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Remarks on Immigration Reform Legislation

August 2, 2017

Thank you very much. It's great to be here today to unveil legislation that would represent the most significant reform to our immigration system in a half a century. I want to thank Senators Tom Cotton and David Perdue for their tremendous work in putting together this historic and very vital proposal.

As a candidate, I campaigned on creating a merit-based immigration system that protects U.S. workers and taxpayers, and that is why we are here today. Merit-based.

The RAISE Act—R–A–I–S–E—the RAISE Act will reduce poverty, increase wages, and save taxpayers billions and billions of dollars. It will do this by changing the way the United States issues green cards to nationals from other countries. Green cards provide permanent residency, work authorization, and fast track to citizenship.

For decades, the United States was operated and has operated a very low-skilled immigration system, issuing record numbers of green cards to low-wage immigrants. This policy has placed substantial pressure on American workers, taxpayers, and community resources. Among those hit the hardest in recent years have been immigrants and, very importantly, minority workers competing for jobs against brand new arrivals. And it has not been fair to our people, to our citizens, to our workers.

The RAISE Act ends chain migration and replaces our low-skilled system with a new points-based system for receiving a green card. This competitive application process will favor applicants who can speak English, financially support themselves and their families, and demonstrate skills that will contribute to our economy.

The RAISE Act prevents new migrants and new immigrants from collecting welfare and protects U.S. workers from being displaced. And that's a very big thing. They're not going to come in and just immediately go and collect welfare. That doesn't happen under the RAISE Act. They can't do that. Crucially, the green card reforms in the RAISE Act will give American workers a pay raise by reducing unskilled immigration.

This legislation will not only restore our competitive edge in the 21st century, but it will restore the sacred bonds of trust between America and its citizens. This legislation demonstrates our compassion for struggling American families who deserve an immigration system that puts their needs first and that puts America first.

Finally, the reforms in the RAISE Act will help ensure that newcomers to our wonderful country will be assimilated, will succeed, and will achieve the American Dream.

I'd like now to invite Senator Cotton and Senator Perdue to say a few words. Thank you. Thank you very much.

[*At this point, Sens. Thomas B. Cotton and David A. Perdue, Jr., made brief remarks. The President then concluded as follows.*]

Thank you, David. I just want to state that, as you probably have noticed, the stock market hit an alltime record high today, over 22,000. We've picked up, substantially now, more than $4 trillion in net worth in terms of our country, our stocks, our companies. We have a growth

rate—a GDP—which has been much higher than, as you know, anybody anticipated, except maybe us. But then, it's going to go up. It's going to go higher too. We're doing a job.

And you're going to see, jobs are pouring back into the country. The factories and plants are coming back into the country. We're going to start making product in America again. And that's happening all over. As I mentioned yesterday, Foxconn is going to spend $10 billion in Wisconsin and other places. And I think the $10 billion is going to end up being $30 billion. They make the iPhones for Apple and others, and it is a truly incredible company.

So we have a lot of things happening that are really great. But again, today the stock market hit the highest level that it has ever been, and our country is doing very well.

I just want to thank you all. Tom and David are going to be outside. They're going to speak to you at length about what we're going to do with respect to this aspect of immigration. I think it's going to be very, very important, the biggest in 50 years—biggest change in 50 years.

Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:39 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Sens. Cotton and Perdue.

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