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Remarks Honoring the NCAA Division I Football Champion North Dakota State University Bison and an Exchange With Reporters

March 4, 2019

The President. It's a lot of big people I'm standing next to. [*Laughter*] These are big, strong, powerful champions, right?

Senator Kevin J. Cramer. That's right.

The President. All champions. [*Laughter*] Well, I just want to thank everybody for being here. And we're very excited to welcome to the White House the 2018 FCS National Champions, the North Dakota State University Bison. And that's with a "Z". You know, I spell—[*inaudible*]. [*Laughter*] I actually took the "S" out, and I just put the "Z", because I didn't want to——

Senator John H. Hoeven III. You know how to say it. Yes, you know how to say it.

The President. They said, "Sir, make sure you have it with a Z."

Anyway, the First Lady, as you know, she's out working very hard—the "Be Best" campaign—all throughout the country, for children. It's something very, very important to her, so she sends her warmest regards.

And the Clemson Tigers—I don't know, they're pretty good, aren't they, huh? They're pretty good. Could you guys take them? Huh? What do you think? [*Laughter*] I think—I've looked at your record. You'd have a heck of a shot, right?

Sen. Hoeven. Go, Bison.

The President. Well, they were here. And you know, when—your two great Senators and a couple of others—but these two guys, they really said, "Would it be possible to do this for this team?" And I said—you know, I watched your championship game. I said: "Those guys are good. They deserve it. They really deserve it." You are special.

So it's an honor to have your representatives and your—by the way, and your new congressional Representative. It's a great honor. Great. Thank you. Come here, let me shake your hand. Congratulations on a nice win.

Representative Kelly M. Armstrong. Thank you.

The President. One Congressman, two Senators, huh?

Sen. Hoeven. Our First Lady, Kathryn.

The President. And very important. How are you? Nice to see you. Absolutely. Good. Thank you. Say hello. Say hello to the Governor.

First Lady Kathryn Burgum of North Dakota. I will.

The President. So I want to thank everybody.

Tornadoes in Alabama and Gulf Coast States

But before we begin, I'd like to start by sending our love and prayers to the incredible people of Alabama—incredible State, unbelievable people—and everyone affected by the

catastrophic storms that struck the Gulf States yesterday. A town, schools, churches, and homes were devastated by tornadoes of a force like we haven't seen in a long time. Historic.

Our whole Nation mourns for the more than 20 lives lost and for the heartbroken families they leave behind. I got reports on it this morning, and it was absolute devastation. It was—it was just terrible. You look at the areas affected, and probably nobody made it out of that path. That path was brutal.

To the community of Lee County, we grieve by your side and we pledge our unwavering support to help you rebuild from the very depths of this horrible tragedy. This morning I spoke with Alabama Governor Kay Ivey, a friend of mine, a tremendous Governor, tremendous person. And I've directed FEMA to provide immediate assistance to the great State of Alabama. They're in there in full force. And whatever we can do, we're doing. They're already there. They got there last night.

It's at times like this, it's more important than ever to be close with the ones we love and to cherish our friends and our family and to unite as one Nation. We're here to recognize amazing achievements of truly an amazing group of young skilled athletes and great Americans, but I just had to say that.

And I know everybody standing with me here—all great Americans—I know you feel the same way. So we're with the people of Alabama and the surrounding area.

NCAA Division I Football Champion North Dakota State University Bison

To the entire Bison team: Congratulations on winning this incredible season; it's really a season. You had great games, but this is a season. Seventh title in 8 years. We should be able to do that, Senators, huh? [*Laughter*]

Sen. Cramer. Yes, right. Okay. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Hoeven. Yes, right on.

Sen. Cramer. Not tired of winning, I can tell you that.

The President. The most championships in FCS. That's right, you don't—you never get tired of winning, do you? Do you ever get tired? I don't think so.

Sen. Cramer. I don't. Not me. Not these guys.

The President. Not these guys, that's for sure. But think of it: It's the seventh title in 8 years. And you have some great football teams in that program, I know that—in that group. And you should all be incredibly proud. To Coach Matt Entz—where is Coach? Coach.

Head Coach Matthew Entz. Right here, sir.

The President. Would you look at the way he stands back there? Hi, Coach.

Sen. Hoeven. He's a big dude.

The President. He's a big guy. Get over here with me, Coach. Come on over here. Come here, Coach. Get over here. I want to be near you. We want some of that to rub off on us, right?

And to Matt Larsen—where's Matt Larsen? Where's Matt? Where is he? Get over here, Matt. Get over here. Did you pick the right coach? I think so.

Athletic Director Matthew Larsen. I think so. I think so. [*Laughter*]

The President. You picked the right everything, I have to say. I think you picked the right everything.

Joining us are some of your biggest fans. You have a lot of fans. And I did watch—I got to watch a lot of that game. That was quite a game. Senator John Hoeven—been my friend for a long time, and I want to thank you. And you and Kevin called, and you said, "Can we do this?" I said—how long did it take me to say yes?

Sen. Hoeven. Not very long.

The President. I actually said, "I saw the game." [*Laughter*] Okay? And it didn't take long, I can tell you.

Sen. Hoeven. No, right away.

The President. We also happen to love that State. Maybe I'd feel differently if it was someplace else, but it wasn't. [*Laughter*] A special place.

So I want to thank John Hoeven; Senator Kevin Cramer, who has just come off a tremendous victory and, really, a tremendous victory. And thank you very much. Come here a minute. That was fantastic, really fantastic. To Representative Kelly Armstrong: Way to go. Congratulations. That's a job well done.

North Dakota Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem—where is—hi, Wayne. Get over here, Wayne. Come here. Come here, Wayne. That's okay. Don't worry, you have more power than all of them. [*Laughter*] And to North Dakota First Lady Kathryn Burgum—and I really—it's great to see you. It's great to see you. Thank you very much, Kathryn.

The Bison football team has achieved something truly remarkable. Through your grit, determination, and teamwork, you finished this season with a 15-and-oh record. But your biggest win of all was a stunning 38-to-24 victory over the Eastern Washington Eagles. It was supposed to be a very good team. Were they good? What'd you think? Pretty good? Not as good as you guys, right? [*Laughter*] Pretty good? Not bad, right?

Mr. Larsen. Not bad.

The President. You started strong, scoring 10 unanswered points in the first quarter. Senior quarterback—I want to meet this guy—Easton Stick—that was some game—led the way with 198 passing yards—but that wasn't the big deal—three rushing touchdowns, and two passing touchdowns. And this past year, he broke the Bison's alltime touchdown passing record with seven games left in the season. That's not bad.

Where is this guy? I want to—wow. He's got the look too. He's got that look. Boy. [*Laughter*] Tom Brady here. Are you Tom Brady? [*Laughter*] He's got that whole—he's got that whole package.

Sen. Hoeven. Yes. Absolutely. He's the real deal.

The President. You're the real deal, I'll tell you. I see that. That's great. Good luck. Good luck.

Quarterback Easton Stick. Thank you very much.

The President. What year are you in that school? Are you going back or are you going to—what?

Mr. Stick. Just finished.

The President. You just finished?

Sen. Hoeven. He just left the NFL combine to come here.

The President. I think somebody better draft him. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Hoeven. Yes. Count on it.

The President. We're going to be watching. That's fantastic. He's going to be a rich guy, huh? [*Laughter*] That money—I feel money. Just don't worry about the money. Just do a great job. I think you're going to be fantastic.

A really, really impressive young man and an incredible game. Both of Easton's touchdown passes of the championship were to MVP wide receiver—here's another guy—Darrius Shepherd. Where's Darrius? Where's Darrius? Not bad. [*Laughter*] What about you? What year are you?

Wide receiver Darrius Shepherd. I just graduated as well.

The President. So you're in the combine? You're out there?

Mr. Shepherd. Training right now.

The President. Okay, good. You're all set?

Mr. Shepherd. Yes.

The President. Come here. He'll be great. And Darrius also averaged an astounding 25 yards per catch—that's pretty good—including an incredible, during the big game, 78-yard reception in the third quarter. And that's one of the most spectacular catches and passes that we've seen this season for any team. And I do mean it.

We had the Clemson Tigers here, and I did the same thing. We could have had chefs, we could have had—but we got fast food because we know what—I know you people very well, okay? [*Laughter*] And I'm going to finish this quick, because we've got to get that stuff, although it's being kept pretty warm.

Every single time this Bison team took to the field, you gave it your all, proving to everyone that when you play with passion, love—and you really love your team; you love you team, right? Huh? You'd better believe it. Otherwise, it's somehow probably not the same. And relentlessly reach for excellence, nothing is impossible.

Congratulations once again to your team, your Senators, your Congressmen, to your State. What a place it is. I've been there a lot. Right? I went there a lot.

Sen. Hoeven. Yes, you have.

The President. I worked hard. And now I'm going to be starting to work hard for you. Huh? You're going to win. You have my endorsement, by the way, in case there's any—I don't know if—I want to give it nice and early. You have my endorsement, a hundred percent. Okay with you? Right?

Sen. Hoeven. That's good by me.

The President. You have my endorsement, a hundred percent, John.

And you've made your mark. Really, you have made a football mark. And I will tell you, I have watched a lot of teams, and I think I understand this sport a little bit. And I've watched

your team and that—especially in that last game. You're really talented people. Forgetting all the other stuff—and you really have a tremendously talented team.

And I would like to see you play a couple of those other competitors, because I think it would be very interesting. I think it would maybe be a lot more interesting than people understand.

But you're champions. You know you're good. You feel you're good. And yet you're great people. And it's an honor. And as soon as these guys came up, and they said, "Do you mind doing it?" I said: "I really want to do it. I look forward to doing it." And then, we weren't going to do this—because I've never done that before, before Clemson.

But we were during a shutdown, and we had nobody working. And somebody suggested. I said, "Yes, but we don't have people working." But the staff is so good, they would've come back. But I said: "You know, don't worry about it, fellas. Let's just go get some McDonalds, Wendy's." We have a couple of others too. I won't get into too—but we have all American. Burger King. We have—we like American companies. Okay? [*Laughter*] We like American companies. And that's what we did. So, you guys—that's right. "Chick-fil-A," they say. Chick-fil-A. [*Laughter*]. He knew. He knew better than I knew it. [*Laughter*]

So I just want to thank—now, before we waste any time, anybody want to speak, you speak. But go grab yourself something. We can eat right here. In fact, I would have one right up here, but I don't think I want to do that, because it will be too big a story for these people. [*Laughter*]

They'll say: "Isn't horrible? Isn't inappropriate?" [*Laughter*] But I would like, John, if you guys could say something just real quickly. And if anybody is really desperate, go get it. [*Laughter*] Otherwise, you'll wait a couple of seconds. Come on up.

Sen. Hoeven. Mr. President, I just want to say thank you. You know, when I asked if you'd do this, right away, you said: "Yes. I know the Bison. I've been to Fargo. And we can do it." Now, it just so happens that we'd like to make a presentation—would it be all right if we made a presentation?

The President. Absolutely.

Sen. Hoeven. Well, you mentioned our quarterback, Easton Stick. And he just—as a matter of fact, he flew back from the NFL combine in order to get on the charter plane and come out with his team.

The President. Wow. Wow.

Sen. Hoeven. And he epitomizes these guys. It's not just that they're great athletes. Seven national championships in the last 8 years. It's not just that they're great students—student athletes—they have real character. These guys are leaders with their peers; they're out there doing great things every single day of the week. We couldn't be more proud not just of the way they represent North Dakota State University, but the State of North Dakota. We could not be more proud.

And so, if it'd be all right with you, Mr. President, we have a little presentation we would like to make. And our quarterback, Easton Stick, has something for you, and he'd like to present that to you now.

Mr. Stick. Thank you, sir.

Sen. Hoeven. Okay, Easton.

The President. Thank you.

Mr. Stick. Well, Mr. President, it's an absolute pleasure to be here. And it's a huge honor for our team, for our community, for our State, and really, for everyone that's been a part of Bison football for a really long time. We have an unbelievable brotherhood that goes back to the sixties, winning championships, and it's a huge family.

And so today, we would like to extend an offering to be part of that family——

The President. Oh, wow.

Mr. Stick. ——with a jersey.

The President. Good.

Sen. Hoeven. Show him the number.

Mr. Stick. With a 45 for President Trump.

Sen. Hoeven. Forty-fifth President!

The President. Thank you. Thank you. Fantastic.

Sen. Hoeven. That's your number, 45th President.

The President. Thank you. That's the number, is right. Thank you, man.

Sen. Hoeven. Thanks.

The President. Thank you. Thank you very much.

You know what I'm going to do?

Sen. Hoeven. You think he can handle it? You think he can handle a big stage?

The President. Say just a word. I'm going to ask the coach to say a word too.

Sen. Cramer. Yes, please.

The President. Please. Come on up. Come on up. Start it off, Easton. He's probably going to be a politician someday.

Sen. Cramer. Well, he's got a lot of potential.

Sen. Hoeven. He's the whole package, maybe.

Mr. Stick. Well, again, I'll just say this is an unbelievable honor for all of us to be here to experience this and get a chance to spend some time with you. And seriously, thank you very much for taking time out of your schedule and allowing us to do this. It means a lot to us and, really, to everyone that's been a part of our program here now and in the past. So thank you very much.

And, Senator, thank you. So thank you very much. It's—this is an unbelievable opportunity. Thank you.

The President. We'll be watching you on Sundays. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Stick. I appreciate that.

The President. Right?

Mr. Stick. Yes. Thank you very much.

The President. Coach, please. Say something.

Mr. Entz. Mr. President, we do appreciate from all of our players, and we are fortunate enough to bring 108 of our teammates and many of our support staff and administration to come here and visit you today. And what an honor.

This is a little different setting than what I'm used to speaking in. Usually, it's more locker-room-like. [*Laughter*] But hard to believe a farm kid from Iowa speaking in the White House.

But we appreciate your letting us come visit, the hospitality we've experienced already. And next thing, let's get you out there for a game, because I think it's one of kind.

Sen. Hoeven. That'd be great. There you go. Yes. Right on, right on.

The President. We'll do that. Thank you, Coach. Thank you.

Sen. Cramer. Well, let me just say, again, on behalf of all of the people of North Dakota, Mr. President, thank you for acknowledging this incredible accomplishment.

And yes, it's true, the folks in North Dakota, the folks in Bison Nation are not tired of winning, never will be tired of winning. But I just want you to know that this team really epitomizes the incredible culture of our great State. And we couldn't be better represented. In fact, as I often I say about town, John Hoeven and I, and Kelly Armstrong, you know, we're really big stuff. Right? We get more street cred knowing these guys then being us. [*Laughter*] So thank you for everything.

The President. Thank you very much.

Sen. Hoeven. This is our university president, Dean Bresciani.

The President. Yes, absolutely. Dean, please.

North Dakota State University President Dean L. Bresciani. Thank you, Mr. President. It is absolutely an honor to be here. It's an honor to have been affiliated with a team that set an NCAA record for winning 7national championships.

But what the real honor is, is the hundred-some-odd young men we're standing with today, Mr. President. They are the best of the best. And I don't mean that just in an athletic sense. They are exceptional human beings. They are exceptional future leaders. And I have never been so proud to be affiliated with a team as I am this one. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. You have done a fantastic job. Thank you very much. Thanks, Dean.

Please, come on, man. Come here, Darrius. How about Darrius? We're going to watch Darrius on Sunday too. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Hoeven. You've got to practice up for all those NFL games, baby.

Mr. Shepherd. Yes, we just want to thank you for having us here, Mr. President. It's been an honor to be here and, you know, see the White House and experience this. It's something we'll never forget and be able to share with our families. So thank you.

The President. Does he have big speed?

Sen. Hoeven. Oh, yes, he's fast. Jets, major jets. [*Laughter*] No. Major jets.

The President. Way to go, man. Thanks. Thank you.

Go eat up. Enjoy yourselves, everybody. Kathryn, thank you very much. It's great.

Congressional Oversight of the Executive Branch/Investigation Into Russia's Interference in 2016 Presidential Election

Q. Mr. President, are you going to cooperate with Mr. Nadler?

The President. I cooperate all the time with everybody.

Q. So he's asking for——

The President. And you know the beautiful thing? No collusion. It's all a hoax. [*Laughter*] You're going to learn about that as you grow older. [*Laughter*] It's a political hoax. There's no collusion. There's no anything.

Q. He's asking for 80 documents.

The President. Folks, go and eat up. Eat up.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:14 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Doug Burgum of North Dakota; and Thomas E. Brady, Jr., quarterback, National Football League's New England Patriots. A reporter referred to Rep. Jerrold L. Nadler, in his capacity as chair of the House Judiciary Committee.

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