

*Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2019*

**Remarks on Signing an Executive Order on Establishing a White House Council on Eliminating Regulatory Barriers to Affordable Housing and an Exchange With Reporters**

*June 25, 2019*

*The President.* Thank you very much. Appreciate you being here. I'd like to take a few moments to describe what we're doing on numerous fronts, but we're going to take a major step in our historic regulatory reduction campaign. Today we begin a bold new initiative to bring down the cost of housing for American families. So important.

In a few moments, I will sign an Executive order launching the White House Council on Eliminating Regulatory Barriers to Affordable Housing. I'm grateful to be joined by the chair of this new Council, Secretary Ben Carson. We're also pleased to have with us Senators Tim Scott and Martha McSally. And here with us are Clyde from Congress—Clyde Holland; Greg Ugalde; Bonnie Roberts-Burke; Pastor Darrell Scott; and—you're not a Congressman yet, Pastor, but you could be if you wanted to, I can tell. Would you like to run for Congress? Because you'd win pretty easily, I think.

*New Spirit Revival Center Senior Pastor Darrell C. Scott.* A Government job? I don't know. [Laughter]

*The President.* But thank you for being here, Pastor.

*Pastor Scott.* Thank you.

*The President.* Kareem Lanier. All the people who really care so much about affordable housing, what it means and how important it is for our country.

Overregulation of housing and housing market is a primary cause of the rising housing costs across our country. Nationwide, it's estimated that the regulations account for more than 25 percent of the cost of a new home. Think of that. So regulation and unnecessary regulation is 25 percent the cost of a new home.

As a result, the supply of affordable housing cannot keep up with the demand. Today, over 37 million American households have to spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing.

So what I'd like to do is ask Ben Carson, who's really devoted a lot of his time and effort on this tremendous overregulation problem—I'd like to have Ben Carson, Secretary, to say a few words. Ben.

*Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Benjamin S. Carson, Sr.* My pleasure. Well, thank you, Mr. President. And thank you for your continued commitment to the people of America.

Today I'm privileged to be here for the creation of the White House Council on Eliminating Barriers to Affordable Housing, which I have the great honor to chair. The Council, which consists of members across eight Federal agencies, will lead Federal efforts to engage with State, local, and Tribal leaders across the country to the remove obstacles that impede the production of more affordable homes, namely the enormous price tag of burdensome Government regulations.

The President has given us a mission to break down barriers and to clear the path for the millions of Americans to pursue their American Dream. It's a mission we proudly and enthusiastically accept.

As the President just said, more than 25 percent of the cost of a new home is the direct result of Federal, State, and local regulations. And sometimes, the price tag is much higher than that.

President Trump's decades of experience as a world-renowned builder and developer gives this administration's leadership a unique set of insights when confronting the challenges of developing more housing.

Today's announcement recognizes the need for Federal policies to serve Americans of all income levels, including working-class Americans—like teachers, and nurses, and auto mechanics, construction workers, policemen, firemen—whose struggles are sometimes forgotten.

And I would also like to thank President Trump and the leadership of this administration, many of whom are here today, for once again fulfilling that great promise that the forgotten men and women of America will be forgotten no longer.

*Holland Partner Group Chief Executive Officer and Chairman Clyde Holland.* Hear, hear!

*Secretary Carson.* I look forward to working alongside my fellow Councilmembers in the months ahead as we use these efforts to continue to build the pillars of prosperity that support all the men and women of this country in their quest for that portion of the American Dream that includes a home. The home is the foundation of the community, which is the foundation of the Nation. And we can do this if we all work together. Thank you.

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

How about Tim Scott? Where's Tim?

*Senator Timothy E. Scott.* Yes, sir.

*The President.* Tim, do you want to say a few words, please?

*Sen. Scott.* Mr. President, thank you for this Executive order. There's no doubt that a regulatory reset that is responsible will help more Americans who are creditworthy achieve their goal, their aspiration, of having a part, a share, in this Nation.

The American Dream so often is seen through the prism of home ownership. This Executive order will accelerate the path of responsible home ownership and is proof positive that your conscientious, compassionate, conservative leadership is undeniably focused on the most vulnerable folks of our economic chain.

*The President.* Very nice. Did you read that?

*Sen. Scott.* No, sir.

*Real Living At Home realtor and sales group leader Bonnie Roberts-Burke.* That was right off the top of his head.

*The President.* Good. That was very good. Thank you, Tim.

*Sen. Scott.* Yes, sir.

*The President.* Martha.

*Senator Martha E. McSally.* President Trump, thank you so much for this Executive order. In the first 90 days as a Senator in Arizona, I visited all 15 counties. We're a very diverse State, and our economy is growing, but a top theme is affordable housing.

And there are many barriers to that, and so this group, coming together to cut across those barriers—Federal, State, and local—to provide more opportunities at lower cost so everybody can meet their full potential, is really important for my constituents. And so I'm grateful for this initiative.

*The President.* Good. Thank you, Martha. Great job.

Pastor Scott.

*Pastor Scott.* Mr. President, during the 2016 campaign, you stated that you would implement national policy to revitalize the urban communities of this great country and—well, all the communities, urban and rural—and I think is just a part. This dovetails on the Opportunity Zones and the things that are being done in those designated areas. And this makes it—makes the revitalization process that much more obtainable. So we thank you for it—

*The President.* Thank you very much.

*Pastor Scott.* —on behalf of—

*The President.* And thank you for bringing up the word "Opportunity Zones"—the words—because Tim Scott had so much to do with that. And it's far beyond our expectation. That's a little different than what we're talking about today, but while you bring up that term—it's a beautiful term. Tim Scott came to see me a little while ago, toward the beginning, but not that long ago—

*Sen. Scott.* Yes. Yes, sir.

*The President.* And, Tim, I don't mind if you say just a couple of things about what's happened, because the Opportunity Zones have just taken off in this country.

*Sen. Scott.* Yes, sir. Mr. President, because of your leadership, frankly, we have seen incredible growth in the Opportunity Zones.

Here's just a couple of examples. I think it's important for us to remember that, in Opportunity Zones, the average person is living in a place where the poverty rate is at 31 percent. Nationally, our poverty rate is at 12½ percent. Because of your legislation that you signed, sir, we've seen an 8-percent increase in wages within the zones. We've seen a 20-percent increase in property values in the zones.

That's really important for two reasons. Number one, over 50 percent of the folks in the zones own their property. So that means that we're seeing net worth increase because of the Opportunity Zone legislation. So that's really important.

Number two, the fact of the matter is, when you put more pressure on those zones, you attract more resources in it.

*Mr. Holland.* Exactly.

*Sen. Scott.* And from the Treasury's perspective, we could see upwards of more than \$50 billion descending upon these zones, creating opportunities and workforce housing that we're talking about today. And that is an important part of the equation.

And that is brought to us by your leadership and your willingness to have a conversation about moving people in distressed communities forward. Thank you for saying yes to Opportunity Zone legislation.

*The President.* Thank you. Thank you, Tim. You've been a great—you've been a great help. He's been a great help.

Would anybody like to say something? And then, we'll sign up. Anybody? Would you like to say something?

*Mr. Holland.* Sure.

*The President.* Please.

*Mr. Holland.* Clyde Holland. With respect to the National Multi Housing Council and Up for Growth, two areas we've been struggling to produce: apartments and the most affordable housing in America. We can't thank you enough, Mr. President——

*The President.* Thank you.

*Mr. Holland.* ——for this help.

*The President.* Thank you very much. I appreciate it, Clyde.

Yes, please.

*Urban Revitalization Coalition Cochairman Kareem Lanier.* Mr. President, thank you for this. And I'd like to thank you as well, Dr. Carson, for your leadership as well.

Coming from the inner city, coming from urban America, living within the confines of what it takes on the day to day, we don't care about the costs and the regulation; we need the housing. And so it's good that we have these barriers removed so that we can actually get access to these things.

When you're a kid living in urban America, you don't care who your President is, who your governor is, who your mayor is. You care about the things that are practical to you. And the things that really are practical is where am I going to lay my head at tonight and what am I going to eat when I get there.

And these things help more people in urban America get access to housing that is so needed. And so we thank you tremendously.

*The President.* Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

*Ms. Roberts-Burke.* And I'd like to say, from the National Association of Realtors, and as a realtor, that I thank you very, very much. The American Dream is home ownership.

*Mr. Holland.* Hear, hear!

*Ms. Roberts-Burke.* We have the lowest percentage of home ownership that we've had in many, many years. And I think this is going to go a long way to increase that.

And thank you.

*The President.* Thank you very much.

Please.

*National Association of Home Builders Chairman of the Board Greg Ugalde.* Greg Ugalde. On behalf of the homebuilders, Mr. President, we are strongly behind this effort. The regulatory framework throughout the country needs to be focused on. It will help us with workforce development as well. And I think that this is tremendous. And we thank you for this.

*The President.* Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

*Secretary Carson.* I just want to add one other thing.

*The President.* Yes, please, Ben.

*Secretary Carson.* You know, the average net worth of a renter is \$5,000. The average net worth of a homeowner is \$200,000. That's a 40-fold difference. And we talked so much about the income gap, the wealth gap in this country. A lot of it has to do with home ownership. And that's why this is so important. But it has to be done the right way. It wasn't done the right way, you know, a decade or more ago, and it led to a crisis.

So we have to learn from those situations, do it the right way. And it's really about recognizing that our people are our most important resource.

*Mr. Ugalde.* Yes, yes.

*Secretary Carson.* And we need to develop it, and the best place to develop those resources is a solid home environment.

*The President.* That's great, Ben. Thank you.

*Assistant to the President for Intergovernmental Affairs Brooke L. Rollins.* One quick thing, Mr. President: When you combine this with your criminal justice reform efforts; with the lowest unemployment because of your tax cuts and regulatory reform effort; with your fight for school choice so children have a real opportunity for an education; to Ivanka and your workforce—the pledge to the American worker; all of that combined lifts all boats, but it lifts those at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder the most. And that's because of your leadership.

So we're just so grateful to you.

*The President.* Thank you.

*Assistant to the President Rollins.* Thank you.

*The President.* Well, thank you for bringing up criminal justice reform. We got it passed. Nobody else could have gotten it passed. And we're very proud of that. A lot of people worked very hard on that. And I see it's a big part of the debates. And now they're all saying, "It got passed, and it got passed by a Republican named Trump." [*Laughter*] And the Democrats don't know quite how to handle that one.

But we did criminal justice reform—very comprehensive, also. And there were a lot of people—and the incredible thing about it was, we had conservatives—very, very conservatives—and we had very, very liberal people supporting it. We had everybody. We had a great bipartisan group. And we had some people opposed to it too. But we had, for the most part, tremendous support. So thank you very much.

*Assistant to the President Rollins.* It wouldn't have happened without——

*The President.* Larry Kudlow, do you want to just give a moment about how well our economy is doing? Because it looks like June could be one of the best months in the history of the stock market for June—for that month.

*National Economic Council Director Lawrence A. Kudlow.* I know. It's most extraordinary. And it's a terrific sign about the future economy. Really a good sign. We had our correction in the spring; now we've gotten it back and then some.

And numbers coming out: production, way up in May; consumer spending, retail sales, way up in May. We're going to have a better Q2 than people initially thought. I think we're on track for 3-percent economic growth or better. And to remind Brooke: low tax rates, deregulation, opening up energy, trade reform, initiatives like this from Secretary Ben and others. This is what it takes. We're opening doors for the whole—every nook and cranny of this economy is coming alive, sir.

*The President.* Right.

*Director Kudlow.* If we stay on track with your policies, it's going to be great news for America.

*The President.* Number one in the world too. If you look at Europe, they're having difficulty. You look at China and various parts of the world—Asia, other places—we're beating everybody. And we're going to keep it that way.

So I'm going to sign this. And, Ben, congratulations.

*Secretary Carson.* Thank you.

*The President.* You've been working on this for a long time.

*Secretary Carson.* Absolutely.

*The President.* It's a great thing. Thank you very much.

[At this point, the President signed the Executive order. He then distributed pens to participants.]

*The President.* Spread these around folks. Spread them around. [Laughter] I don't like signing one letter at a time. Doesn't look too good—the end result.

### *Separation of Parents and Children at Mexico-U.S. Border/Border Security*

*Q.* Mr. President, are you personally concerned—Mr. President——

*The President.* Wait till you hear this beauty. This is a——

*Q.* Are you personally concerned about the conditions at these border facilities, where there are some reports——

*The President.* Yes, I am. I'm very concerned. And they're much better than they were under President Obama, by far. And we're trying to get the Democrats to agree to really give us some humanitarian aid—humanitarian money. And that is a very fair question, and I appreciate that question.

But I'm very concerned. It's in much better shape than it ever was. A lot of these young children come from places that you don't even want to know about. The way they've lived—the way they've been—the way—the poverty that they grew up in.

But, with that, if we can get this bill signed, we'll be able to do it. We have—you know, the Democrats don't want to sign anything. And now, I think they're going to probably sign this. From what I understand it's—I call it "humanitarian aid." This isn't even about border.

At the same time, you see the numbers are way, way down. Mexico has been really helping us a lot. They have very strong immigration laws. They are moving 15,000 people or 16,000 people to our southern border. And they moved 16,000 troops to their southern border, which is pretty incredible.

And a lot of signs are coming out where the cartels and all of the bad folks—the "coyotes," as they call them, and all of the bad people that are bringing young children and taking advantage horribly—it's a form of slavery. It's horrible what they're doing to young children. You understand. You've reported on it. A lot of that is stopping now because of what we're doing and because of what's happening on the border.

So I just want to thank Mexico. They've really done a great job. We appreciate what they're doing. And hopefully, they can keep it up, because it's very important. They have very, very—Mexico has very, very powerful immigration laws. They can do things. Our laws are so bad.

What we would like to do—and I'll do it right now officially, is ask the Democrats to give us help on asylum, help on all of the loopholes—the horrible loopholes that get signed in over a

period of years that don't allow us to do what we should be able to do. We need the votes of Democrats.

And I think, very importantly, you know, because our economy—you heard Larry Kudlow—because our economy is so strong—it could be the strongest in the history of our country—people want to flow up to the United States. But you just can't do it that way. You have to do it legally. But they're—you have these massive numbers of people trying to get into the United States because of the economy, because we've done so good.

But that's one of the problems. We're doing well. Everybody wants to come in. Ten years ago, 5 years ago, 4 years ago, they didn't want to come in. Today, they want to come in. But we can't let that happen so we're doing very, very—for them.

And as far as the wall is concerned, the wall is heavily under construction. The Army Corps of Engineers is doing a great job. We're doing a lot of wall right now, and we expect to have 400 miles built by the end of next year. That's a lot. And we're building them in the right places. We're building—we're picking areas where we need it the most, and it's having a tremendous effect.

### *Resignation of Acting Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection John Sanders*

*Q.* Did you ask your Customs and Border Protection head, John Sanders, to resign? Do you know why he is leaving his post?

*The President.* No. I know there was going to be a change there. I've made changes, very good changes. We have—we're moving some people around into different locations. The game has changed a lot because of what Mexico is doing. We're able to do things that we wouldn't have been able to do before.

The problem with our Border Patrol, who are phenomenal people, but they're not allowed—because the laws are so bad with catch-and-release and all of the different things including chain migration, the visa lottery—the laws are so bad and the asylum rules and laws are so bad that our Border Patrol people, who are so incredible, aren't allowed to do their jobs.

So because Mexico is, now, for the first time in 50 years, helping us—and we really appreciate it—we're able to make certain changes that we wouldn't have been able to make before.

Steve [Steve A. Holland, Reuters], did you have a question?

### *Iran*

*Q.* You had a back-and-forth with the leader of Iran this morning via tweet. What message did you send to him with your tweets this morning?

*The President.* There is no message. You know, I'll tell you what the message is: When they're ready, they'll have to let us know. When they're ready, they'll let us know. Very simple.

*Q.* Ready to negotiate, you mean?

*The President.* Ready to do whatever. Doesn't make any difference. Whatever they want to do, I'm ready. Okay?

### *Arab-Israeli Peace Process*

*Q.* On the Middle East, Jared Kushner is in Bahrain right now——

*The President.* Yes.

*Q.* —releasing this economic component of your Middle East Peace Plan without the Israelis or Palestinian officials attending. So what's your strategy going forward when there's no buy-in from the parties in—[inaudible]?

*The President.* Well, we want to get support. And we have to get economic support, because the Palestinians don't have money. And we have to help the Palestinians with some money because they don't have it. And one of the groups that you get are some of those countries in the Middle East that do have money.

So they're going to play a role in the peace plan, and we'll see what happens. We had a little bit of setback when the election from—in Israel, as you know, as I guess the result is somewhat mixed, because now they're going to do it again. That's another do-over, unfortunately, and—but we'll see what happens. I mean, we'll see what happens with that election, but it's an early process, but we expect other people to help out.

*Q.* So does that mean——

*The President.* Because, again, there's no money. And some people don't have money. And if they don't have money, it's going to be very hard. We want people to be able to live and live well.

#### *Resignation of U.S. Customs and Border Protection Acting Commissioner John Sanders*

*Q.* Taking it back to the CBP—so does that mean you did not ask Sanders to resign?

*The President.* I didn't speak to him. I don't think I've ever spoken to him, actually. No, we have some very good people running it. And you know, I don't know anything about it. I hear he's a very good man. I hear he's a good person. I don't know him. I don't think I ever spoke to him.

#### *Appointment of Stephanie A. Grisham as White House Press Secretary and Communications Director*

*Q.* And can you tell us about your decision to choose Stephanie Grisham as your new Press Secretary?

*The President.* So Stephanie has been with me from the beginning, as most of you know. And then, over the last couple of years, she's worked for the First Lady. Done a fantastic job. The First Lady loves her. I think she's been, you know, just incredible. She's very talented.

And I asked so many people, "Who do you like?" A lot of people wanted the job. You know, there—a lot of people wanted to do it. And I'd ask people, "Who do you like?" And so many people said, "Stephanie." And she's here. She knows everybody. She actually gets along with the media very well, as you know. A lot of the folks in the media like her very much. And I think she's going to be fantastic. I think she's going to do a great job.

So I offered her the job this morning, and she accepted. And the First Lady is very happy for her. It's a big job. It's a very big job, but we think Stephanie is going to do a fantastic job. And Hogan is going to be with her. Hogan was one of the people that recommended her. Here's Hogan. He recommended her very strongly. I said, "Hogan, who do you think?" He said, "Stephanie Grisham." So——

*Q.* Mr. President, can you tell us about the letter to Chairman Kim?

#### *Iran*

*Q.* Do you have an exit strategy for Iran if war does break out? How do you——

*The President.* Say it?

*Q.* Do you have an exit strategy for Iran if war does break out?

*The President.* You're not going to need an exit strategy. [Laughter] I don't need exit strategies.

*North Korea/Chairman of the State Affairs Commission Kim Jong Un of North Korea/Iran/Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action*

*Q.* Mr. President, could you tell us about your letter to Chairman Kim?

*The President.* Just a nice letter back and forth. He wrote me a beautiful one on my birthday. It was my birthday, as you know, last week. He wrote me a beautiful letter. I thought it was very nice. And just two friendly letters. We get along very well.

*Q.* No mention of another meeting?

*The President.* Maybe there was. But we—you know, at some point, we'll do that. Getting along very well. He's not doing nuclear testing. When I took over, as you know—when I became President, they were testing—previous to that, they were testing so much, and they were doing ballistic tests and nuclear tests. And we didn't have all our prisoners back. We had a whole lot of things that were going wrong.

Now we have our hostages back, or prisoners back. They came back. We've had, as you know, the remains of the heroes—our great heroes from many years ago. That's coming back, and coming back as they find them. And as they find the sites and the graves, they're sending them back.

The relationship is a far different relationship than it was during the Obama years, where—you were going to end up with a war. You were going to end up with a war in North Korea, that I can tell you. I'll tell that to Tim Scott. Maybe you haven't heard that, Tim. You understand.

*Sen. Scott.* Yes, sir.

*The President.* You were going to end up—I tell you what, you were going to end up in a war in North Korea, and—if it kept going the way it was going, if you had that group continuing onward.

As far as Iran is concerned, the deal was a horrible deal. It was no good. It was no good. It ended in a very short period of time. We're dealing about countries. It ended in a very short period of time. They would have had a clear path to a nuclear weapon. We're not going to allow that to happen. Can't do it.

And I'm all for Iran. I have so many people—Iranian friends. I come from New York. I have tremendous numbers of Iranian friends. They're great people. They're from Iran. They're wonderful people. It's too bad this is happening. They're living badly right now. Their country is not doing well economically at all. That can be changed very quickly, very easily. But they have to get rid of the hostility from the leadership. And the leadership, I hope they stay. I hope they do a great job. But they should talk to us decently.

We're all for them. We want it to be done properly. But the deal that was done by President Obama, \$150 billion for nothing. He used the money for terror. They gave the money out to terrorists.

If you remember, John Kerry—they asked him that question: "Do you know the money is going to be used for terror?" He said, "Yes." Essentially, he said at least some of it is going to be used—I mean, he knew about it. He actually said that some of the money may be used for terror. What kind of a deal is that? Then, they gave him \$1.8 billion in cash—cash. Planeloads of cash. What kind of a deal is that?

And the biggest problem is, they had bad testing. You weren't able to see many of the sites. You saw that, Tim.

*Sen. Scott.* Yes, sir.

*The President.* You couldn't go into the most important sites to test, to see. They were probably making this stuff for a long time. But with \$150 billion going to them, they were doing very well. And \$1.8 billion in cash. And you had no real right of testing. You couldn't test properly.

And most importantly, the agreement ends in a very short period of time. So they had a path to nuclear weapons. We cannot allow Iran to have a path to nuclear weapons.

And by the way, we have tremendous support, tremendous support. And people were very happy with what I did the other day by not doing something, okay? But we had tremendous and we have tremendous support. Nobody wants to see Iran have nuclear weapons.

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you very much.

*Iran*

*Q.* Do you think Iran misunderstood the message you were sending them last week? Do you think they understood the message you were sending them last week? You decided not to strike—

*The President.* I hope they understood the message. I decided not to strike. They shot down unmanned—as you know, an unmanned drone.

*Q.* But do you think they take your threats seriously now, Mr. President?

*The President.* I think everybody does. [*Laughter*] I think you do too. Goodbye. [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:07 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to White House Principal Deputy Press Secretary J. Hogan Gidley; 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, 2018; and former Secretary of State John F. Kerry. Assistant to the President Rollins referred to Adviser to the President Ivanka M. Trump. A reporter referred to White House Senior Adviser Jared C. Kushner.

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Immigration and naturalization : Refugees; Immigration and naturalization : Unaccompanied alien children at Mexico-U.S. border, response to influx; Iran : International diplomatic efforts; Iran : Nuclear program, Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action; Iran : Nuclear weapons development; Iran : U.S. Navy RQ-4A Global Hawk drone, downing over Strait of Hormuz; Law enforcement and crime : Criminal justice system, reform efforts; Law enforcement and crime : Trafficking in persons, efforts to combat; Mexico : Border with U.S., infrastructure and security; Mexico : Immigration enforcement, cooperation with U.S.; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; North Korea : Ballistic missiles, testing and development; North Korea : Chairman, State Affairs Commission; North Korea : International diplomatic efforts; North Korea : Nuclear weapons development; Palestinian Authority and Palestinians : International assistance; White House Office : Assistants to the President :: Communications Director; White House Office : Assistants to the President :: Intergovernmental Affairs ; White House Office : Assistants to the President :: Press Secretary; White House Office : Assistants to the President :: Principle Deputy Press Secretary; White House Office : Economic Council, National.

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