

*Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2018*

## **Remarks During a Meeting With Republican Senators on Immigration Reform and an Exchange With Reporters**

*January 4, 2018*

*The President.* Important meeting. Thank you very much for being here. We're making a lot of progress on a lot of different things. Today I'm with the Senate working group on immigration. It's become a very big subject. I think that started around November 8 and maybe a year and a half before that, starting with the campaign.

We're all working in an effort to develop an immigration reform plan that will serve the interests of the American workers and the American families and safety. I want to thank Chairman Grassley, along with Senators Tillis and Lankford, Cornyn, Cotton, and Graham for being here today. These are great people. They've become friends of mine, and they love this country. I also want to acknowledge Senator Perdue, who is likewise a terrific person, who has become a very close friend of mine. And he'll be briefed as to what's happening.

Our current immigration system fails Americans. Chain migration is a total disaster, which threatens our security and our economy and provides a gateway for terrorism. Likewise, the visa lottery is bad for our economy and very bad for security. You saw that recently in New York along the West Side Highway.

We need a physical border wall. We're going to have a wall—remember that—we're going to have a wall to keep out deadly drug dealers, dangerous traffickers, and violent criminal cartels. Mexico is having a tremendous problem with crime, and we want to keep it out of our country.

We need to ensure our immigration officers finally have the resources, tools, and authorities that they desperately deserve and need to save and protect American lives. Even the Border Patrol agents, as you saw recently, killed—a couple of them killed; one very badly hurt. It's a rough job, and they're incredible people, along with the ICE agents. These are incredible people. They've been with me right from the beginning, and they love what we're doing.

That's why our position has been clear and very clear from the beginning. Any legislation on DACA must secure the border with a wall. It must give our immigration officers the resources they need to stop illegal immigration and also to stop visa overstays. And crucially, the legislation must end chain migration. It must end the visa lottery. Dangerous. And I think many of the Democrats agree with us on that now.

The lottery system is a disaster. Tom and I talk about it all the time. They put down their probably worst people—who knows—but they're not looking to get rid of their best people. So they put their worst people in the hopper, and we're picking out the people. And then, we find out: What do we have? It's not a good situation. So we're going to end it. The lottery system has to be laughed at by countries outside of our country when they send these people in.

I want to thank the Senators for working with us, because it really has been a very collaborative effort. We are, believe it or not, working also with Democrats. I think that's correct. Right, Tom? We're moving across the aisle and trying to get support, and I think we have a lot of support. But we'll soon see. We'd love to take care of DACA, but we're only going to do it under these conditions. So we appreciate it very much.

Mr. Vice President, do you have anything to say? Mike.

*Vice President Michael R. Pence.* Mr. President, you've made immigration a centerpiece in the national debate over the last year and a half. And—but you said all along the way, we're going

to build a wall and reform our immigration system. We're going to enforce the laws of this country for the citizens of this country.

But you also said along the way, we're going to do it with a big heart. And you've opened the door to an agreement on DACA, and today is part of an ongoing discussion with these Republican leaders, but also with Democrats on Capitol Hill, to accomplish that. And I look forward to being a part of it.

*The President.* Very good. Thank you, Mike. And, Senator Grassley, anything to say?

*Senator Charles E. Grassley.* Of course, where you said, we were here, I think, with you on November the 8. We set out a program that we all agreed to here. We know that there has to be negotiations in regard to that, but you've laid out some principles that we will not compromise on.

*The President.* Thank you. And you've been a great voice in a lot of different ways, and we appreciate it. Thank you very much.

Lindsey—used to be a great enemy of mine, and now he's a great friend of mine. I really like Lindsey. Can you believe that? I never thought I'd say that, but I do like him a lot.

*Senator Lindsey O. Graham.* Thank you. I like me too, so we have something in common. [Laughter]

*The President.* We all know that. [Laughter]

*Sen. Graham.* Obama couldn't do it. Bush couldn't do it. I think you can do it. There's a deal to be had. If you want it bad enough, we'll get it. It will be good for the country. Everybody has got to give a little bit. But I've never been more optimistic about an immigration reform proposal making it to the President's desk than I am right now.

*The President.* I think we have a good chance. Tom Cotton?

*Senator Thomas B. Cotton.* Thank you for having us, Mr. President.

*The President.* Thank you.

*Sen. Cotton.* As Senator Graham said, I think there's a deal to be had here. The President has made clear that he wants to provide some kind of protections for those who receive the DACA work permits, but at the same time, we have to deal with the negative consequences of that.

We have to end chain migration to prevent a future set of new chain migrants coming. And we have to secure our border. We have to enforce our laws on the interior as well, to decrease the illegal immigration that will inevitably encourage overstays.

The President and our group have been clear on that from the very beginning. And I hope Democrats will sit down with us and finally take yes for an answer on it.

*The President.* Good. I think we've got a good shot. I really do. Thom? Anything?

*Senator Thomas R. Tillis.* Mr. President, I just want to say exactly what Lindsey did. And if you think about in the Obama administration, when you had the votes to pass Obamacare and you couldn't get the DREAM Act passed, then you know there's something structurally wrong with just the baseline. [Laughter] I mean, if you just think about it, you're providing the leadership to come up with a balance where you're going to produce a bipartisan solution and a solution that's consistent with your principles, which I think are important for us to fulfill the promises that we made to the American people. And we can provide certainty to the DACA population.

And shame on anybody for getting caught up in words. The wall, for example—

*The President.* Right.

*Sen. Tillis.* When we've got the opportunity to provide a solution, achieve your objectives, and do something good for the DACA population, then I think we should.

*The President.* Thank you, Thom, very much. You're right 100 percent. Tom? I'm sorry.

*Senator James P. Lankford.* Mr. President, thank you for bringing all of us together. I mentioned to you in September, when you first made the announcement about DACA, that you'd given a tremendous gift to the American people. It's been 20 years since we've had a vote on immigration of any type that's actually passed and become law.

Immigration issues are very hard; they're very emotional. But there's been no deadline. So every time the Congress starts to work on it, they work on it for a while, then drop it because it's difficult. You gave us a deadline——

*The President.* Thank you, James.

*Sen. Lankford.* ——and setting that for March the 1st, and that's a tremendous gift to be able to get that done.

Thanks for your engagement on this. I do absolutely agree with your heart on the issues on DACA and for those kids, and be able to find out—we've got to get a legislative solution, but we've got to deal with every other issue as well or we'll just keep having DACA votes every 10 years, and we can't do that. So thanks. And by the way, thanks for the new leadership in DHS as well.

*The President.* Right.

*Sen. Lankford.* And looking forward to seeing her leadership in the days ahead.

*The President.* Well, I have to tell you, James Lankford has been a tremendous help, not only on what we just passed, but will be a tremendous help on this. And, James, I want to thank you for your support.

*Sen. Lankford.* Thank you, sir.

*The President.* You've been really fantastic. And I can say that for all of the men and the people in this room. They've been fantastic. And, John, you have been really been—we can't even call you the whip—[laughter]—but you have been more than a whip. You've been so fantastic on the taxes and the tax cuts and reform and the success of that.

And certainly, it wasn't easy. It went right to the last minute, and you were right there. And we all want to thank you. The job you did is fantastic.

So, Senator Cornyn, want to say a few words?

*Senator John Cornyn III.* Well, Mr. President, thank you for having us here. America is the most generous country in the world when it comes to legal immigration, but that generosity has been abused by people who are exploiting the vulnerabilities we have along the border with the lack of enforcement. And we saw the previous administration that tried to usurp the authority that only Congress and the White House have in passing immigration laws. And they tried to do it by executive action, and the courts just struck that down.

So I do think this is an important opportunity for those of us who care not only about the people and about our legal immigration system that's benefited us all, but also are determined to eliminate and stop illegal immigration, along with the drugs and the harm that that causes. And I do think this is a great opportunity. I hope we make the most of it.

Coming from a border State with 1,200 miles of common border with Mexico, my constituents in Texas all understand the importance of border security and enforcement. At the same time, they're people with big hearts.

*The President.* That's true. That's so true.

*Sen. Cornyn.* And like you and like the rest of us who want to do the right thing by these young adults who came here as children, and I think we have a great opportunity.

*The President.* Well, thank you very much, John. And I have to tell you that as I walked into the room—I don't know if you heard the latest, but the market is up about 150 points. And we broke a very, very big barrier—25,000. And there were those who'd say we wouldn't break 25,000 by the end of the 8th year, and we're in the 11th month. We broke 25,000 just as we came in now. I have to be a little careful, because as we walk out, maybe it goes down. *[Laughter]* You always have to be careful with that, Tom.

But we did, in fact, break 25,000, very substantially break it, very easily. So I guess our new number is 30,000. *[Laughter]* But what it means is, every time you see that number go up on Wall Street it means jobs, it means success, it means 401(k)s that are flourishing.

I was in New York at a big event recently, and I take a lot of pictures with police and with firemen and with the military. And one of the policemen came up, an officer, and he said: "Sir, I want to thank you. My 401(k) is through the roof. My wife thinks I'm a brilliant investor." *[Laughter]* He said he was up 39 percent. I said, "You should be doing better than that, actually." *[Laughter]* But he said, "I'm up 39 percent in 9 months." And he said: "I've never seen anything like it. My wife is so happy, my family is so happy."

And people with 401(k)s, unless they're really having difficulties in life, they're doing very, very well. So I just want to congratulate everyone in the room because you worked so hard.

I may finish off with our new Secretary, who's just in the position, but I will tell you, respected by everybody. I got a very good vote. Got a very good vote. And would you like to say anything, Secretary?

*Secretary of Homeland Security Kirstjen M. Nielsen.* Yes. I just want to thank you for your leadership on this issue. And I really appreciate your support of the men and women at DHS. They do have a very dangerous job, one that we don't often like to talk about. But they are—they do put their lives in danger for all of us every day.

And I really look forward to working with all of you, and learning today about your progress. As you know, border security, we have to have the wall and the technology and personnel that go with that, but we also need to close the loopholes so that we can do the expedited removal because that's a core part of border security.

So I look very much forward to working with you and others in Congress to get this done.

*The President.* Well, you're going to break all of General Kelly—who's right over here—you're going to break all of his records, rights? *[Laughter]*

*Secretary Nielsen.* Absolutely.

*The President.* Because he had some pretty good records; 78 percent is—so far, that's the best number. So you have to break 78 percent. That's tough, but you'll do it.

*Secretary Nielsen.* All right. Yes, sir.

*The President.* Thank you all very much. Appreciate it.

*Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program/Border Security/Bipartisanship*

*Q.* Your message to DREAMers, Mr. President? Your message to DREAMers, Mr. President?

*The President.* Hopefully, everything is going to work out very well. We really want it to work out. I can tell you the Republicans want to see it work out very well. If we have support from the Democrats, I think DACA is going to be terrific. We have people that have been working on this issue for a long time. As Lindsey said, as others have said, we really are at a point where I think we could do something spectacular for the people on the border, people coming through.

We have to be careful, because there's a drug epidemic like the likes of which we've never seen in this country. We need protection. We need the wall. We need all of those things. And frankly, I think a lot of Democrats agree with us. When they see what's happening, when they see the kind of problems we're having at the border, they really understand it. Whether they'll vote that way is another situation, but they really understand it.

So we want to thank you all for being here. We have a great spirit going in the Republican Party. I think it can be bipartisan. I hope it's going to be bipartisan. And we take care of a lot of problems. We take care of a lot of problems. It would be really nice to do it in a bipartisan way. Okay?

Thank you all.

*Former White House Chief Strategist Stephen K. Bannon*

*Q.* Did Steve Bannon betray you, Mr. President? Any words about Steve Bannon?

*The President.* I don't know, he called me a great man last night. So you know, he obviously changed his tune pretty quick. All right, thank you all very much.

*Q.* [Inaudible]

*The President.* I don't talk to him. I don't talk to him. I don't talk to him. That's just a misnomer. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:34 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Stephen "Michael" Garland, a U.S. Customs and Border Patrol agent who was injured in an ambush attack in Van Horn, TX, on November 18; White House Chief of Staff John F. Kelly, in his former capacity as Secretary of Homeland Security. Sen. Graham referred to former Presidents Barack Obama and George W. Bush.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Immigration reform, meeting with Republican Senators; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters :: White House.

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