

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2019

Remarks Honoring the Stanley Cup Champion St. Louis Blues
October 15, 2019

The President. Well, thank you very much. It's a great honor today. These are great champions behind me, great athletes. I always respect great athletes. But they're also very smart, because you can't win unless you're smart. It takes more than just the muscles, right? I think we've all learned that.

Today it's my pleasure to welcome the Stanley Cup Champions, the St. Louis Blues. I watched it very carefully. I watched that season, and I saw, gee, they're not doing very well this year. *[Laughter]* But you'll see the story; it's an amazing story of comebacks.

Congratulations to Head Coach Craig Berube and the Blues organization. And I just want to congratulate you guys. That is something. *[Applause]* Fantastic. Fantastic. And the entire team on winning your first Stanley Cup. And you'll probably have many more, based on what I'm hearing.

Turkey's Incursion Into Northern Syria/U.S. Diplomatic Efforts/Withdrawal of U.S. Military Forces From Syria

We're delighted to be joined by Second Lady Karen Pence. Karen, thank you very much. Appreciate it. Mike is getting ready to make a big trip. He'll be leaving tomorrow. We have a delegation leading today. And Mike is heading it up with Secretary Pompeo. They'll be leaving tomorrow.

And we're having very strong talks with a lot of people. We want to bring our soldiers back home after so many years. And they're the greatest warriors in the world. They're policing. They're not a police force; they're a different kind of a force.

We want to bring our soldiers back home. And we're being very tough on Turkey and a lot of others. They have to maintain their own properties now. They have to maintain peace and safety. And we'll see what happens—the delegation. We're asking for a cease-fire. We put the strongest sanctions that you can imagine, but they get a lot. We have a lot in store if they don't—if they don't have an impact, including massive tariffs on steel. They ship a lot of steel to the United States. They make a lot of money shipping steel. They won't be making so much money.

China-U.S. Trade

I just want to tell you that the stock market is way up today because of probably the trade deal that we made with China. We made a fantastic deal. You guys would've been very proud of it. Your agents would've been—*[laughter]*—your agents would've been very proud. Those agents, right? They sit in bed, they weigh 350 pounds, and they complain: "You're not playing very well today. Come on." *[Laughter]* So—the good, old agents. But they would've been proud.

We're going to be selling to China about \$50 billion worth of farm agricultural products. And it's amazing. And China has been great. China has really been great on this. And we have a phase two, and we're doing a lot with banking and with financial services already in phase one. Phase one is massive, actually. It's probably the simpler stuff, but in some ways, maybe it's the most complicated. But it's very big numbers.

So I hear the most the farmers ever did was \$16 billion, so I said, "Ask for 70." They said: "No, you don't mean 70. Sixteen. Ask for 70." I said, "Yes, ask for 70." So we agreed on 50. And the only problem is they say the farmers can't produce it; it's too much. I said, "Don't reduce it."

My people said, "All right, make it 20." I said, "No, make it 50. Let the farmers tell me we can't do it." The farmers will never say that, because they'll do it. You guys know that, right?

So we have \$50 billion worth of agriculture. It's the largest contract of its kind, by three times, ever signed. And China is starting immediately, even though the agreement will take—Gary, you get agreements done much more quickly. Gary Bettman, what a job. But the agreement will take probably until Chile. We're going to Chile for a meeting—as you know, a summit.

Stanley Cup Champion St. Louis Blues

And—hello, Mr. Senator. Look at my two great Senators. Roy, stand up—even though I'm going to introduce you in a second. How's our young—how's our young, incredible—how's our young, incredible Josh doing? Good job? Come on. Stand up, Josh. What a job.

Roy and I said back—we said, "We need somebody that's really outstanding to beat her." I won't mention names. *[Laughter]* And they had four or five candidates. I looked at four or five candidates. I said, "I want him." And he really, under pressure, was unbelievable. Thank you very much. We made a good choice, Roy, right? What do you think? Yes? One thing with Roy, he'll tell if it was no good. He'll tell you now. *[Laughter]* It's always dangerous. Right, Josh? Anyway, congratulations. Great job.

But we're delighted to be joined also by Secretary Alex Azar, who has been fantastic; and Andrew Wheeler, EPA—Andrew, thank you very much; and Robert Lighthizer. How are you doing with trade with other countries? Doing all right? All he does is contracts. He does contracts. In fact, he probably wants to leave now, because he's got another contract. We just did one with Japan. We just did one with South Korea. China is happening. Mexico, Canada is happening, if they can ever get it approved. I doubt they will because it's Nancy Pelosi. *[Laughter]* They're too busy working on impeachment.

And by the way, we just hit the greatest economy we've ever had. "Let's impeach the President." Isn't that a good idea? *[Laughter]* I wouldn't worry about it, fellas. *[Laughter]* I wouldn't worry about it. Don't worry too much. How are we doing, Roy? Okay in the Senate? I hear we're looking very good. I hear our Senators, they're the greatest.

I want to start by introducing a man that I've known a little bit, but he's been a great business success: Tom Stillman. He's the majority owner of the St. Louis Blues. And Tom became the chairman of the Blues—had a great success in business, but we won't bore them with that. And tremendous success, actually. Became the chairman of the Blues. And, in May of 2012, when he took over, he said: "I have a plan for 5 years, 6 years, 8 years. We've got to make—we have to have a champion." And within 7 years, they won the Stanley Cup—the beautiful Stanley Cup, right here. So that's a great job.

Chairman and Governor Tom Stillman. Thank you, sir. Thank you.

The President. You know, he wasn't on the list to introduce. I said, "Wait a minute, he's the owner." They want to introduce everybody but the owner. I said, "Give me a little information." That's a very good thing, 7 years.

Mr. Stillman. Yes, sir.

The President. We've been waiting a little longer than that in New York, you know? *[Laughter]* We've been waiting, but we'll get there. We're going to get there.

We also have some very proud Blues fans here with us. And we just introduced Senator Roy Blunt, who is a fantastic man, a great friend of mine. He's done an incredible job, and he loves your State very much. He loves your team. He loves your team. Roy, thank you very much.

And, as I said, Josh Hawley, who is a young, brilliant star of the Senate. And he's been doing fantastically well. And I want to thank you very much, Josh, for the job you're doing.

Representatives Mike Bost—where's Mike? Mike. Stand up, Mike. Just stand up as I introduce. You've got so many political people here. They're so afraid of not being here. They'll lose half of their vote if they're not here today. *[Laughter]* They all came back early, because they didn't want to not be here. Right, Mike?

Rodney Davis, a great guy. Thank you, Rodney. John Katko. The great Billy Long. Thanks, John. Where's Billy? Billy, do an auction for the Saint—auction the team off, please.

Rep. William H. Long. You want me to auction the Stanley Cup?

The President. Yes, come on. Come on over here, Billy. Come here. *[Laughter]* Auction. Auction off the Stanley Cup. And he didn't know I was going to—you won't believe this.

Rep. Long. And I've never been to auction school either, so.

The President. *[Inaudible]*—buy the Stanley Cup.

Rep. Long. All right, going to buy the Stanley Cup here. Hey, here—taking 25. What do you—30 thousand dollars? How about a 30? Thirty-five? Forty. You able to buy 45? Forty-five? Fifty. Fifty thousand dollars. Now going to buy 60. Now going to buy—get that satisfied look off your face. You're out! *[Laughter]* Sixty-five. Seventy. I have—sold at \$65,000!

The President. I'll take it. That's a good deal. Thank you.

Rep. Long. Hey, will you sign this? The last one brought \$15,000.

The President. I will. Give me a pen.

Rep. Long. He signed my St. Jude tie at the State of the Union. We gave the money—we auctioned it off for \$15,000 to St. Jude. He's going to sign this one here.

The President. I will sign it.

Rep. Long. This will be in next year's auction.

The President. This was not planned, by the way.

Rep. Long. What do you mean it wasn't planned? That plan—they stopped me at the gate. They said, "Stand over here." They didn't know I was coming! *[Laughter]*

The President. Thank you, Billy. Oh, Billy. *[Laughter]* Pretty good job though. Didn't he do— isn't that pretty good? *[Laughter]* I think it's pretty good.

And Blaine. Where's Blaine? Blaine Luetkemeyer. A friend of mine. Good. Thank you, Blaine. Great job. That's a great job. Jason Smith. Jason. Thank you, Jason. A great hockey player—I must tell you, I'm not sure we're in that category though, Pete. Right? What do you think? I know you were really good. Do you know that he was a great player in his own right? Okay? Pete Stauber. Yes. He was a good one. And Ann Wagner. She wasn't a great player, but she's a great person.

Representative Ann L. Wagner. *[Inaudible]*

The President. *[Laughter]* Thanks, Ann. Missouri Governor Mike Parson. Mike, great job. And Attorney General Eric Schmitt. Eric.

And many other leaders, great leaders. And another leader—and I introduced him a little bit before, but the NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman. I've known him so long; I refuse to say how

long. It's a lot of years, right? A lot of years. A lot of success too. Way to go, Gary. Way to go. It's an honor to have you.

So what we were alluding to before is, in 2019, when the year started, you were true underdogs. Midway through the season, the Blues were ranked last in the NHL. I can't believe that, fellas. But don't worry, it gets better. *[Laughter]*

You only had 15 wins; you had 18 losses and 4 ties. On January 6, fresh off another really bad loss—a hard one; it was close, but it was bad—a few of the Blues players—it's still a loss, right? Losses are no good no matter by what. Does it matter if you lose them close, Tom, or it's—a loss is a loss, right?

Mr. Stillman. It's a loss.

The President. Yes, I think so. At least, you have a little hope when they're close, right?

But they gathered at a bar in Philadelphia where they heard the 1982 hit, "Gloria." That's where you were—that's why we were playing that song, for those of you that don't know what's happened here. *[Laughter]* "Gloria."

The next day, you shut out the Flyers, who were hot, and "Gloria" became your new "win song." It was a "win song"; that's why we played it. So now everybody gets it, otherwise the fake news would be criticizing me. *[Laughter]* They'd say: "What kind of a song—you're playing this song. What does that have"—look at that guy. Look at that mouth on that guy. Come here a minute. *[Laughter]* Come here. Come here.

[At this point, the President invited left wing Alexander Steen to the podium.]

You think he's taken a few hits? *[Laughter]* Huh? Do you think he's tough? Do you think I could take him in a fight? I don't know. *[Laughter]* I don't know. Great. Wow.

[The President gestured toward his teeth.]

How do mine look? *[Laughter]* No hockey. No, that's great.

Over the next few weeks, the Blues notched 11 straight wins, the longest winning streak in team history and soon earned a place in the playoffs.

In the first round, you took on the Winnipeg Jets. Moments away from overtime in game five, the Blues' left wing Jaden Schwartz scored the winning goal in the last 15 seconds of regulation. And everybody else just took a deep breath and said, "That was close." Where's Jason? Jason?

Team Captain and defenseman Alex Pietrangelo. Jaden.

The President. Oh, Jaden. Come here. Say a few words. Jaden.

[The President lowered the microphone.]

Center Jaden Schwartz. Oh, boy. *[Laughter]*

The President. Jaden. And they say he's a great golfer, but——

Mr. Schwartz. Well—*[laughter]*—I wouldn't be able to score if it wasn't for my partner passing me the puck. Where are you, Tyler? Golf partner too. Undefeated.

The President. Ooh.

Mr. Schwartz. If you want to take us on sometime——

The President. Yes. *[Laughter]*

Mr. Schwartz. —let us know.

The President. Fantastic job. Fantastic. Thank you, Jaden.

The next game, St. Louis clinched the series after Jaden scored all three—Jaden, you're pretty good—[laughter]—all three of the Blues' goals. And, Jaden, your persistence made you the Blues' leader in the playoff goal scoring. That's a great job. After winning two more series, the Blues were off to the legendary Stanley Cup Finals, which everybody watches, everybody loves. Very special.

It was a matchup for the ages. With the series tied at 3–3, the Blues headed to Boston for the final showdown against a great team. Watching from the bleachers was your biggest fan, 11-year-old Laila Anderson, who is here with us today. Where's Laila? Laila, stand up. Come on up here, Laila. Come on up here. Good job. Hi, honey.

So you all know Laila. Laila is a bigger celebrity than our two Senators. [Laughter] They just hope that she's not going to be running against them someday. But it's a—really, an extraordinary story of a very heroic young woman.

Throughout the season, Laila was bravely battling an extremely rare, life-threatening immune disease called HLH. Blues players visited her in the hospital constantly, and they hosted a bone marrow registry drive to help her get lifesaving treatment. Laila's mother Heather said—who is here—"These boys are what keeps [her]* going. They're just incredible, incredible young men." Thank you very much for being here. Very—very nice. Very nice.

Laila received a bone marrow transplant in January and was strong enough to cheer the team on to victory in the final game. Laila, your exceptional courage and, frankly, the fact that you brought the team some luck—which is important, right? We all need a little of that. But we just want to thank you. You inspired the Blues all season, and today, you continue to inspire all Americans. We all know your story.

Right now. See all of those people back there? See? They look so friendly; they're not. [Laughter] They're not. They're tougher than these guys, okay? But I'll bank on these guys. So congratulations, darling. You take care of yourself, okay?

St. Louis, MO, resident Laila Anderson. Thank you. Thank you.

The President. Thank you, honey. Be careful.

So the Stanley Cup Final was an extraordinary finish to a miraculous season. So you think of that, and that's what we're referring to. They started off so bad—so bad. It was so bad that even the commissioner was telling me it wasn't looking too good for this team. Right? But they set records.

When the puck dropped, the Blues did not strike right away. You only knew it took one shot on goal until the final minutes of the first period. Then, Stanley Cup MVP—what happened to Jaden with all the goals you—[laughter]. I think Jaden should be the MVP. No, I'm only kidding. [Laughter] Where's Ryan? Ryan O'Reilly. Where's Ryan?

Mr. Stillman. He's over here.

The President. Come here. Come on up. That's pretty good. Say a couple of words.

Thanks, Ryan. That's enough. [Laughter] Go ahead.

Center Ryan O'Reilly. Well, I couldn't do it without these guys behind me. And we're a great team, and it was a heck of a run.

* White House correction.

The President. And you're not Irish, are you, by any chance?

Mr. O'Reilly. [Laughter] I am. I am. [Laughter]

The President. Great going, Ryan. Ryan O'Reilly. He scored the first goal of the game and became the first player since Wayne Gretzky—a great guy, really, fantastic guy—in 1985 to score four consecutive Cup Final games. He scored in all of them. Ryan, congratulations on winning the Conn Smythe Trophy.

As the first period came to a close, Team Captain Alex Pietrangelo—where is he?

Mr. Pietrangelo. Right here.

The President. Where's Alex? Come on over here.

Mr. Pietrangelo. Oh, boy.

The President. Look at this guy. Come on, say a couple of words, Alex. Look, see that?

Mr. Pietrangelo. Yes.

The President. You don't even get that for sports, right?

Mr. Pietrangelo. No, no, no. [Laughter] This is a bigger deal than the sports. This is pretty cool.

The President. This is part of everything.

Mr. Pietrangelo. Yes, it's a pretty good group of guys back here, huh?

The President. You'd better believe it.

Mr. Pietrangelo. Yes, big golfers.

The President. That's right.

Mr. Pietrangelo. Big golfers. I know you like that.

The President. That's right.

Mr. Pietrangelo. Well, thanks for having us. We appreciate it. [Laughter]

The President. Thank you. Great job.

Mr. Pietrangelo. Appreciate it.

The President. Great job. Thank you, Alex. Alex rushed forward and found that the back of the net was his, taking a two-nothing lead. But Boston didn't let up. It's a tough team. I know the owner too. How's he doing? Okay? Good man, right? Not so happy, unfortunately. But he's my friend. But he wasn't so happy.

The Bruins took 33 shots on net during the game, and the Blues rookie goaltender—that's pretty good—Jordan Binnington—where's Jordan? Jordan. I've got to find—come here. He stopped 32 of 33, so why didn't you stop the other one, Jordan? You could have made the game a lot easier. Come on. [Laughter]

Goalie Jordan Binnington. Yes, first off, you know, that's my bad, I guess. [Laughter] Could have had a shut-out there. But you know, we went all that way so we had to finish the job and—
—

The President. You did it.

Mr. Binnington. —it was a great game. And yes.

The President. Fantastic.

Mr. Binnington. We're happy we're here. Thanks.

The President. So have you always had good reflexes?

Mr. Binnington. I guess so. Yes. *[Laughter]*

The President. If you didn't, you'd be in trouble.

Mr. Binnington. Yes.

The President. If you didn't, it wouldn't—wouldn't be pretty.

Mr. Binnington. I don't think I'd be here. No. *[Laughter]*

The President. I don't think you'd be—I don't think you'd be here, right?

Mr. Binnington. No.

The President. That's—great job, Jordan. Thank you very much.

Thirty-two of thirty-three. I guess that's good. Commissioner, that's pretty good, right? I think so.

Jordan, your astounding 97-percent save percentage held Boston to a single goal. That's pretty good, huh? After 52 years, the Blues finally, and triumphantly, raised the Stanley Cup. That's amazing, 52 years. And you did it in 7, huh? Come here.

And the St. Louis Blues' amazing comeback reminds us to never give up, never lose faith, never, ever quit. Just keep forging ahead. You never know. Just keep forging ahead. But this team is really exemplary. Starting a season so badly, where they were in last place and people had written them off. And I think your fans are so loyal, frankly. They don't stop coming, Roy, do they? I don't think so. Josh, they came anyway. But they probably, sort of, gave up. *[Laughter]* They started—some of them. But it's incredible. Think of that: So they had a record streak, and then all of a sudden, they're in it, and then they win, and they keep winning.

When you work hard, support each other, believe in yourself, and give everything you've got, victory is always within reach. To the St. Louis Blues: Congratulations again on your unforgettable season—that was a really a tremendous final, incredible—and the thrilling Stanley Cup win.

And it's now my honor to invite up the chairman—the man that we've been talking about—seven—and we're going to call him "7-Year Tom." That's actually a very quick period of time. But he's a great gentlemen and he'll say a few words about the team. Thank you. Fantastic.

Tom Stillman. Thank you.

Mr. Stillman. Thank you, Mr. President. And thanks so much for welcome—welcoming us to the White House today. It is a really an honor to be here and to be here with you. It's also an honor to be here with the group of guys that's behind me here. They showed tremendous not only skill and ability in their sport, but great character and persistence. I think they serve as a model for not only our sport, but other sports, but how to live your life and, as you said, never giving up. So, it's a proud moment to be here with all of them.

The President. And, Tom, you worked here, didn't you? Right in the area. You were working in Government.

Mr. Stillman. I did work in Government for a while. I was over there at the Commerce Department in export controls for a while. So——

The President. Well, if you ever get tired of doing this, maybe we can get you get back over there. [Laughter]

Mr. Stillman. I'm sticking with hockey. [Laughter]

The President. Good decision. Tom, maybe the coach would like to say a few words.

Mr. Stillman. Yes. [Laughter] Sure.

The President. Come on over, Coach.

Head Coach Craig Berube. Thank you. Just for—on behalf of the team and the Blues organization, we just want to thank the—Mr. President for having us here today. It's a great honor to come here.

You know, we won the Stanley Cup, I think, once we got our team working together and playing together. When you play as a team, day in and day out, it's hard to get your—hard—you're going to be hard to beat. So that's what it basically boiled down to. These guys all came together as a team and played for each other, and we ended up being champions.

But thank you again for having us, on behalf of the organization.

The President. How is it going this year, Coach? How's it going so far this year?

Mr. Berube. It's all right. Up and down a little bit. [Laughter] We've been——

The President. Better than—hey, better than last year, right?

Mr. Berube. Yes, better. It's been a little bit better. We've been on a—quite a road trip here. A lot of stuff going on. Up in Canada, went to the Hockey Hall of Fame——

The President. Right.

Mr. Berube. ——and we presented a Stanley Cup Ring to the Hockey Hall of Fame. So those—these guys are going through a lot right now with a lot of travel and everything. And come—you know, coming here. It's a great honor. It's a—you know, we love it all, but it's just a lot on everybody right now. But we're getting home here today and——

The President. But now the pressure is off, because you've done it, so there's a lot less pressure.

Mr. Berube. Well, I don't know about that. I mean—[laughter]. Thank you, again, for having us.

The President. Great job. Great job. I just want to say, "Great job." It's an honor to have all of you folks here. And, Gary, congratulations. Fantastic sport.

Mr. Stillman. May I?

The President. Please.

Mr. Stillman. Mr. President, on behalf of the St. Louis Blues organization and all of our fans back in St. Louis, the other members of our ownership group here today, our whole team, including the on-ice team and the rest of the Blues organization, we'd like to present you this jersey.

The President. Thank you very much. Wow. Whoa.

Mr. Stillman. This is our Stanley Cup Championship jersey. I think it will be just right on the golf course. [Laughter]

The President. That's beautiful. Would you like to introduce your other owners? Would you like to do that?

Mr. Stillman. Sure. Let's see. We have Donn Lux, Jim Kavanaugh—Steve Maritz, Scott McCuaig, Tom Schlafly, Jim Cooper. And—am I missing anybody?

The President. Any other owners?

Mr. Stillman. And John Ross as well.

The President. Any other owner out there?

Mr. Stillman. All members of our——

The President. Congratulations.

Mr. Stillman. Thank you, Mr. President. Thanks very much for having us.

The President. Well, thank you all very much. Appreciate it. Thank you. Thank you. See you soon.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:23 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Vice President Michael R. Pence; former Sen. Claire C. McCaskill; Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi; and Jeremy M. Jacobs, owner and governor, Boston Bruins. Mr. Schwartz referred to Tyler Bozak, center, St. Louis Blues.

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