

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2018

Remarks at a Roundtable Discussion on California's Immigration Enforcement Policies

May 16, 2018

The President. Good afternoon. I'm greatly honored to be here with the courageous mayors and sheriffs and local leaders from across the State of California, a great State. Each of you has bravely resisted California's deadly and unconstitutional sanctuary State laws. You've gone through a lot too, although it's becoming quite popular what you're doing. A law that forces the release of illegal immigrant criminals, drug dealers, gang members, and violent predators into your communities.

California's law provides safe harbor to some of the most vicious and violent offenders on Earth, like MS-13 gang members putting innocent men, women, and children at the mercy of these sadistic criminals. But we're moving them out of this country by the thousands. MS-13, we're grabbing them by the thousands and we're getting them out, Kevin.

We're also joined by Attorney General Jeff Sessions. Jeff, thank you. The Secretary of Homeland Security, Kirstjen Nielsen. Secretary, thank you very much. [*Laughter*] I know you folks are keeping busy, right?

Secretary of Homeland Security Kirstjen M. Nielsen. Yes, sir.

The President. Keeping busy at those borders. And Deputy ICE Director, Tom Homan, who's going to be leaving us soon for a life of retirement. But there's no such thing as retirement for Tom. You've done a fantastic job, and we appreciate it very much, Tom. Incredible job.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Acting Director Thomas D. Homan. I'm not leaving the fight, sir. [*Laughter*]

The President. I know that. Oh, you'll never leave the fight. No, you'll always be in.

Also with us is House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, who's been a special friend of mine. He represents California's 23d Congressional District, and he is very, very popular. And I just recently saw a poll of Kevin. I think the opposition might as well just go home, because Kevin, they love him out there, and he's done an incredible job. He's brought it home. And we appreciate it, Kevin, the great job you've done for the country. Thank you very much.

Unfortunately, Congress—and I'd have to say, congressional Democrats—you take a look at what has been going on and what's going on with the laws, whether it's catch-and-release, whether it's any of the things that we're fighting for so hard.

Now, we have started the wall. We're spending \$1.6 billion between fixing and starting. You know, Melissa, what's been going on. We're getting it up. We have a lot of folks in California, they don't talk about it, but they want the wall up, and they're very happy. That's one of the reasons we started in California. But we made a lot of progress on it, and now we're going for the full funding for the wall, and we're going to try and get that as soon as possible. But it's become a very popular issue.

In January, the Los Angeles Police Department arrested an illegal immigrant from Mexico for drug possession. Instead of honoring the ICE detainer, they set him free. Just a few weeks later, he was arrested again, this time for murder. So they arrested him, they had him, they let him go. Tom, you've seen this. They let him go, and he killed somebody. And it's happening more and

more. And we get them out as fast as we can. We have the worst laws anywhere in the world for illegal immigration. There's no place in the world that has laws like we do.

Catch-and-release, think of it. We catch somebody, we find out they're criminals. We end up having to release them, and they go into our society. Now, we do the best we can, I'll tell you. We do better than anybody. And our numbers are much better than in the past, but they're not nearly acceptable and not nearly as good as what we could have. We're down 40 percent from those other standards, so that's really good—meaning 40 percent crossings. So that's good. But we can do much better.

Part of the problem that we have is, our economy is so strong that people are pouring up to get into our economy. They want a piece of our economy. And that makes the job even tougher. But we want to keep—we want people based on merit. We want people to come into our country based on merit. We're not looking to keep them out. We're looking to bring them in. We need them. We have companies moving back into the United States like never before. Chrysler is opening up now in Michigan. We have so many companies actually coming from Mexico, even, and coming back in. So we want people coming in based on merit.

We all remember the tragic case of Marilyn Pharis in California who was murdered by an illegal immigrant who had been arrested six times prior to breaking into Marilyn's home, raping her, and savagely beating her to death with a hammer. And this is one example, but there are many examples. I've been saying it for a long time. We cannot let this butchery happen in America.

The State of California's attempts to nullify Federal law have sparked a rebellion by patriotic citizens who want their families protected and their borders secured. They want border security. They want protection. That's what we're all about. We're about protection, both from international and from, frankly, people crossing our border illegally.

I will now go around the room and ask these incredible mayors and officials to discuss their brave stand on behalf of their constituents. They are very popular, they are very well respected. These are the top people. And they are people that other people listen to, and they listen to them from around the country.

So I'll begin by asking California Assemblywoman Melissa Melendez—and you have been an inspiration to a lot of people, Melissa. So maybe you could say a few words, and we'll go right around the room, okay?

California State Assemblywoman Melissa A. Melendez. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you.

Assemblywoman Melendez. I just want to start off by saying, on behalf of everyone here, thank you for inviting us. There are more people in California, I think, than you know who support what you're doing, who believe in your agenda in securing our borders. Everywhere in between, from San Francisco to Los Angeles, you have millions of people who want to see that our borders are secure and that our neighborhoods are safe.

So we want to thank you for what you're doing.

The President. Thank you.

Assemblywoman Melendez. I have been in office in California for 5 years now, and it's interesting to me that you've been in office for a year almost?

The President. Yes, 17—17 months. Seventeen years would be nice. It's 17, but—[laughter].

Assemblywoman Melendez. But you have invited us here to talk about this issue. I've been in office in California for 5 years. Not once has Governor Brown invited any Republican to discuss this issue in California. And it is a crisis. That's the point we're at in California. It's a crisis.

[At this point, Assemblywoman Melendez continued her remarks, concluding as follows.]

And I think the resistance that started in the Democrat Party, this is your Republican resistance right here against what they're doing in California.

The President. And beyond Republican. I mean, this has really become a Democrat issue, a Republican issue. I think a lot of the Democrat politicians don't understand what's going on. Because it's actually good politically. People want safety.

Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

Assemblywoman Melendez. Yes. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you.

The President. Sam, go ahead.

Mayor Sam Abed of Escondido, CA. Thank you, Mr. President. I am a proud immigrant here from Lebanon. Thirty years ago, I came here to live the American Dream, and we did well. Jerry Brown wants to take this American Dream from us. I see myself——

The President. He'll going to be retired pretty soon, won't he?

Mayor Abed. I hope so.

Assemblywoman Melendez. End of the year. End of the year.

The President. Somebody said he's going to run for President. I said: "Please. Please run."
[Laughter] But no, I think he's going to be retired, from what I understand, pretty soon.

Mayor Abed. I see myself fighting for these values that made our country great, Mr. President. We are aligned with your goals.

Here's the success story of Escondido. When I was elected mayor in 2010, I made the agreement with ICE. We brought eight ICE agents to Escondido, to our police station. Since then, we deported over 2,700 illegal criminals from our city and made Escondido as safe as it was in 1980. This is a great success story, and our cooperation with ICE and the San Diego ICE is a very compelling model for the Nation to follow.

In our city, more immigrant people report crime. And this narrative that sanctuary city will allow more immigrants to report crime is fake news, Mr. President.

The President. Fake news. *[Laughter]* Fake news.

Mayor Abed. We are going—California is going down the drain. It's going to be—sorry, Congressman McCarthy. But California is the least business friendly, is the poorest city in the Nation, the highest poverty rate, the highest taxes, you name it. Instead of fixing the Golden State and making it the American Dream for everyone, they are dealing with illegal criminals.

[Mayor Abed continued his remarks, concluding as follows.]

I am passionate about it. When I go back to California, I'm going to start a PAC. And we're going to fight the fight. We want to make sure if the Supreme Court does not repeal the sanctuary State, we're going to make sure the grassroot team like you see today, we will repeal that. We are with you. We need to build that wall. We need to end the sanctuary State. We had 11 sanctuary cities not too long ago. Now we have 560. Ten-thousand illegal criminals have been released under the sanctuary cities——

The President. But now it's reversing, Sam. And it really got bad, and now it's reversing. There's a big change of heart, of mind, of people don't want sanctuary cities. They're dangerous; they don't want them anymore.

So thank you, Sam.

Mayor Abed. Most of the people support us, Mr. President. Sixty-five percent of the Hispanics support us. The liberals, the Democrats, everybody is supporting our—in my city, 90 percent are with us. Thank you.

The President. And I'll tell you what, I had a lot more support in the State of California than people understand. *[Laughter]*

Assemblywoman Melendez. That's right.

The President. Check the voting records, folks. Please.

Mayor Crystal Ruiz of San Jacinto, CA. I'm Crystal from the city of San Jacinto. Can I speak frankly?

The President. Yes.

Mayor Ruiz. I'm sitting here in this room in awe of God's power, how He can take someone who was homeless in a tent, make them the mayor in the city, and bring them before the President of the United States of America who wants to hear the cry of our people. And that's what's going on.

[Mayor Ruiz continued her remarks, concluding as follows.]

You see, every one of us came from somewhere else. We all came from different countries. My husband is from Mexico. My family came way back from before the Revolutionary War, and we've been fighting for this country ever since, fighting for the constitutional rights of our country. I'm not going to stop fighting for those rights.

The President. Don't fight—look, it's coming back and it's coming back fast. Faster than even the people in this room understand. Kevin understands what's happening. You see it, maybe, better than anybody. But it's coming back. People are tired of this nonsense, and it's happening. So don't give up the fight. Don't give up the fight.

Mayor Ruiz. I'm not, Mr. President. You are our leader. And thank God for you.

The President. Thank you very much. That's very nice.

Mayor Ruiz. So bless you.

The President. And yours is an amazing story.

Mayor Ruiz. Thank you, God. Thank you.

The President. Thank you.

Sheriff?

Sheriff John D'Agostini of El Dorado County, CA. Thank you, Mr. President. John D'Agostini. I'm the elected Sherriff of El Dorado County, California. And the bottom line from sheriffs—and you'll hear from my peers, as well—is we just want to do our jobs. We want to do what the people elected us to do, and that is respect our Constitution and keep our community safe.

[Sheriff D'Agostini continued his remarks, concluding as follows.]

We're not immigration officers; we never have been, and we're never going to be. We just want to be able to cooperate with our Federal partners so that these folks that end up in our custody and need to be deported, get deported.

The President. Of course, Sheriff, I'll tell you what: It's not bad politics anymore. You know, if you look at what's going on—because I think, maybe, more than anywhere else right now, there's a revolution going on in California. They want safety.

You know, you had the Mayor of Oakland that I read where you had a thousand people—Tom, you know this because it was your deal—you had a thousand people together. Many of these were illegals. They were criminals. They were all sorts of—it was work. And she informed them and they all fled, or most of them fled. And that whole operation that took a long time to put together—I mean, you talk about obstruction of justice; I would recommend that you look into obstruction of justice for the Mayor of Oakland, California, Jeff. She advises a thousand people. They told, "Get out of here, the law enforcement is coming." And you worked on that long and hard. And you got there, and there were very few people there.

To me, that's obstruction of justice. And perhaps the Department of Justice can look into that with respect to the mayor, because it's a big deal out there and a lot of people are very angry about what happened. That was a lot of hard work and a lot of danger involved. And that was a terrible thing.

Yes, ma'am.

Mayor Natasha Johnson of Lake Elsinore, CA. Mr. President, Natasha Johnson, from the city of Lake Elsinore. As the mayor, April 24, we took a formal position and adopted a resolution opposing SB 54. It was based on our constitutional duty to serve. I think everyone in this room that is elected knows that public safety is their number-one priority. But we can't say that we are public safety driven and also turn a blind eye to what is happening.

[Mayor Johnson continued her remarks, concluding as follows.]

This isn't a fight, this is a battle. This is a war. And I know that we have a lot of work to do. This is just the beginning.

The President. We'll get it done. Thank you very much.

Secretary Nielsen? Would you like to say something?

Secretary Nielsen. Just—mostly just thanks. I want to thank you for your leadership, sir, in bringing us all together but in also recognizing what a very important issue this is. And this week, as many of you know, we celebrate Police Week and we celebrate law enforcement. Everyone in this room is an enforcer of the law, and I thank you for that and I thank you for your leadership.

When States are turning their back on the U.S. Constitution and their communities, you are standing up. And we greatly, greatly appreciate your partnership.

I know Director Homan will give us more details on the dangers of sanctuary cities, which you're living, as do our officers and folks who work at ICE and other parts of the Federal family. But I just want to hear from you and just thank you. Thank you for your partnership and for standing up for your communities. Thank you.

The President. Thank you. And you're doing a good job, and it's not an easy job. I know what you're going through right now with families is very tough. But those are the bad laws that the Democrats gave us. We have to break up families. The Democrats gave us that law. It's a horrible thing. We have to break up families.

The Democrats gave us that law, and they don't want to do anything about it. They'll leave it like that because they don't want to make any changes. And now you're breaking up families because of the Democrats. It's terrible.

Mayor Troy Edgar of Los Alamitos, CA. Yes. How are you doing, there, President Trump? I'm Troy Edgar, Los Alamitos Mayor. It's an honor to be here.

You know, I just want to say, thank you for inviting us also to the Residence earlier today. You know, as a previous ex-Navy guy, and being able to be on a city council of a small city, it's people like you that are actually bringing the people back to the people's house: your house, our house. So we really appreciate it.

You know, going through, I also want to say thank you to Secretary Nielsen. There's a gentleman in our community, Mark Cito, who is on the local ICE officer in charge of Orange County. When we came out, we were the first city. He came, he called right away, he started giving me that bright line between where ICE has problems with local law enforcement.

So, Secretary Nielsen, thank you.

Secretary Nielsen. Thanks to Director Homan.

The President. Thank you, Troy.

Mayor Edgar. Yes. And then, Attorney General—you know, coming out first has a price to pay. And the ACLU has filed a lawsuit against us. You know, we would really appreciate any direct or indirect funding there—any sort of fiscal help that you could provide us with—*[laughter]*—for, you know, things like potentially putting some of your Attorney General or Assistant Attorney Generals maybe, if they have the base in our military town, or helping us offset some of the costs.

But we really appreciate everything that you're doing. We also filed the amicus brief to kind of join, and we're going to plan on intersecting you at the appeals court. One of you guys will appeal, and we think that we'll have a more substantive amount to offer at that point.

The President. Maybe we could join in with you though. We could perhaps join in with you. Because we have a lot of cases like that where we're with you 100 percent, but we're not in paper. So we'll join in with you. If it's at all possible, we'd like to do that.

Attorney General Jefferson B. Sessions III. Thank you, Mr. President. Yes.

The President. Pam? Thank you very much, Troy.

Councilmember Pam Patterson of San Juan Capistrano City, CA. So thank you, Mr. President. It's an amazing honor to meet you, and thank you so much for the invitation.

I served on San Juan Capistrano City Council for the last 3 years, but I've also served on the community engagement panel of the San Onofre Nuclear Power plant, which is—they call it SONGS. And they, back in 2001, were testifying before Congress that the terrorists were saying, "target the power plants." So the fact that we have this unsecured border is putting us—

The President. Crazy.

Ms. Patterson. —at great risk because we know that terrorists are coming in.

The President. It's crazy.

Ms. Patterson. But with respect to the power plant—that is number one—that has the worst safety record in the Nation. And one of the questions that I asked—

The President. This is a nuclear power plant?

Ms. Patterson. Yes.

The President. And the terrorists are coming in alongside of the power plant.

Ms. Patterson. Exactly. And you——

The President. Isn't that wonderful? [*Laughter*]

Ms. Patterson. ——can get in to that power plant with really—you can just drive in. And so I asked them, actually, during one of the meetings—I said, "So you have a no-fly zone, right?"—with respect to the power plant—and they said, "Yes." And I said: "So what would happen if an airplane flew into the no-fly zone? Would you shoot it down?" They said, "No." And that was on the record.

And so I just think that it's a Fukushima, number one, waiting to happen. It's on an active earthquake fault, in a tsunami zone, where they're storing this radiation which is 124 times that of Chernobyl and improperly stored, and it's—there's no security.

So I think that——

The President. We'll check it out.

Ms. Patterson. Okay.

The President. It doesn't sound too good. [*Laughter*] It doesn't sound like the greatest, right?

Ms. Patterson. Exactly.

The President. We'll check it out. Thank you very much.

Ms. Patterson. Okay, thank you.

The President. Okay.

Margaret?

Sheriff-Coroner Margaret Mims of Fresno County, CA. Thank you, Mr. President. You know, sheriffs in California are now in an untenable position when it comes to trying to figure out—now, we have State law, we have Federal laws, and here we are stuck in the middle. Sheriffs, especially, because most of us run our county jails.

[*Sheriff Mims continued her remarks, concluding as follows.*]

And I appreciated Mr. Homan and his—the ICE. We had a great relationship; we still do. But now ICE is the only law enforcement agency that cannot use our databases to find the bad guys. They cannot come in and talk to people in our jail, unless they reach a certain threshold. They can't do all kinds of things that other law enforcement agencies can do. And it's really put us in a very bad position.

The President. It's a disgrace. Okay? It's a disgrace.

Sheriff Mims. It is a disgrace.

The President. And we're suing on that, and we're working hard, and I think it will all come together, because people want it to come together. It's so ridiculous. The concept that we're even talking about is ridiculous. We'll take care of it, Margaret. We'll win.

Sheriff Mims. Thank you. There could be an MS-13 member I know about, if they don't reach a certain threshold, I cannot tell ICE about it.

The President. Yes. We have people coming into the country or trying to come in—and we're stopping a lot of them—but we're taking people out of the country. You wouldn't believe

how bad these people are. These aren't people. These are animals. And we're taking them out of the country at a level and at a rate that's never happened before. And because of the weak laws, they come in fast, we get them, we release them, we get them again, we bring them out. It's crazy.

The dumbest laws—as I said before, the dumbest laws on immigration in the world. So we're going to take care of it, Margaret. We'll get it done. We're going to ask that man right there, because that man can do it. *[Laughter]* Right now he's the most important man in the room. Kevin can do it.

So, Kevin? Please.

House Majority Leader Kevin O. McCarthy. Well, first of all, I want to thank all of you, because most people around the country do not realize how your hands are tied behind your back. The only thing you want to do is to have safe streets, safe neighborhoods, and protect your communities. And for California Legislature to go against the Constitution—one of the greatest strengths of this Nation, and we're fortunate to be in this room, is the rule of law. They are breaking down society by breaking down the rule of law; that you have a known criminal that you can't communicate with ICE about.

[Majority Leader McCarthy continued his remarks, concluding as follows.]

So, collectively, it was city councils and sheriffs—city council is not your full-time job, but you listened to your community, you saw the problem that was going on. So things are improving, and that's why I'm so thankful for this President to call us together, because collectively we'll be stronger. The Secretary is doing an amazing job. I'll tell you, the number of times we meet or call at all hours of night, trying to make sure she can protect it. The Attorney General just talked to me last night, around 10 o'clock. *[Laughter]*

And so, from that perspective, we are in this together, but we are in it for the Constitution. We're in it for the security and the safety of our streets, and I thank you for leading the charge.

The President. Well, we want to thank you, Kevin. You have done an incredible job. And you're sort of going against the tide, but now the tide is sort of with us because you see it in the room. I mean, a year ago, 2 years ago, this would have been unthinkable to have you all in the room talking the way we're talking. But you're fed up with what's happening.

And, Kevin, thank you very much. You're doing really great.

Stacey.

District Attorney Stacey L. Montgomery of Lassen County, CA. Thank you very much. I just want to say thank you for your leadership in your office and on this issue. I am delighted and privileged to be here. And it is so wonderful to be here among all of you as well, because you're all on the frontlines in your own communities fighting this fight.

[Ms. Montgomery continued her remarks, concluding as follows.]

And I believe that, to a certain extent, we are sort of a forgotten part of California. We are rural California, and we do not stand for the policies in Sacramento. We have a horrible problem in our public lands, in our forests. We've got illegals, marijuana—excuse me, drug cartels that have come up to grow on our public lands and in our forests, and they are decimating it. They are killing wildlife.

The President. And you can't really do anything about it.

Ms. Montgomery. There's not a thing we can do. We work with the Department of Fish and Wildlife, who file charges, that do the best that they can. But these people are coming into our forests, they're endangering our citizens. They are armed. They're setting up camps, and they're

growing mass amounts of marijuana on our public lands. They are killing wildlife. They're diverting streams. The damage that they're causing, both to the economy and to our public lands, is going to be generational. A large portion of these people that are coming in to do this are illegal immigrants.

Because of the legalization of marijuana in California, now we're seeing those same individuals working with other criminal groups: the Asian groups, the Russian groups, the motorcycle groups, all kinds of organized crime. It's bringing into rural California——

The President. So has legalization made it worse?

Ms. Montgomery. The legalization made it worse. Yes. I believe the legalization made it worse. I've been appalled, as a district attorney, someone who's sworn to uphold the Constitution and the laws of the State, that we have fallen so far in California.

[Ms. Montgomery continued her remarks, concluding as follows.]

Well, the response from my office was very simple: We have nothing. Because this office will stand for the rule of law. Lassen County stands for the rule of law. And we have no policies to give you because we will not issue such policies from this desk and from this office.

The President. Yes. Good job.

Ms. Montgomery. We stand with you. We are delighted with the actions that you have taken, Mr. Sessions. The people of Lassen County stand with you, I stand with you, and we appreciate everything that you're doing.

The President. Yes. Thank you, Stacey.

Ms. Montgomery. You're welcome.

The President. Beautifully said. Thank you very much.

Tom?

Acting Director Homan. First of all, Mr. President, I want to thank you for having this meeting today, this roundtable. We appreciate your leadership on this issue. The Secretary, I appreciate your leadership and how you support law enforcement and the rule of law. And the AG, I can't say enough good things about what you've done for law enforcement.

[Acting Director Homan continued his remarks, concluding as follows.]

And as far as the hate that I take for defending the men and women of ICE and the Border Patrol, that will stop the day my heart stops to beat. *[Laughter]* And it won't end. And even though I may be retiring soon, this fight doesn't end with me. I will stay engaged, and I will keep fighting for you, sir. So thank you very much.

The President. Thank you very much.

Acting Director Homan. I've worked for six Presidents, and I respect them all. But no President has done more than you for border security and for law enforcement. I think every law enforcement officer at this table would agree with me.

The President. Thank you very much. No, that's very nice. That's a great compliment, believe me, because you have, indeed, worked for six. And all six respected you greatly, none more than me. Thank you very much. I just wish you could have said that to the press, but—*[laughter]*—here's the good news: You have such a beautiful, full head of hair, you look good even from that angle. *[Laughter]*

I appreciate it, Tom. That's really nice. Thank you very much.

Elaine?

Mayor Elaine Gennawey of Laguna Niguel, CA. Good afternoon, Mr. President. And thank you for inviting us here to share our thoughts with you. I'm Elaine Gennawey, Mayor of the city of Laguna Niguel in Orange County, California. And so, really appreciate the opportunity to let you know what our residents are feeling.

But first, I'd like to ask Director Homan, please let the men and women of ICE know that they have our gratitude and our deep, deep appreciation for what they do.

Acting Director Homan. Thank you.

Mayor Gennawey. But, you know, Laguna Niguel took a stance against SB 54 because that is the greatest threat to the safety of all of California residents: all of our residents, all of our communities. And that includes our immigrant communities. The siloing or preventing law enforcement agencies from talking to each other is a threat to our agents and to the communities. And our country learned a very tragic lesson on September 11, and that's what happens when law enforcement does not communicate.

[*Mayor Gennawey continued her remarks, concluding as follows.*]

So H.R. 5724 is just being introduced, and we would appreciate help with that, because local control is being attacked from Sacramento every single day, and this is one other issue.

The President. We'll take a look. We'll take a look. I'll take a look on that. Thank you very much.

Mayor Gennawey. Okay, thank you. Appreciate that.

The President. Steve Miller, would you like to say something?

White House Senior Adviser for Policy Stephen Miller. Just what an honor it is to be able to work for a President who has the backs of our law enforcement officers. Everything you're doing every day is saving so many lives all across this country, and it's just an endless honor to be a part of it, and even in any a small way. So thank you, sir.

The President. Thank you, Stephen. That's very nice. A great job you do too.

Senior Adviser Miller. Thank you.

Supervisor Kristin Gaspar of the San Diego County, CA, Board of Supervisors. Good afternoon, Mr. President. It's an honor to be here. I'm Kristin Gaspar representing the largest county here today, San Diego County. I have 3½ million constituents that I'm responsible for their public safety. If you look around this room—your tiny but mighty team—this is what Governor Brown classifies as low-life politicians. Well, here we are.

You've heard about the problems. You've heard about the statistics. And I could have thought of a million things to say to you. I have a stack of 3,000 e-mails in my office. These are the e-mails that have come in: thank yous, people supporting what we're doing. And I have a tiny little stack of less than 50 where people are very upset with what we're doing in San Diego County.

The President. How is the wall going? How is the wall? [*Laughter*]

Ms. Gaspar. It's going. It's going.

The President. We're getting it built, right?

Ms. Gaspar. It is being built.

The President. They wanted it so badly—San Diego. They wanted it so badly. And I said, you know, if we build it, we will lose a big constituency, because there won't be anybody saying, "We want the wall." [Laughter] But we had to build it. So I know they're very happy about it.

Ms. Gaspar. And I'd like to share with you a story, because sometimes humanizing the issue is really important. And a family reached out to me, and I brought with me one single photo on that plane, since the stack of 3,000 e-mails is a little difficult to carry. But that photo was the last photo taken of 27-year-old Alexander Mazin, who was gunned down by an illegal immigrant who had previously been deported.

[*Ms. Gaspar continued her remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Now, he said something that stuck with me. He said, "You know, my son, he was a true patriot. He was a wonderful human being, an exemplary citizen, lost because of the problem at our border." So this case, and so many others, these are the faces—this is what we're fighting for. And we're all in, because we're going to fight to protect our public safety, and we are going to speak freely about this issue until we can look back at our own children and guarantee their safety in our community.

Thank you for your advocacy.

The President. Well, thank you very much. And you find Mexico helps, or it does nothing for us?

Ms. Gaspar. Mexico does not help with cases like this, because it will take years——

The President. Mexico does nothing for us. They do nothing for us.

Ms. Gaspar. And this family will——

The President. Mexico talks, but they do nothing for us, especially at the border. Certainly don't help us much on trade, but especially at the border, they do nothing for us.

Jeff. Thank you very much. Jeff.

Attorney General Sessions. Mr. President, great to be with you. I want you to know that the President has made clear to all of us that we have to do better. We are going to do better. In our Department, we're reviewing everything we're doing. And we're going to probably have twice as many prosecutions, add a whole bunch of judges, and do the things that we can to move this agenda forward.

But I want to tell you, in my opinion, having been here and a lot of battles over this issue, this year—Kevin, and I know you and I were talking about it—could be the year—this is the year that we have to move Congress. I've always said Congress will pass anything as long as it doesn't work. [Laughter] If you come up with a bill that will actually improve our sheriffs' and our ICE officers' and Border Patrol officers' ability to do their job, to deport people who have entered illegally, then they object, and we seem to come up short. This time, let's don't come up short.

We've got a leader. He can articulate this message effectively. And if we all get behind our leader, we'll get something done this year that's historic.

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

Deputy Sheriff Ray Grangoff of Orange County, CA. Mr. President, Ray Grangoff, Deputy with the Orange County Sheriff's Department. And thank you so much for fighting for law enforcement. It's much appreciated.

[*Deputy Sheriff Grangoff continued his remarks, concluding as follows.*]

So we will reap these bad policies that have been sown. But the lawsuit and what your administration is doing to fight that is a huge help. So keep it up, and thank you so much.

The President. Thank you, Sheriff. Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

Mayor Julie Hackbarth-McIntyre of Barstow, CA. Hi. Julie Hackbarth-McIntyre, city of Barstow. We sit—we have the longest cul-de-sac. The National Training Center is 27 miles from the city of Barstow.

When we joined the amicus brief, it was—we recognized that—myself and my councilmembers—was that Federal law reigns over immigration, not the State. What is happening—in listening around this table of what's happening in other communities, I haven't had anything personal from the ICE of illegal immigrations yet, but I know it's coming, because we can't enforce anything. The crime rate is up in California, and it's going to continue to rise as long as these policies——

The President. It's true.

Mayor Hackbarth-McIntyre. ——are blanketed across California. And they don't—they're not talking to the small communities. We talk to our citizens every day. They're afraid——

The President. And we have—the crime rate in the Nation is way down. But in California, it's up. Because of the ridiculous laws. Go ahead.

Mayor Hackbarth-McIntyre. Yes. And I just appreciate, Mr. President, for you here, listening to our concerns, listening to—it's going to take all of us, and I think we're ready to make the fight to California, to say: "Enough is enough. We're done." We—the blanketed policies across California aren't working. So we need help. I'm glad that you're making this fight known and we appreciate everyone in your staff, in your administration, helping and pushing through to make sure that our communities are safe.

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

Mayor Pro Tempore Warren Kusumoto of Los Alamitos, CA. Mr. President, I'm Warren Kusumoto from the tiny town of Los Alamitos. And we were first, and we were boldest, and—[laughter].

Participant. Here, here.

Mayor Pro Tempore Kusumoto. We've done something that no other city has done. We've actually passed an ordinance and exposed our city to a lawsuit, as Mayor Edgar said. And in this experience, there's a silent majority of patriots out there—I'm sorry, I'm getting broken up—that they want this. They want us to do what we're doing. And that anyone with common sense knows this California Values Act was put in place to protect those that are here breaking the law.

And the message I got from this whole experience is, the citizens of our State and our city feel like they have less rights than the entitled illegal aliens, and the entitled attitude is a thing that really just makes me really unhappy. They feel that they're entitled to something that we don't even get. So please, sir, we need your help. We appreciate your leadership.

And because the——

The President. And by the way, you gave us great leadership too.

Mayor Pro Tempore Kusumoto. Thank you, sir.

The President. Don't kid yourself. You did a great job.

Mayor Pro Tempore Kusumoto. But the State—you know, the double-speak from the politicians in the State of California—the commandeering—they've commandeered our police

force by tying their hands. And so that's the double-speak that comes out of the bullies there. We just poked the bully. And I think being the lowlifes that we are, we're closest to the people. We know what the people want, and we've gone forward with that boldly. And I've asked other cities to step up and do at least—consider the matter, listen to their constituents, and they'll know what they're supposed to do.

Thank you, sir, for having us here.

The President. Thanks very much. Great job. Thank you.

Supervisor Michelle P. Steel of the Orange County, CA, Board of Supervisors. Mr. President, Michelle Steel from Orange County.

The President. Yes.

Ms. Steel. Thank you very much by inviting us. And I just want to say, as a Korean-American—first-generation Korean-American—went through legal process to coming in here, really appreciate for the release of three Korean-Americans from North Korea. So we really appreciate that.

The President. Thank you. We're very happy about that.

Ms. Steel. At the same time that—for SB 54—that because of city of Los Alamitos, they have 11,700 people living there, and they had the gutsy move and then Orange County led, as of now, the 9 counties of 58 in California that they passed an ordinance—they passed the ordinances or resolutions to go anti-sanctuary State. So—and then, more than 35 cities as of now.

This is really an interesting experience because I was never called—I'm married to—you know, Kevin knows my husband, Shawn Steel, who is a national committeeman from California—

The President. Sure, sure. Say hello.

Ms. Steel. This is the first time that I was called—because I was going out for anti-sanctuary State—"a racist big 'B'." I mean, on the e-mail that you get this—and I said: "Oh my God, first generation. How desperate that the other side are"—[laughter]—"that being called."

But I am very, very excited that Orange County actually filed a lawsuit to join Attorney General's lawsuit. So June 5, that court is going to decide we can join them—join the Federal Government or not. If it's not, then we're going to file the lawsuit.

The President. Good.

Ms. Steel. So we're going to work together in Orange County. Most of cities that we came from—Laguna Niguel and San Juan Capistrano—Orange County is all with you. And you know what? People—that I got all these e-mails; mostly positive. And then, actually, Berkeley study came out where 57 percent are against us—so for sanctuary State—and 41 percent against sanctuary State. I don't think that polling is really right, because whatever we get, we got all mostly positive ones except that person that called me. Yes.

The President. Right. Right. Well, you have done a great job, Michelle.

Ms. Steel. Thank you very much.

The President. We appreciate it. Fantastic job.

Sheriff?

Sheriff Adam Christianson of Stanislaus County, CA. Well, Mr. President, thank you for having us. And first of all, thank you for being a defender of the rule of law, and for your

overwhelming support of public safety and standing with the men and women who put their lives on the line every day. That's just tremendous.

[Sheriff Christianson continued his remarks, concluding as follows.]

I'm privileged to live in the Central Valley, where agriculture is the number-one economic industry, multibillion-dollar industry. We feed the world. ICE is not out sweeping through those agricultural communities. We're looking for the people, the criminals, not the people who are working, seeking a better life in America, send their kids to school, are out every day in agriculture, whether that's nuts, fruit, poultry, dairy, you name it. That's not what we're doing, sir. We're focused on those individuals who victimize and exploit the weak and defenseless. And we should be able to do that without interference.

Thank you for having us.

The President. Thank you, Adam. That's fantastic. I want to thank everybody for being here, very special people. And we are—step by step, we're bringing it back, and we will bring it back. We will not fail. We'll bring it back. So thank you very much. Thank you very much. Please. Go ahead. Thank you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:19 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Victor Aurelio Martinez Ramirez, who is accused in the murder of Marilyn Pharis in Santa Maria, CA, on July 24, 2015; and Gov. Edmund G. "Jerry" Brown, Jr., of California; and Mayor Elizabeth B. "Libby" Schaaf of Oakland, CA. Mayor Ruiz referred to her husband Carlos. Ms. Gaspar referred to Ernesto Castallenos Martinez, who is accused in the murder of Alexander Mazin in San Diego, CA, on Feb. 25; and Mr. Mazin's father Jeffrey Mazin. Ms. Steel referred to Kim Hak-song, Tony Kim and Kim Dong-chul, U.S. citizens formerly detained by North Korean officials who returned to the U.S. on May 10.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : California immigration enforcement policies, roundtable discussion.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Abed, Sam; Brown, Edmund G. "Jerry," Jr.; Christianson, Adam; D'Agostini, John; Edgar, Troy; Gaspar, Kristin; Gennawey, Elaine; Grangoff, Ray; Hackbarth-McIntyre, Julie; Homan, Thomas D.; Johnson, Natasha; Kusumoto, Warren; Martinez Ramirez, Victor Aurelio; McCarthy, Kevin O.; Melendez, Melissa A.; Miller, Stephen; Mims, Margaret; Montgomery, Stacey L.; Nielsen, Kirstjen M.; Patterson, Pam; Ruiz, Crystal; Schaaf, Elizabeth B. "Libby"; Sessions, Jefferson B., III; Steel, Michelle P.

Subjects: Business and industry : Domestic investment, promotion efforts; California : Governor; California : Immigration enforcement policies; Communications : News media :: Accuracy and fairness; Congress : House of Representatives :: Majority leader; Drug abuse and trafficking : Decriminalization and legalization; Economy, national : Improvement; Homeland Security, Department of : Immigration and Customs Enforcement, U.S.; Homeland Security, Department of : Secretary; Immigration and naturalization : Illegal immigration; Immigration and naturalization : Reform; Justice, Department of : Attorney General; Law enforcement and crime : Crime rate, decline; Law enforcement and crime : Gang violence, prevention efforts; Law enforcement and crime : Illegal immigration, deportation of criminals; Mexico : Border with U.S., infrastructure and security; Mexico : Relations with U.S.; Mexico : Security cooperation with U.S.; Mexico : Trade with U.S.; White House Office : Assistants to the President :: Policy, Senior Adviser for.

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