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Remarks at the Family Research Council's Values Voter Summit
October 13, 2017

The President. Thank you very much, Tony. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. Thank you very much. You know, I've been here before. [*Laughter*] You do know that. Before the big day on November 8, I was here. I want to thank Mark Meadows and all of the folks that have really made this possible. And, Tony, tremendous guy.

We have some incredible people that we love and that we're involved with. So we all know that. And I'm being followed by Mr. Bennett—you know that, right? And I've been watching him say nice things about me before I knew him. Those are the ones I like—[*laughter*]—where they speak well of you before you know them. Right? [*Laughter*]

But I really want to thank everybody, and, Tony, for your extraordinary leadership of this organization. And I want to thank, also, Lawana, for your dedication to the faith community and to our Nation. Work so hard.

It's great to be back here with so many friends at the 2017 Values Voter Summit, and we know what that means. We know what that means. America is a nation of believers, and together we are strengthened and sustained by the power of prayer. [*Applause*] True.

As we gather for this tremendous event, our hearts remain sad and heavy for the victims of the horrific mass murder last week in Las Vegas. It was an act of pure evil. But in the wake of such horror, we also witnessed the true character of our Nation. A mother laid on top of her daughter to shield her from gunfire. A husband died to protect his beloved wife. Strangers rescued strangers, police officers—and you saw that, all of those incredible police officers, how brave they were, how great they were running into fire—and first responders, they rushed right into danger. Americans defied evil and hatred with courage and love. The men and women who risked their lives to save their fellow citizens gave proof to the words of this scripture: "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

All of America is praying for the wounded and the grieving, and we will be with them today, and we will be with them forever. Just want to finish by saying that—really, and we understand it was so horrific to watch and so terrible—but to those who lost the ones they love: We know that we cannot erase your pain, but we promise to never, ever leave your side. We are one Nation, and we all hurt together, we hope together, and we heal together.

We also stand with the millions of people who have suffered from the massive fires, which are right now raging in California, and the catastrophic hurricanes along the Gulf Coast, in Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands. And I will tell you, I left Texas, and I left Florida, and I left Louisiana, and I went to Puerto Rico, and I met with the president [Governor]* of the Virgin Islands.

These are people that are incredible people. They've suffered gravely, and we'll be there. We're going to be there. We have, really—it's not even a question of a choice. We don't even want a choice. We're going to be there as Americans, and we love those people and what

* White House correction.

they've gone through. And they're all healing, and their States and Territories are healing, and they're healing rapidly.

In the wake of the terrible tragedies of the past several weeks, the American people have responded with goodness and generosity, and bravery. You've seen it. The heroism of everyday citizens reminds us that the true strength of our Nation is found in the hearts and souls of our people. When America is unified, no force on Earth can break us apart. We love our families. We love our neighbors. We love our country. Everyone here today is brought together by the same shared and timeless values. We cherish the sacred dignity of every human life.

We believe in strong families and safe communities. We honor the dignity of work. We defend our Constitution. We protect religious liberty. We treasure our freedom. We are proud of our history. We support the rule of law and the incredible men and women of law enforcement. We celebrate our heroes, and we salute every American who wears the uniform. We respect our great American flag. [*Applause*] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. And we stand united behind the customs, beliefs, and traditions that define who we are as a nation and as a people.

George Washington said that "religion and morality are indispensable" to America's happiness, really, prosperity and totally to its success. It is our faith and our values that inspires us to give with charity, to act with courage, and to sacrifice for what we know is right.

The American Founders invoked our Creator four times in the Declaration of Independence—four times. How times have changed. But you know what, now they're changing back again. Just remember that.

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. Benjamin Franklin reminded his colleagues at the Constitutional Convention to begin by bowing their heads in prayer. Religious liberty is enshrined in the very First Amendment of the Bill of Rights. And we all pledge allegiance to—very, very beautifully—"one Nation under God." This is America's heritage, a country that never forgets that we are all—all, every one of us—made by the same God in Heaven.

When I came to speak with you last year, I made you a promise. Well, one of the promises I made you was that I'd come back. [*Laughter*] See? And I don't even need your vote this year, right? That's even nicer. [*Laughter*]

But I pledged that, in a Trump administration, our Nation's religious heritage would be cherished, protected, and defended like you have never seen before. That's what's happening. That's what's happening. You see it every day. You're reading it.

So this morning I am honored and thrilled to return as the first sitting President to address this incredible gathering of friends—so many friends. So many friends. And I'll ask Tony and all our people that do such a great job in putting this event together—can I take next year off or not? [*Laughter*] Or do I have to be back? I don't know. Huh?

Audience members. No!

The President. He's saying—they're saying no. [*Laughter*] Lawana is saying no. So that's means no. [*Laughter*]

So I'm here to thank you for your support and to share with you how we are delivering on that promise, defending our shared values, and in so doing, how we are renewing the America we love.

In the last 10 months, we have followed through on one promise after another. I didn't have a schedule, but if I did have a schedule, I would say we are substantially ahead of schedule. Some of those promises are to support and defend the Constitution. I appointed and confirmed a Supreme Court Justice in the mold of the late, great Justice Antonin Scalia, the newest member of the Supreme Court, Justice Neil Gorsuch.

To protect the unborn, I have reinstated a policy first put in place by President Ronald Reagan, the Mexico City Policy. To protect religious liberty, including protecting groups like this one, I signed a new executive action in a beautiful ceremony at the White House on our National Day of Prayer, which day we made official. [*Laughter*]

Among many historic steps, the Executive order followed through on one of my most important campaign promises to so many of you: to prevent the horrendous Johnson Amendment from interfering with your First Amendment rights. [*Applause*] Thank you. We will not allow government workers to censor sermons or target our pastors or our ministers or rabbis. These are the people we want to hear from, and they're not going to be silenced any longer.

Just last week, based on this executive action, the Department of Justice issued a new guidance to all Federal agencies to ensure that no religious group is ever targeted under my administration. Won't happen.

We have also taken action to protect the conscience rights of groups like the Little Sisters of the Poor. You know what they went through. What they went through—they were going through hell. And then, all of the sudden, they won. They said, how did that happen? [*Laughter*] We want to really point out that the Little Sisters of the Poor and other people of faith, they live by a beautiful calling, and we will not let bureaucrats take away that calling or take away their rights.

We are stopping cold the attacks on Judeo-Christian values. [*Applause*] Thank you. Thank you very much. And something I've said so much during the last 2 years, but I'll say it again as we approach the end of the year. You know, we're getting near that beautiful Christmas season that people don't talk about anymore. [*Laughter*] They don't use the word "Christmas" because it's not politically correct. You go to department stores, and they'll say, "Happy New Year," and they'll say other things. And it will be red, they'll have it painted, but they don't say it. Well, guess what? We're saying "Merry Christmas" again.

And as a Christmas gift to all of our hard-working families, we hope Congress will pass massive tax cuts for the American people. That includes increasing the child tax credit and expanding it to eliminate the marriage penalty. Because we know that the American family is the true bedrock of American life. So true. This is such an exciting event, because we are really working very hard, and hopefully, Congress will come through.

You saw what we did yesterday with respect to health care. It's step by step by step. And that was a very big step yesterday. Another big step was taken the day before yesterday. And one by one, it's going to come down, and we're going to have great health care in our country. We're going to have great health care in our country. We're taking a little different route than we had hoped, because getting Congress—they forgot what their pledges were. [*Laughter*] So we're going a little different route. But you know what? In the end, it's going to be just as effective, and maybe it will even be better.

For too long, politicians have tried to centralize the authority among the hands of a small few in our Nation's Capital. Bureaucrats think they can run your lives, overrule your values,

meddle in your faith, and tell you how to live, what to say, and how to pray. But we know that parents, not bureaucrats, know best how to raise their children and create a thriving society.

We know that faith and prayer, not Federal regulation—and by the way, we are cutting regulations at a clip that nobody has ever seen before. Nobody. In 9 months, we have cut more regulation than any President has cut during their term in office. So we are doing a job. And that is one of the major reasons, in addition to the enthusiasm for manufacturing and business and jobs—and the jobs are coming back.

That's one of the major reasons—regulation, what we've done—that the stock market has just hit an alltime historic high; that just on the public markets we've made, since election day, $5.2 trillion in value. Think of that: $5.2 trillion. And as you've seen, the level of enthusiasm is the highest it's ever been, and we have a 17-year low in unemployment. So we're doing, really, some work.

We know that it's the family and the church, not government officials, that know best how to create strong and loving communities. And above all else, we know this: In America, we don't worship government, we worship God. Inspired by that conviction, we are returning moral clarity to our view of the world and the many grave challenges we face.

This afternoon, in a little while, I'll be giving a speech on Iran, a terrorist nation like few others. And I think you're going to find it very interesting. [*Laughter*] Yesterday things happened with Pakistan, and I have openly said Pakistan took tremendous advantage of our country for many years, but we're starting to have a real relationship with Pakistan, and they're starting to respect us as a nation again, and so are other nations. They're starting to respect the United States of America again, and I appreciate that. And I want to thank the leaders of Pakistan for what they've been doing.

In this administration, we will call evil by its name. We stand with our friends and allies, we forge new partnerships in pursuit of peace, and we take decisive action against those who would threaten our people with harm—and we will be decisive—because we know that the first duty of government is to serve its citizens. We are defending our borders, protecting our workers, and enforcing our laws. You see it every single day like you haven't seen it in many, many years, if you've seen it at all.

In protecting America's interests abroad, we will always support our cherished friend and partner, the State of Israel. We will confront the dangers that imperil our Nation, our allies, and the world, including the threat of radical Islamic terrorism. We have made great strides against ISIS, tremendous strides. I don't know if you've seen what's going on, but tremendous strides against ISIS. They never got hit like this before. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. Hit them again! [*Laughter*]

The President. Stand up. Stand up. Let me see—oh, he's a rough guy. I can see it. [*Laughter*]

But they've been just ruthless, and they've ruthlessly slaughtered innocent Christians, along with the vicious killing of innocent Muslims and other religious minorities. And we've made their lives very, very difficult, believe me.

We've done more against ISIS in 9 months than the previous administration has done during its whole administration—by far, by far. And ISIS is now being dealt one defeat after another. We are confronting rogue regimes from Iran to North Korea, and we are challenging the communist dictatorship of Cuba and the socialist oppression of Venezuela. And we will not

lift the sanctions on these repressive regimes until they restore political and religious freedom for their people.

All of these bad actors share a common enemy, the one force they cannot stop—the force deep within our souls—and that is the power of hope. That is why, in addition to our great military might, our enemies truly fear the United States. Because our people never lose faith, never give in, and always hope for a better tomorrow.

Last week, Melania and I were reminded of this in a powerful way when we traveled to Las Vegas. We visited a hospital where some of the survivors were recovering from absolutely horrific wounds. We met a young man named Brady Cook. He's 22 and a brandnew police officer. That night was Brady's second day in field training—his second day as a policeman, can you believe that? But when the shooting began, he did not hesitate. He acted with incredible courage, rushing into the hail of bullets, and he was badly shot in his shoulder.

This is what Brady said: "I didn't expect it, but it's what I signed up for. When stuff goes down, I want to be there to face evil and to protect the good, innocent people that need it." And here's a young guy, great guy—and second day. I said, Brady, don't worry about it, it's going to be easier from here. [*Laughter*] Brady is a hero, and he can't wait to get back on the job.

Several weeks before, when Hurricane Harvey hit Houston, a local furniture storeowner, who's known in Texas as "Mattress Mack"—[*laughter*]—decided he had to help. When the rain began to flood the streets of the city, he sent out his furniture trucks to rescue the stranded. He brought them back to his stores and gave them food and a clean, dry place to stay, even if it meant ruining countless dollars' worth of furniture. As Mattress Mack put it, "My faith defines me, it's who I am." "We can afford [the cost] . . . we can't afford"—what we can't—and he said this very strongly, "what we can't afford is to cause people to lose hope."

In Brady and Mack, we see the strength of the American spirit. This spirit of courage and compassion is all around us, every day. It is the heartbeat of our great nation. And despite certain coverage, that beat is stronger than it's ever been before. You see right through it. That beat is stronger than it's ever been.

We see this spirit in the men and women who selflessly enlist in our Armed Forces and, really, who go out and risk their lives for God and for country. And we see it in the mothers and the fathers who get up at the crack of dawn; they work two jobs and sometimes three jobs. They sacrifice every day for the furniture—and future of their children. They have to go out. They go out. They work. The future of their children is everything to them. They put it before everything. And they make sure that the future of their children has God involved in it. So important to them.

We see it in the church communities that come together to care for one another, to pray for each other, and to stand strong with each other in times of need. The people who grace our lives, and fill our homes, and build our communities are the true strength of our Nation, and the greatest hope for a better tomorrow. As long as we have pride in our country, confidence in our future, and faith in our God, then America will prevail.

We will defeat every evil, overcome every threat, and meet every single challenge. We will defend our faith and protect our traditions. We will find the best in each other and in ourselves. We will pass on the blessings of liberty and the glories of God to our children. Our values will endure, our Nation will thrive, our citizens will flourish, and our freedom will triumph.

Thank you to the Value Voters Summit. Such an incredible group of people you are. Thank you to all of the faithful here today. And thank you to the people of faith all across our Nation and all over the world.

May God bless you. May God bless the United States of America. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:22 a.m. in the Omni Shoreham Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Anthony R. Perkins, president, Family Research Council, and his wife Lawana; Rep. Mark R. Meadows; former Secretary of Education William J. Bennett; Las Vegas, NV, resident Carly Krygier and her daughter Blayke; Bakersfield, CA, resident Jack Beaton and his wife Laurie; Gov. Kenneth E. Mapp of the U.S. Virgin Islands; Brady Cook, officer, Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department; and James F. McIngvale, founder and president, Gallery Furniture. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization.

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Names: Beaton, Laurie; Bennett, William J.; Cook, Brady; Gorsuch, Neil M.; Krygier, Blayke; Krygier, Carly; Mapp, Kenneth E.; McIngvale, James F.; Meadows, Mark R.; Perkins, Anthony R.; Perkins, Lawana; Trump, Melania.

Subjects: Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Service and dedication; Business and industry : Manufacturing industry :: Strengthening efforts; California : Wildfires, damages and recovery efforts; Civil rights : Freedom of religion; Economy, national : Improvement; Elections : 2016 Presidential and congressional elections; Family Research Council, Values Voter Summit; Florida : Hurricane Irma, damage and recovery efforts; Government organization and employees : Federal regulations, review; Health and medical care : Health insurance reforms; Holidays and special observances : Day of Prayer, National; Iran : Terrorism, sponsorship; Israel : Relations with U.S.; Judiciary : Supreme Court :: Associate Justice; Law enforcement and crime : Law enforcement officers, service and dedication; Natural disasters : Response and recovery efforts; Nevada : Las Vegas :: Shootings; Pakistan : Relations with U.S.; Puerto Rico : Hurricane Maria, damage and recovery efforts; Taxation : Child tax credit; Taxation : Tax relief; Terrorism : Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization; Texas : Hurricane Harvey, damage and recovery efforts; Virgin Islands, U.S. : Governor; Virgin Islands, U.S. : Hurricane Irma, damage and recovery efforts; Virgin Islands, U.S. : Hurricane Maria, damage and recovery efforts.

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