pruitt. Good morning, Mr. President. It's good to be back in the United States. Actually, I arrived back this morning at 1 o'clock from Italy, from the G-7 summit, focused on the environment. And our message there was that the United States is going to be focused on growth and protecting the environment. It was received well.

The President. Good job, Scott.

Director of National Intelligence Daniel R. Coats. Good morning, Mr. President. The intelligence community has never faced such a diversity of threats to our country in our lifetimes. We have men and women who are working 24/7, 7 days a week, to make sure that we are on top of all of these threats. It's a joy to be working with the people that I have inherited, and we're going to provide—continue to provide you with the very best intelligence we can so you can formulate policies to deal with these issues.

The President. Thank you, Dan.

Secretary of Education Elisabeth P. DeVos. Mr. President, it's a privilege to serve, to serve the students of this country, and to work to ensure that every child has an equal opportunity to get a great education and, therefore, a great future.

The President. Thank you, Betsy.

Secretary of Health and Human Services Thomas E. Price. Mr. President, what an incredible honor it is to lead the Department of Health and Human Services at this pivotal time under your leadership. I can't thank you enough for the privilege that you've given me and the leadership that you've shown. It seems like there's an international flair to the messages that are being delivered. I had the opportunity to represent the United States at the G-20 Health Summit in Berlin and at the World Health Assembly in Geneva. And I can't tell you how excited and enthusiastic folks are about the United States leadership as it relates to global health security.

The President. Thank you. Appreciate it.

Secretary of the Interior Ryan K. Zinke. Mr. President, as your SEAL on your staff—
[laughter].

The President. That's true.

Secretary Zinke. —and it's an honor to be your steward of our public lands and the generator of energy dominance. And I am deeply honored. And I am committed and optimistic that we can be both great stewards and be the world's largest producer of energy.

The President. Good. And you can do both. Thank you very much. Thanks, Ryan.

Rex.

Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson. Mr. President, thank you for the honor to serve the country. It's a great privilege you've given me. Clearly, we are engaged with our allies to ensure

that they know where our common interests lie, what our expectations are: that America will continue to be a leader, but they must do more. And they must meet their obligations both from a national security standpoint, but also for creating conditions of stability and prosperity.

And for our adversaries, we are engaging and will engage, but they have to know that we will be engaging from a position of strength, to protect America's national interest, and we expect to make progress on resolving some of these differences.

The President. Thanks, Rex.

Secretary of Defense James N. Mattis. Mr. President, it's an honor to represent the men and women of the Department of Defense, and we are grateful for the sacrifices our people are making in order to strengthen our military so our diplomats always negotiate from a position of strength. Thank you.

The President. Thank you, Jim. Thank you.

Secretary of Commerce Wilbur L. Ross, Jr. Mr. President, thank you for the opportunity to help fix the trade deficit and other things. The other countries are gradually getting used to the fact that the free rides are somewhat over with. They're not happy with it, but I think they're—have a growing recognition of it. So I'm thrilled to have a chance to help you live up to your campaign promises.

The President. Good. Thank you, Wilbur.

Secretary of Transportation Elaine L. Chao. Mr. President, last week was a great week. It was Infrastructure Week. Thank you so much for coming over to the Department of Transportation. Hundreds and hundreds of people were just so thrilled, hanging out, watching the whole ceremony. I want to thank you for getting this country moving again and also working again.

The President. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Secretary of Homeland Security John F. Kelly. Mr. President, proud to be here. Certainly very proud to represent the quarter of a million men and women that serve the country in DHS. In the 5 months that I've been in the job, we have gone a long way to facilitate the—improve the legal movement of people and commerce across our borders and, yet at the same time, have gone a long way to safeguarding our borders, particularly the southern border, working with all of our partners to the South. A 70-percent drop in illegal immigration. While we still welcome legal immigrants to the tune of over a million a year, we are no longer a friendly environment for illegal border crosses.

The President. Thank you

U.S. Trade Representative Robert E. Lighthizer. Mr. President, first of all, I apologize for being late for work. [Laughter] About 4 months, I got bogged down in that swamp that you've been trying to drain—[laughter]. I also have traveled. I just got back from Paris, where we met with the OECD and the WTO both. And the message was similar to Wilbur's. It was deficits do matter, and ours are coming down. Pleasure to be here.

The President. Thank you. I know they are.

Small Business Administration Administrator Linda E. McMahon. Good morning, Mr. President. Thank you for the opportunity to serve at SBA. And I can tell you that as—I haven't been traveling internationally, but I've been traveling around the country. And what I'm

continuing to hear is this renewed optimism from small businesses, higher than it's been in about 16 years. So those people returning to the workforce, a lot of them are because small businesses are creating new jobs. So loan portfolios are up, mentoring, and our outreach with SCORE and our other programs are being so successful. So thank you. We're on a good trajectory and still a lot of work to do.

The President. Thank you.

White House Chief of Staff Reinhold R. "Reince" Priebus. On behalf of the entire senior staff around you, Mr. President, we thank you for the opportunity and the blessing that you've given us to serve your agenda and the American people. And we're continuing to work very hard every day to accomplish those goals.

Director of Central Intelligence Michael R. Pompeo. Mr. President, it's an honor to serve as your CIA Director. It's an incredible privilege to lead the men and women who are providing intelligence so that we can do the national security mission. And in the finest traditions at CIA, I'm not going to say a damn thing in front of the media. [Laughter]

Secretary of Veterans Affairs David J. Shulkin. Mr. President, thank you for your support and commitment to honoring our responsibility to America's veterans. I know that this is personally very important to you. I have the great honor of being able to represent the 21 million American veterans that have done such great things for this country. And I have worked every day to make sure that we're honoring that responsibility. Thank you.

The President. Thank you very much.

Ben.

Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Benjamin S. Carson, Sr. Mr. President, it's been a great honor to work with you. Thank you for your strong support of HUD and for all the others around this table that I've worked with. We're making tremendous progress in converting to a business model. Already seeing tremendous savings there.

And this month is National Homeowners Month, and therefore, I'll be ringing the bell on Wall Street at 4 o'clock, which means I've got to leave at 12:00. Thanks. [Laughter]

Secretary of Agriculture George E. "Sonny" Perdue. Good morning, Mr. President. While we're bragging about international travel, I just got back from Mississippi. [Laughter] They love you there. [Laughter]

And I want to congratulate you on the men and women you've placed around this table. The holistic team of working for America is making results in each and every area. Working with Secretary Ross and Ambassador Lighthizer and Secretary Mnuchin and Tom Price and Scott Pruitt—this is a team you've assembled that's working hand-in-glove with—for the betterment of America, and I want to thank you for that. These are great team members, and we're on your team.

The President. Thank you, Sonny. Thank you.

Secretary of the Treasury Stephen T. Mnuchin. Thank you, Mr. President. It was a great honor traveling with you around the country for the last year and an even greater honor to be here serving in your Cabinet. On behalf of everybody at the Treasury, I can assure you we are focused on creating sustained economic growth, sweeping tax reform, and fighting terrorism with sanctions and all other programs within our control.

The President. Thank you. Very good. Thank you. Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:11 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Supreme Court Associate Justice Neil M. Gorsuch. He also referred to H.R. 1628 and S. 1094; and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization. The transcript, prepared for immediate release by the Office of the Press Secretary, was received by the Office of the Federal Register on July 27.

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