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Remarks in an Exchange With Reporters Prior to Departure for Montoursville, Pennsylvania

May 20, 2019

The President. Okay, so I'm heading to the great State of Pennsylvania, and we're going to have a rally. A lot of people are outside, as you probably know, many, many people. And it's going to be a packed house, since it always is. I don't know if you've ever seen a vacant seat for Trump, but I don't think so. We're going to have a good time. I don't know who's coming, but I hope you come. It will be a lot of fun.

The Presidency/Congressional Oversight of Executive Branch

Q. Mr. President, why are you asking Don McGahn to defy a congressional subpoena?

The President. Well, as I understand it, they're doing that for the Office of the Presidency, for future Presidents. I think it's a very important precedent. And the attorneys say that they're not doing that for me, they're doing that for the Office of the President. So we're talking about the future.

Yes, go ahead.

Investigation Into Russia's Interference in 2016 Presidential Election/The President's Personal Finances

Q. What's your feeling on Judge Mehta's ruling about your financial records? And do you plan to appeal?

The President. Well, we disagree with that ruling. It's crazy, because you look at it, this never happened to any other President. They're trying to get a redo. They're trying to get what we used to call in school a deal—a "do-over." And if you look, you know, we had no collusion, we had no obstruction. We had no nothing.

The Democrats were very upset with the Mueller report, as perhaps they should be. But, I mean, the country is very happy about it, because there was never anything like that. And they're trying to get a redo or a do-over, and you can't do that.

As far as the financials are concerned, we think it's the wrong—it's totally the wrong decision by, obviously, an Obama-appointed judge. He was a recent Obama-appointed judge.

Representative Justin A. Amash

Q. Mr. President, your reaction to Justin Amash, who says you committed impeachable offenses?

The President. Well, I've known him, and he's been against Trump from the beginning. He probably wants to run for some other office. I don't think he'll do very well. He's been a loser for a long time, rarely votes for Republicans. And you know, personally, I think he's not much.

Q. [*Inaudible*]—in Pennsylvania?

Investigation Into Russia's Interference in 2016 Presidential Election

Q. What do you have to say to Americans who feel that your administration is stonewalling all these investigations up on Capitol Hill? Why not let Don McGahn testify? Are you afraid of what——

The President. I think we've been the most——

Q. ——he has to say?

The President. Yes, I think we've been the most transparent administration in the history of our country. We just went through 2 years of Bob Mueller, with 18 people that hated Donald Trump. They were "Angry Democrats," as I called them. We've been through it for 2 years, they spent almost $40 million on it. We had, I think, 500 people testified. We had 1.4 or 1.5 million documents.

At the end of all of that, he said there's no collusion. Now what happens is, the Democrats want a redo, and we've had enough, and the country has had enough.

Q. You don't find it important——

The President. There has never been, ever before, an administration that's been so open and transparent. So we——

Q. Are you willing to——

The President. We want to get on. What we want to do is get on with running the country.

Abortion

Q. Can you clarify your position specifically on the Alabama abortion law? And do you think it goes too far?

The President. Well, I put out my position on the—on abortion. You've known it for a long time. But I put it out the other day. You have it. I feel strongly about it. And all of that is working its way through court, along with the fact that the Democrats are talking about third term, and they're really talking about beyond third term, and that's a terrible thing.

Q. But specifically, that law, is it a good law?

Iran

Q. What about Iran? What's going on with Iran? Are you worried about a war there? Or do you want negotiations or what?

The President. So, with Iran, we'll see what happens. But they've been very hostile. They've truly been the number-one provocateur of terror in this country and in the—you know, representing their country. But certainly, our country has been very much involved, because we're trying to help a lot of people out. And I don't mind that at all.

We have no indication that anything has happened or will happen. But if it does, it will be met, obviously, with great force. We'll have no choice.

Q. Will you continue to apply economic sanctions on Iran?

Iran

Q. [*Inaudible*]—negotiations with them? Any talks with them?

The President. Say it?

Q. Any negotiations with Iran?

The President. We have not—we've not talked about it. We'll see what happens. If they called, we would certainly negotiate. But that's going to be up to them. I'd only want them to call if they're ready. If they're not ready, they don't have to bother.

Iran/U.S Sanctions

Q. Will you continue to apply economic sanctions to Iran? Or are you going to pause it to try and deescalate tensions right now?

The President. Well, we'll see what happens. But right now we have very strong sanctions. We'll see what happens.

Q. Will you issue new ones?

2020 Presidential Elections

Q. The polls have you losing in Pennsylvania to several Democrats——

The President. I don't know. I think we're doing very well in Pennsylvania. We won it last time. The polls had us losing Pennsylvania last time, and we won. And I expect we'll win it this time, because the coal industry, the steel industry, the car industry—they're all doing incredibly well.

Pennsylvania now has the best employment they've ever had—the best employment record. More people working in Pennsylvania now than ever before, like, in our country. So I think we'll do very well in Pennsylvania.

The President's Personal Finances

Q. Will you appeal the judge's ruling on the—on your financial——

The President. Yes. They'll appeal it.

Q. You will appeal it? You will——

The President. They'll appeal it. Sure, they'll appeal it.

Border Security

Q. Mr. President, what about this—there's another child who has died on the border. Another child migrant, now five.

The President. Well, I know this: that if you look at the border, and if you look at the fact that the Democrats are really making it very, very dangerous for people by not approving simple, quick, 15-minute legislation, we could have it all worked out. It would be great for people, great for lives, great for safety.

And the border is a dangerous place. It's only made that way because the Democrats will not approve any legislation. I mean, they don't want to approve anything. And it's making the border very dangerous.

Border Security

Q. What's being done to make sure these kids don't die though? What's being done to make sure these kids don't die?

The President. Well, we're working very hard. And I'll tell you, the Border Patrol people and all of law enforcement is working very hard. I mean, unfortunately, many of them have

become doctors and nurses, and they're taking people that are very, very sick from a long trek up—2,000 miles—and they're doing an incredible job.

Honestly, what should happen is, the Democrats should sit down and make changes so that we can protect people on the border.

Q. Are you going to approve the disaster funding bill? Are you personally—[*inaudible*]—on that, sir?

Iran

Q. Do you mean there is no—you don't see anything going on right now from the Iranian side? Is that what you just said?

The President. Say it again?

Q. Did you mean, right now, what you said that——

The President. There are no talks going on with Iran.

Q. What Iran might or might not be up to—do you see any threats right now? Do you see any threats?

The President. I think Iran would be making a very big mistake if they did anything. If they do something, it will be met with great force. But we have no indication that they will. Okay?

Disaster Relief for Puerto Rico

Q. Are you going to approve additional funding for Puerto Rico, for disaster funding, as part of this package?

The President. So I've given more money to Puerto Rico than, I believe, any President ever. They've gotten $91 billion for the hurricane. Not only that, our military, our law enforcement, and FEMA has done a great job for Puerto Rico. And I think the people of Puerto Rico are very thankful.

We'll see you in Pennsylvania.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:51 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House prior to boarding Marine One. In his remarks, he referred to Department of Justice Special Counsel Robert S. Mueller III; and Amit P. Mehta, judge, U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. Reporters referred to former White House Counsel Donald F. McGahn II; and Carlos Gregorio Hernandez Vasquez, who was found dead during a welfare check at U.S. Customs and Border Protection's Weslaco Border Patrol Station in Weslaco, TX, on May 20.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters :: White House.

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Subjects: Communications : News media :: Presidential interviews; Defense and national security : Border security; Disaster assistance : Puerto Rico; Elections : 2020 Presidential and congressional elections; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Health and medical care : Abortion; Homeland Security, Department of : Customs and Border Protection, U.S.; Immigration and naturalization : Reform; Iran : International diplomatic

efforts; Iran : Terrorism, sponsorship; Iran : U.S. sanctions; Judiciary : Judicial review; Justice, Department of : Special Counsel; Law enforcement and crime : Law enforcement officers, service and dedication; Presidency, U.S. : Congressional subpoena of White House staff; Presidency, U.S. : President Trump's financial records, congressional subpoena; Puerto Rico : Disaster assistance; Russia : 2016 U.S. elections, interference.

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