

**Remarks on Signing a Proclamation on National Nurses Day, 2020, and an Exchange With Reporters**

*May 6, 2020*

*The President.* Well, thank you very much. It's my honor to welcome so many extraordinary nursing professionals as we celebrate National Nurses Day. That's a very important day, and I've been talking about it for the last 2 months, when I watched people running into those hospitals and putting on their outfits, their gowns, their protective gear. And they have nothing on their mind except helping people and making people better. It's an incredible—incredible. And you just said, "Thank you for calling us warriors," but you are warriors. That's what you are. Incredible warriors.

America's nurses are waging a heroic war against the invisible enemy. They're fighting on the frontlines of the battle, risking their health to save lives of fellow citizens and, honestly, to save lives—like we say about the police—to save lives of people they don't know. It's dangerous, and it's people they don't know. But they're saving lives, and they're doing them in record numbers.

History will ever—will forever—and I really mean that: forever—remember how our nurses answered the call of duty in America's hour of need. And I think that, in terms of a brand, if you take a look at the nurses' brand, I don't think it's ever been higher than it is right now. It's very important.

We're joined by Vice President Mike Pence, Secretary Alex Azar, and Ambassador Deborah Birx. Also with us are president of the American Nurses Association, Ernest Grant, and the president of American Association of Nurse Practitioners, Sophia Thomas. Thank you all for being here. We really appreciate it. Thank you very much. Fantastic.

We've rallied the full power of the Federal Government to defeat the virus and support our health care professionals. I proudly signed legislation providing \$175 billion for hospitals and other health care providers.

FEMA, HHS, and our private-sector partners have distributed over a billion pieces of personal protective equipment, and I know you're getting a lot of that equipment. Not quite a billion pieces, but you're getting a lot of great equipment. We've made such progress.

The men and women in this room today are true American heroes. Luke Adams is a nurse of 11 years. He lives in Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania, a good place. When he heard the call of volunteers in New York, Luke drove to the epicenter of the outbreak and slept in his car for 9 days so he could help care for the sick. Luke is currently still in New York, working to protect his fellow citizens.

And, Luke, I'd like you to say a couple of words. Where is Luke?

*Bloomsburg, PA, nurse Luke Adams.* Over here, Mr. President.

*The President.* There he is. *[Laughter]* Luke, please.

*Mr. Adams.* Yes, as the President said, 2020—well, today is Nurses Day, but 2020 is actually the year of the nurse. And so it's only fitting that we should be faced with one of our greatest challenges yet.

You know, a lot of us have been forced away from our partners, turned away hugs from our children. We slept on concrete floors or in cars. And we did these things not for our own benefit

or safety, but we did them, as he said—as the President said—to risk our lives in service of a stranger. And there is no greater love than that.

And you know, the world may never know all that you do behind that curtain, but I do. You fight hard to save the ones you can, and we carry with grace the enormous burden of the ones that we can't. And there's been a lot of those recently.

You know, we represent the very best about the human capacity, and I've never been more proud to call myself a nurse. So thank you. And thank you to all the nurses.

*The President.* And thank you, Luke. And you'll answer a couple of questions from the media, because I think they'll have a couple of questions—[laughter]—what you go through and how you go through it with the bravery. We appreciate it. Thank you very much. Beautifully done.

Also with us is Marty Blankenship. She was a nurse for 40 years and was 3 months into retirement when the virus struck. Marty knew she had to help; had no doubt in her mind. So she called her former colleagues and volunteered to work with coronavirus patients.

And, Marty, I'd love you to say a couple of words, please.

*HCR ManorCare nurse Marty Blankenship.* That's me.

*The President.* Thank you.

*Ms. Blankenship.* First off, I'd like to really express the appreciation of all the nurses up here for having us here today. It's a—it's quite an honor. I felt that I needed to get back into the health care. I wanted to feel like, in some way, that we can make a difference. Unlike Luke, I didn't have to sleep in my car to do that.

But it's just been a true blessing to be able to go back into the facilities and offer help to not only the residents, but to the coworkers who are working tirelessly to fight this wicked virus.

*The President.* Where do you work, Marty?

*Ms. Blankenship.* I live in West Virginia, but I'm working in Pennsylvania right now.

*The President.* That's great.

*Ms. Blankenship.* Yes.

*The President.* That's great. And you'll go back to West Virginia, ultimately?

*Ms. Blankenship.* Yes.

*The President.* That's great.

*Ms. Blankenship.* Yes.

*The President.* Well, they're two great places. Thank you very much.

*Ms. Blankenship.* Thank you.

*The President.* Fantastic job.

So the valiant sacrifices of America's nurses will stand for all time as testament to American strength and grace and courage. And in demonstrating and in demonstration of our everlasting appreciation, I'm pleased to sign this Proclamation commemorating May 6 as National Nurses Day—May 6, National Nurses Day. That's a big deal. [Applause] That's a big deal.

So I'm going to just sign this right now. And I'm going to give somebody the pen, but I'm going to give you all a pen, okay? Deborah knows that. [Laughter]

[*At this point, the President signed the proclamation and distributed pens.*]

Okay. Here, Luke. Here, Marty. Take that, Marty.

*Ms. Blankenship.* Thank you.

*The President.* Okay. Congratulations.

Mike. Where's Mike? Do you have anything to say, Mike?

*Vice President Michael R. Pence.* Just very humbling to be among these heroes. Mr. President, I was chatting with a few of them beforehand. And on National Nurses Day, I don't think the American people have ever been more grateful of our nurses and our health care professionals, not just because of the extraordinary care that you provided during the coronavirus epidemic, but the fact that, because of the separation that's required with this disease, nurses around America have had to fill in for family members and loved ones, as well as provide health care.

And so, Mr. President, I just join you in expressing our most profound gratitude for the work of our nurses across America. And, just, it's a great honor to be here with them and with you.

*The President.* We appreciate it. Great job you did, too, and the Task Force—continuing Task Force.

Deborah, anything to say?

*White House Coronavirus Response Coordinator Deborah L. Birx.* I'd be privileged to just speak for a moment, because I was raised—my mother was a nurse and still is a nurse at 91. My niece is an ER nurse. And I think what I—I was privileged to be able to talk to these amazing individuals, because they are individuals. Each have an incredible story of what it's been like in the service of others at the frontline.

And I think coming out of this and figuring out not only how to recognize them but protect them going forward, to really ensure that they have the resiliency, because they have been the ones standing at the bedside for every patient that we have lost over the last 3 months. And I think—I'm so grateful that you were there for them and such deep service for others, not only your technical abilities, but your compassion for others. I just have such deep respect for each one of you.

*The President.* And your mother is a nurse at 91.

*Ambassador Birx.* Well, she's no longer practicing. [*Laughter*] But she's taking care of the grandchildren while I'm not there.

*The President.* That's great.

*American Nurses Association President Ernest Grant.* Once a nurse, always a nurse. [*Laughter*]

*The President.* That's right.

Alex? Please.

*Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex M. Azar II.* Well, my mother is also a registered nurse. But to not get in trouble, I am not going to tell you how long she has been a registered nurse. [*Laughter*]

But I've gotten to see, throughout my entire life, her compassion and to see the great work of nurses. But that has been brought home to me just in the last several months as I've been with my father. As he was dying, I got to see the unbelievable compassion and care of America's nurses.

I've been privileged to work with you in this job, but thank you for everything you do. You are the centerpiece of so much of our health care system. You're really the ones who drive so much of it. And just, you're real heroes, and thank you for everything you do.

*The President.* Thank you. Thank you, Alex, very much.

Would you like to say something?

*Mr. Grant.* Yes, sir, Mr. President. Good afternoon. My name is Ernest Grant. I'm the president of the American Nurses Association and wish to thank you for everything that you've done, especially for recognizing National Nurses Day.

And if I may add, one big concern that I have is the posttraumatic trauma that a lot of the nurses and doctors and other members of the health care team will be facing in the future. So I would ask that you please take into consideration——

*The President.* Good.

*Mr. Grant.* ——some efforts for that.

*The President.* What percentage would that be, do you think? What seems to be the percentage?

*Mr. Grant.* I don't have any numbers right now, but I can pretty well anticipate that it would be a very high percentage. You know, they're seeing death——

*The President.* A lot. A lot.

*Mr. Grant.* ——probably three or four times the average than what they normally would.

*The President.* Yes. It's a lot of death.

*Mr. Grant.* Yes. Yes, sir.

*The President.* There's no question about it.

And by the way, while we're at it, you can pass these pens around, okay?

[*The President continued distributing pens.*]

You can pass them around. Here you go. I've got some for the other side. We don't want to forget them, Marty.

*Ms. Blankenship.* No, don't worry. I've got one.

*The President.* Anybody have anything to say?

*American Association of Nurse Practitioners President Sophia L. Thomas.* I'd like to thank you. I'm Sophia Thomas, president of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners. I want to thank you and your staff for everything that you've done to help the American public, to help the nursing community. I want to thank you for the waivers—the telehealth waivers—and things like that.

And I think this is an opportunity, through COVID-19, to really look at the overall health of our country, look at the health disparities, and to see what we can do differently. I think you are in a very unique position to do some very innovative things with health care as we look forward on the horizon. So——

*The President.* Great.

*Ms. Thomas.* ——I look forward to working with you.

*The President.* And let us know as you have ideas too.

*Ms. Thomas.* Oh, I've got lots of them, Mr. President. [*Laughter*]

*The President.* I'll bet you do. [*Laughter*]

*Ms. Thomas.* I've got lots of them.

*The President.* Let's talk to her.

*St. Luke's-Sacred Heart Campus Hospital nurse Allen Zelno.* Mr. President——

*The President.* She'll speak to the Task Force maybe.

*Mr. Zelno.* I just wanted to say thank you so much.

*The President.* Thank you.

*Mr. Zelno.* I'm a faith community nurse. And what that means is, we blend faith ministry with nursing.

*The President.* Great.

*Mr. Zelno.* And we work in faith-based community health sites throughout the city. And I just thank you for reminding us that what we fight for is God, family, and country. I've heard you say that repeatedly.

*The President.* Yes.

*Mr. Zelno.* And I have the privilege, actually, of being a nurse, to be able to serve God; family—my wife Kim and my boys Joseph and Allen; and this great country. It means so much to me to know that you're recognizing us for serving our country.

*The President.* Thank you very much. Beautiful.

*Mr. Zelno.* Thank you for what you're doing and Mrs. Trump as well.

*The President.* Terrific. And that's a beautiful cross.

*Mr. Zelno.* Oh, thank you very much.

*The President.* Very nice. Beautiful.

*Mr. Zelno.* Thank you.

*The President.* Go ahead.

*National Association of Catholic Nurses and Virtua Hospital nursing supervisor Maria Arvonio.* Mr. President, thank you so much for allowing me to be here. I represent a Catholic nursing association; it's called the NACN—USA. But it's also international; it's called CICIAMS. So I am blessed to be here and also represent a community hospital in South Jersey that's considered a hot zone right now in Willingboro, New Jersey. It's called Virtua Willingboro.

*The President.* Right. Sure.

*Ms. Arvonio.* But the lesson here, sir, is that, because we're a small community hospital and connected with five others, the amount of patients we get are able to spread out so we're not in one place.

In regards to nursing, sir, I have to tell you: We talk about science as a nurse—it's a whole base, scientific issue—but it's the compassion part. And the first time that I got involved with a patient with COVID, sir, this patient was so scared. You should have seen her face. But, sir, we're all, like, dressed up, gowned up. We look like we're going to the Moon, basically.

*The President.* Right. [*Laughter*]

*Ms. Arvonio.* And so the thing that I noticed is that minute when I touched her hand—and we're gloved and all—but touched her hand and said, "You're going to be okay, ma'am." I looked at—right in her eyes, and, sir, she was okay.

*The President.* Good.

*Ms. Arvonio.* She didn't wind up on the ventilator. We got her out of there. I know it's prayer. I know it's the compassion of the nurse. It's not just our science; it's our compassion. Excuse me, sir. Thank you.

*The President.* That's fantastic. Thank you very much. Beautiful.

Please.

*Genesis Healthcare nurse Lisa Barlow.* I'd like to say, on behalf of West Virginia, where I'm from: We appreciate everything that the whole country is doing for us.

*The President.* Right.

*Ms. Barlow.* All the support is fantastic. I was able to leave my home in West Virginia and go to help in New Jersey, which was just completely devastating for me—the loneliness and isolation that our patients and residents felt. And the families, they would stand outside the windows and wave at their family members, just to——

*The President.* Incredible.

*Ms. Barlow.* ——have some kind of contact.

*The President.* Have you ever seen anything like that?

*Ms. Barlow.* Never in my 28 years.

*The President.* And yet it's the right thing, right?

*Ms. Barlow.* Absolutely.

*The President.* You have no choice.

*Ms. Barlow.* Absolutely. So I thank you for having us here and for honoring us. And thank you for the help that I know we're going to get.

*The President.* Thank you. Yes. We're giving you a lot of help. And we appreciate what you're doing.

Please.

*Shady Grove Fertility nurse coordinator Caroline Elliott.* Hi. I'm Caroline. I'm from Charlotte. So I actually kind of have a different story. I'm not on the frontline, but I have benefited from the telehealth. I work for a clinic here in DC, but I work remotely in Charlotte.

So I was kind of overwhelmed with feelings of guilt by not being on the frontline and using my skills, because while—I mean, I love what I do, but I'm not there to really be on the frontlines. So, in my community, I've raised over \$80,000 to kind of give back to those on the frontline and support them by providing food and things like that. So while working full time as a nurse, although from my home, I did everything I could.

So I am just so honored. So thank you for having us. And it's such a privilege to kind of represent nurses today. I think we all feel that way. Because it's—this is just a small fraction of us, and we all have different roles and do different things. And it's a privilege. And like Luke said, I've never been more proud to be a nurse. It's—and proud of my friends and colleagues. It's a pretty amazing thing.

*The President.* Will you let them know how I feel?

*Ms. Elliott.* Yes.

*The President.* And how Mike feels. And this is the Oval Office. This is the big—I'm sure you've all been here many times. [Laughter] Right? It's a big deal, the Oval Office.

John [John Roberts, Fox News], go ahead, please.

#### *White House Coronavirus Task Force/Availability of Medical Supplies and Equipment*

*Q.* Mr. President, you mentioned the Coronavirus Task Force. Yesterday we were told that there were discussions of winding it down, maybe by the beginning of June. You tweeted out this morning that it would continue indefinitely. What's the rationale for continuing?

*The President.* Well, it's had great success. And Mike Pence has done a fantastic job, whether it was on ventilators. When we started, we didn't have ventilators, and we got them built very quickly, and now we're giving them to other countries all over the world that are desperate for ventilators. There's been no person in this whole country, in our whole country, that hasn't had a ventilator if they needed it.

You probably saw that. Remember, at the beginning, it was really tough.

*Ms. Thomas.* It was.

*The President.* And we got it built so fast. It was really an incredible mobilization. Not since World War II has anything happened with not only ventilators, but everything else. Testing is doing really well. And the Task Force has done a great job.

And I had a meeting yesterday. I had a meeting this morning, probably even more importantly. And so we'll be leaving the Task Force indefinitely. We'll see. You know, at a certain point, that will end like things end. But we'll be adding some people to the Task Force. And they'll be more in the neighborhood, probably, of opening our country up, because our country has to get open again, and the people want it to be open, but we have to open it up safely.

So we'll be adding two or three additional members to the Task Force. There may be one or two that will be less involved that were more involved with the original formation of the ventilator and the ventilator systems. But if they want to stay, they can, because they really did a fantastic job.

So, at a certain point, we won't need the Task Force, but we're going to leave that. We're going to add a couple of people to it. And that will, again, be for the opening of our country. We're opening—you know, if you think about it, we're opening our country again.

We had the most successful economy in history for any country, anywhere in the world. And then, they came—I was sitting right here—and they said, "Sir, we're going to have to close it." I said, "Close what?" "Basically, we're going to have to close our country."

And just like you said, with the—I said, "Is it important that they not be together?" It's not—it's not a question, right? It's not a question. You can't have the family together. It's so sad.

So anyway, we have—we did something that—we did the right move. We saved millions of lives by doing what we did, but it's unbelievably tough for a country. And most countries throughout the world did something similar. But this affected 182, 184 countries, and it's a very sad thing. A very sad thing.

So we're keeping the Task Force for a period of time. I look forward to when we can close the Task Force, because then the job will be, essentially, hopefully, over, Mike. Right?

*Vice President Pence.* Yes, sir.

*The President.* And you've done a fantastic job.

*Q.* Mr. President——

*The President.* Yes.

*White House Coronavirus Task Force/Availability of Medical Supplies and Equipment*

*Q.* ——can you explain the change between what you said yesterday about winding down the Task Force and now, saying you're going to keep it?

*The President.* Well, I think—yes. Yes.

*Q.* Because it is different from what you said yesterday, sir.

*The President.* Yes. Well, I guess, if you think, we're always winding it down. But you know, it's a question of what the end point is. But I think it is a change, a little bit; I thought we could wind it down sooner. But I had no idea how popular the Task Force is until actually yesterday. When I started talking about winding it down, I'd get calls from very respected people saying: "I think it would be better to keep it going. It's done such a good job." It's a respected Task Force. It's—I knew it myself; I didn't know whether or not it was appreciated by the public, but it is appreciated by the public.

When you look at the job we've done on everything—on supplies, on everything—the gowns, the gloves, the face—the masks. You saw, yesterday, the masks. We were at a factory yesterday. A great company—Honeywell. And in a period of 4 days, they took a big factory—essentially, 4 days. A little longer. Two weeks, but it was really—most of the work done in 4 days. They took a big plant that did other things, and they converted it into masks. You have to see it. It's actually complicated process.

But they have unbelievable equipment, and they're doing millions of masks out of this factory. And that took place so quickly. And that was all because of the Task Force. I mean, all of this happened because of the people working within the administration.

And something I didn't know, Mike: They take different layers of material and compress it, put it together. Because one layer is good for something; one layer is good for something else. One layer is good for very tiny particles. I mean, it's really—you think of it as a mask. They make a very good mask. This is really something that's very special.

So the Task Force will be around until we feel it's not necessary. But I will say that I learned yesterday—even after I spoke, Jeff [Jeff Mason, Reuters]—that the Task Force is—something you knew—it's very respected. People said we should keep it going. So let's keep it going. And so we'll be doing that. But we'll be adding some people to it, actually.

*White House Coronavirus Task Force/The President's Recruitment Record*

*Q.* Sir, who are some of the people you are thinking about adding to the Task Force?

*The President.* We have a whole list of people that want to be on. And we have a list of people that we want. And——

*Q.* What would their roles be?

*The President.* Nobody has—I'll tell you this; I will say this—nobody has ever turned me down to be on that Task Force. It's a very—nobody has turned me down for anything, to be honest. When we have a committee—like we had the various committees—the sports committee, the commissioners—everybody wants to be on everything we do. The business committees. It's never had anybody say, "Gee, I'd rather not be on that committee." You know, it's very important.

So we'll be announcing, I would say, by Monday. We'll be announcing two or three new members to the Task Force.

*Resumption of Economic and Commercial Activity/Federal Preparedness for Future Coronavirus Outbreaks/Economic Recovery Efforts*

*Q.* Mr. President, on the issue of reopening, it seems little question that, by beginning the reopening process and continuing it, there will likely be more cases of coronavirus, more deaths than there would have been had everything stayed shut down. Will the Nation just have to accept the idea that, by reopening, there will be more cases, there will be more deaths?

*The President.* So I called these people warriors. And I'm actually calling now, as you know, John, the Nation warriors. We have to be warriors. We can't keep our country closed down for years. And we have to do something. And hopefully, that won't be the case, John, but it could very well be the case. You won't be locked in a house. And some people should stay, if you're over a certain age. I mean, you've seen that, right? Elderly people or especially elderly people with——

*Ms. Thomas.* Comorbidities.

*The President.* ——with a problem, where they have a problem. It attacks these people viciously. And I think they will be staying back, and we're strongly recommending that they do that. We're saying over 60—and especially over 60 if you have diabetes or heart problems or whatever problem you might have.

So—but we have to get our country open again. And you see it. Look, you cover it. People want to go back. You're going to have a problem if you don't do it. If you don't do it, you've got a very big problem.

*Q.* How close are—how close are we to a permanent problem if we don't reopen the country?

*The President.* Well, I think people won't stand for it, actually. I don't think our people will stand for it. Now, what I really believe you people will be able to do is, at a certain age, they'll stay back longer. Because, you know, this virus is going to disappear. It's a question of when. Will it come back in a small way? Will it come back in a fairly large way? But we know how to deal with it now much better. You know, nobody knew anything about it, initially.

Now we know we can put out fires. We can put out—I call them "embers" if it's a small—or if it's a fire or a hotspot, we could put it out. But we can't have our whole country out. We can't do it. We can't—the country won't take it. It won't stand it. It's not sustainable. And I think you're going to have a tremendous transition, which is a third-quarter thing. I think you're going to have a good fourth quarter. I think next year is going to be an incredible year, economically.

And, with that being said, if somebody lost somebody—a parent or a wife or a husband or, you know, any brothers, sisters—if you lost someone, you could never make up for that by saying, "Well, you're going to have a great year next year, economically." And so you can never do that.

But I will say that, from an economic standpoint, I think next year is going to be a very big year. There's tremendous demand. You see it with the stock market, where the stock market is at 24,000, and we went through the worst attack we've ever had on our country.

This is really the worst attack we've ever had. This is worse than Pearl Harbor. This is worse than the World Trade Center. There's never been an attack like this. And it should have never happened. It could have been stopped at the source. It could have been stopped in China. It should have been stopped right at the source, and it wasn't.

Okay.

### *Resumption of Economic and Commercial Activity*

*Q.* Mr. President, 20 States have begun reopening without meeting those gating criteria that your administration put out. Are you okay with that?

*The President.* I've given the leeway to the Governors. If I see something wrong, we'll stop it. But I have given leeway to the Governors to make that decision.

You have some Governors—most of whom I have great respect for—they're working very hard. They're watching very closely. But we've given leeway to the Governors to make those decisions.

### *Unemployment/Economic Recovery Efforts*

*Q.* And unemployment: There's some projections that show unemployment for the month of April could be as high as 15 percent. Are you worried about that number? And are you also worried that Democrats—

*The President.* Well, there's nothing—

*Q.* —or your opponents might blame you for it?

*The President.* There's—no, I don't think they can—they're not blaming me. You know, it's very interesting. It's one thing: Nobody is blaming me for that. I built the greatest economy—with a lot of great people—that we've ever had, and I'm going to rebuild it again. We're going to have a great economy very soon. Much sooner than people think. Much sooner.

Now, we cut taxes, and we do things that you have to do. If somebody comes along and raises taxes and does all of the nonsense that they're talking about, you'll have a crash like you've never seen before.

But this was artificially induced. This was an artificially induced unemployment. This was where we said, "We're taking the greatest economy in the history of the world"—because that's what it was. Most people in our country, almost 160 million people—we were never close—and we had to turn it off. One day, it turned off. Nothing like that has ever happened before. But by doing that, we have saved millions of lives.

But now we're going to make our comeback. And the comeback is going to be a very strong one. And I'll be meeting you in a little while, because, as you know, we have a very good Governor—

### *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act*

*Q.* Quick question, just before we go, because it's health care-related. Today is the deadline for the White House if it wants to modify its argument before the Supreme Court about invalidating Obamacare to do it. Will you continue with the plan to completely invalidate the ACA?

*The President.* So what we want to do is, we want to—

*Q.* Or would you want Attorney General Barr—

*The President.* We're staying—we're not doing another thing. In other words, we're staying with the group—with Texas and the group. But just so you understand, Obamacare is a disaster, but we've run it very well. And we've made it barely acceptable. It was a disaster under President Obama, and it's very bad health care. What we want to do is terminate it and give great health

care. And we'll have great health care, including preexisting conditions, a hundred percent preexisting conditions.

Now, we've already pretty much killed it, because we got rid of the individual mandate. Now, in getting rid of the individual mandate, which was, by far, the most unpopular thing in Obamacare—that's where, for the privilege of paying a fee, you don't have to buy health insurance at a ridiculous price for not good health insurance. It was a terrible thing. You were mandated to pay something in order not to pay, and we got rid of that. That's gone. And nobody thinks it's ever going to come back.

But what we are doing is, we want to terminate health care for—under Obamacare, because it's bad, and we're replacing it with a great health care at far less money, and it includes preexisting conditions. There will never be a time when we don't have preexisting conditions included.

*Q.* So——

*The President.* So what I'm saying then, John, is, we're going to replace Obamacare with great health care at a lesser price, and preexisting conditions will be included, and you won't have the individual mandate, which was expensive and terrible and very unfair to everybody, and it was very unpopular.

*Q.* So to Attorney General Barr's suggestion to pull back on invalidating the entire act and leave some of it in place, you're not going to go in that direction?

*The President.* No, I don't know about that suggestion. I think I've spoken a lot about this to Bill Barr. And we're totally in lockstep with all of the many States that want to see much better health care. See, I don't view it as a termination. I view this as getting great health care.

Because Obamacare—we run it really well. I had a decision to make. I said this yesterday: We took over Obamacare. We got rid of the individual mandate, which basically was the end of Obamacare. In a formal sense, it was really the end of Obamacare. And few people are challenging the fact that we can do that. So we got rid of the individual mandate.

I had a decision to make: Do I want to have Obamacare run as well as it can run? Or do I want to have it run really badly so everybody can say Obamacare is terrible? Politically, I could do the other. I should do—let it run badly. But I can't do that, because I'm President for the people. And we ran that much better than President Obama ran it, much better than the last administration ran it—Seema and Alex and everybody—and spent a lot of money in running it properly.

It's still not good. It's still not good. But I had a decision: Do I want to run it great? Or do I want to run it really badly? Politically, I should have run it really badly, but I'm glad I made the decision to run it great. But running it great, it's still lousy health care. And we are going to do something that's going to be great health care, always including, always having—again, the individual mandate gone, and preexisting conditions will be taken care of. So I'm glad you asked me that question.

### *The President's Travel to Arizona/Protective Face Masks*

*Q.* Mr. President, yesterday we went to Arizona, and you had said before the trip that you would likely wear a mask at the mask factory. You ended up not wearing one.

*The President.* Well, I actually did have one. No. I put a mask——

*Q.* Did you have one on?

*The President.* Yes. I put—I had a mask on for a period of time.

*Q.* We didn't see you with a mask on.

*The President.* Well, I can't help it if you didn't see me. I mean, I had a mask on, but I didn't need it. And I asked specifically the head of Honeywell: "Should I wear a mask?" And he said, "Well, you don't need one in this territory." And as you know, we were far away from people, from the people making the masks. They were making the masks.

But I did put a mask on, and it was a Honeywell mask actually. And I also had a 3M mask, and I had about four other masks. But I did have it on. I don't know if you saw it or not, but I had it on.

*Q.* How long did you have it on, sir?

*The President.* Not too long, but I had it on. I had it on back—backstage. But they said you didn't need it, so if I didn't need it—and by the way, if you noticed, nobody else had it on that was in the group.

*Q.* We just saw——

*The President.* And they were people——

*Q.* We saw the workers wearing them.

*The President.* The workers had them on. Yes. The workers were there, yes, because they're working next to each other. Okay?

#### *News Media/Medical Supplies and Equipment/Coronavirus Testing Access*

*Q.* Mr. President, what kind of message does it send that you're surrounded by nurses who are not doing social distancing, who are not wearing masks? What kind of a message is that?

*The President.* Well, I can't help that. I mean, look, I'm trying to be nice. I'm signing a bill, and you criticize us.

Look, here's the story: There is nothing I can do to satisfy the media, the Democrats, or the fake news, and I understand that. We did the greatest job, mobilization, in history with the ventilators, and I don't think there was a story what a great job we did.

Now we're helping Germany, and we're helping many other countries—France, Spain, and Italy, by the way—and Nigeria, sending 250 to Nigeria, ventilators. And, 2 months ago, we didn't have any ventilators for ourselves. We were—the cupboards were bare. Right, Deborah? They were bare. People have no idea. There's not a thing I can do to satisfy the fake news, and there's not a thing I can do to satisfy Democrats.

I watched this phony Chuck Schumer—everyone in New York knows he's a total phony. He brought nothing back to New York except SALT. You know what SALT is? Bad tax policy. He brought SALT back. He didn't even fight it. I watched him the other night on a show, and all he could talk about was testing, testing, testing. And yet I showed a chart yesterday where our testing is far superior to anybody else's testing.

And then the other thing that is very interesting: Because we did so much more testing, we have more cases. If I did little testing, we'd have practically no cases. So the headline was, "We have more cases than anyone else." Well, China has more cases than us, and other big countries. You know, you're talking about big countries, but they don't want to choose—they don't want to use that. The fact is, we've done better testing, more testing. In fact, we've done, as of 2 days ago, more testing than the entire world together.

If you would add every country—every country together, we've done substantially more testing than the entire world together. And all I get is, "Oh, we have more cases." You understand

that. We have more cases because we do more testing. If I don't do testing, we don't have any cases.

So, as I do more testing, they say, "But you have more cases." They're very smart, but they're very devious people. And in many cases, very bad people. And in some cases, very good ones. There's a couple of good ones here.

### *Military Medical Personnel*

*Q.* Could we ask the man who was sleeping on the floor—behind you—a question? Up until recently, we've heard a lot of stories of hardships on the frontline owing to a shortage of PPE, masks, that sort of thing. Can you tell us, did it get bad where you were? And what's the situation now compared to what it was?

*Mr. Adams.* Sure. There is always a lag time between what happens in the real time versus when you guys get it and run it, you know. So the PPE, the ventilator situation, yes, it got to a point where it was getting bad. But manufacturing ramped up, and I think those are two things that we knew we would take care of as a country.

The third thing that we can't manufacture—and I've talked about this before—is a doctor or a nurse or essential personnel. We can't just manufacture them. So, ultimately, that ended up being the weakest point for us on the frontlines. We had the PPE, we had the ventilators in time, but we just didn't have enough people. We couldn't get them there fast enough.

*The President.* And one of the things we did is, we sent in the military doctors and nurses. And I think most of you have seen them and some of you have worked with them. But they did a fantastic job.

John, we had lot of the military. Like, we took the *Comfort*—because they didn't need the ship—and we took the *Comfort*, and we took the doctors and nurses, and we sent them all over New York and New Jersey. And we took doctors and nurses out of the convention center—the Javits Convention Center—and many of them went throughout New York.

So we did a job. And we weren't even supposed to have doctors in the convention center, but we ended up putting them there. So we had a lot of—because it's true. Wouldn't you say? It was right. Man- and woman-power was one of the toughest things.

### *Availability of Medical Supplies and Equipment/News Media/The President's Accomplishments*

*Q.* Mr. Luke, are you—and all of you—are you seeing now that the supplies are what they need to be?

*Mr. Adams.* Yes.

*Ms. Thomas.* I think it's sporadic. As I talk to my colleagues around the country, certainly, there are pockets of areas where PPE is not ideal. But this is an unprecedented time. And the infection control measures that we learned back when we went to school—one gown, one mask for one patient a day or per time—this is a different time. And I've been reusing my N95 mask for a few weeks now. I just broke out a new one to come here, just in case I need to wear it.

To answer your question earlier, we're all COVID-19-free. We were all tested. So we're not socially distancing, but we're all negative. And we wouldn't do anything to harm our President, obviously.

*The President.* Everybody has been tested, yes.

*Ms. Thomas.* Yes. We were all tested.

*The President.* I hope the test works right. [Laughter]

*Ms. Thomas.* So we were all tested. We're all negative. And so that's why we're not socially distancing and why we're not wearing masks.

Certainly, and I've had several tests throughout this whole COVID-19 crisis. I practice in New Orleans at a community health center. My youngest patient has been 4 days old—a 4-day-old infant. And so PPE has been sporadic, but it's been manageable, and we do what we have to do. We're nurses, and we learn to adapt and do whatever the best thing that we can do for our patients to get the job done and get the care provided. And that's what we're going to continue to do as COVID-19 continues.

*The President.* Sporadic for you, but not sporadic for a lot of other people.

*Ms. Thomas.* Oh, no. I agree, Mr. President. Absolutely.

*The President.* Because I've heard the opposite.

*Ms. Thomas.* Yes.

*The President.* I've heard that they are loaded up with gowns now. And you know, initially we had nothing. We had empty cupboards. We had empty shelves. We had nothing. Because it wasn't put there by the last administration.

And I've heard that we have—I just saw it yesterday, where they're making millions of masks a month in a factory from—you know, in that case, it was Arizona. It was great. We have other factories being built now for masks. And, for the most part, I have—I mean, that was fine, but I've heard we have tremendous supply to almost all places—tremendous supply—to a point where we're going to start having some of our supply go to other countries which need it very badly.

How did you find that? Do you find a good supply?

*Ms. Barlow.* I found that we had what we needed.

*The President.* Good. Thank you.

*Ms. Barlow.* We had to change the way we did things.

*The President.* Good. You'll end up being a star.

*Ms. Arvonio.* And, Mr. President, I just wanted to add one thing too. You know, in my—because I'm a nursing supervisor where I work at. And one of the blessings I have is, my director—my assistant director; his name is Dennis Hunter—he said: "Do you know what? You guys take care of nursing. We'll make sure we have the supply."

When we all talk about the fears, it makes it so much worse for us nurses to work. We're seeing the reality of it, but to hear it on constantly: "There is not enough. There is not enough." In reality, I'm not seeing it. I'm in a hot zone right now. I'm in South New Jersey, all right? We're very close to New York—[inaudible].

*The President.* And so you don't see that when you hear the stories?

*Ms. Arvonio.* I'm not seeing it. No.

*The President.* You know why? Because they're fake news. That's why. [Laughter]

*Ms. Arvonio.* I have to say——

*The President.* It's true. I really appreciate you saying that. It's so nice that you stepped up, because they're fake news.

*Q.* Respectfully, though, sir, at the beginning——

*The President.* No, when I—when I took over, it's different. Now, I will say this: There was a period of time, but between "Russia, Russia, Russia," and all the stuff that these characters put us through, it's not so easy. And despite that, I've done more than any other President in history in the first 3 years as President.

*Q.* But what I was going to say——

*The President.* And you can look at that from any way you want to look at it: from rebuilding the military, to cutting taxes, to getting rid of regulations at a level that nobody has ever come close to, to saving your Second Amendment, which is under siege, by the way.

So you know, we've done—but I really appreciate your statement. That was really beautiful. And——

*Q.* But just on the issue of masks, I mean, I remember at the beginning of this crisis that——

*The President.* Sure.

*Q.* ——you all were encouraging——

*The President.* That's right.

*Q.* ——people not to——

*The President.* We didn't have enough.

*Q.* ——not to wear them in order to have it for the——

*The President.* And you're right, but that was at the——

*Q.* So there was not enough, at the beginning, of PPE.

*The President.* You're right, Jeff. And the reason that we did such a good job is because we were able—now we have factories all over doing masks and building our own masks and doing them. Because a lot of countries—I don't want to be specific—but they sent us masks which were total garbage, and they were defective. And they sent us other equipment, which was defective.

And so now we're building our own masks. We're doing our own masks. We're making them by the millions. And Honeywell in Arizona yesterday was a case in point. And that was some scene. I've never seen anything like it.

I didn't realize, as they put different layers and then they put it together. And each layer has a different function. I mean, you know, it's not just, like, taking a thing and wrapping it, as we said perhaps you can do in certain conditions, but certainly not inside of a hospital.

But no, we ended up—we had an empty cupboard, and now we have full cupboards. And we have ventilators, and we have tremendous testing. And we're doing the antibodies very shortly, as you probably know. That's going to also——

I mean, you know, there are a lot of people that don't believe in such big testing, Deborah. I mean, you know, you have some people that want to test everything—15 different ways. Mostly, that's the media because they know, you know, certain things can't be done. But we have tremendous testing right now.

When you see that chart—I don't have it with me now; I guess they have it someplace in the room. But when you see the chart that I put up yesterday as I was interviewed by one of your friends on ABC, that chart says it better than anything I can say. You saw the line going. We're like a rocket ship. Everyone else is down here in testing. And then, all they do is complain about the testing.

So look, you get used to that. But I really appreciate the fact that—what you said. And we do have, we have great—and not only do we have great equipment, but we have the—the quality of what we have is far better than anything that we're getting, because we see what comes in. The quality of the gowns, the quality of the masks.

We have—as of today, we've got 1 billion gloves. Gloves—1 billion. Whoever heard of such a thing? At the beginning, we had none. You know, when this all started, we had none. It's one of the greatest mobilizations. It's a war. And it's one of the greatest mobilizations. So it's been very successful.

### *School Closures and Reopening*

*Q.* Mr. President, one more question about reopening. The initial forecast showed that the real decline in the infection curve would be about June 1.

*The President.* Yes.

*Q.* Latest forecasts have pushed now back to August. And I'm wondering what the ramifications might be for certain reopenings, particularly schools, which begin to go back near the beginning of August.

*The President.* Yes. I mean, I can—I'll just address one part of that. The schools should open. The one thing you should be careful of is, when instructors are over 60, especially if they have a problem. That, you should be careful. But the schools should definitely open, in my opinion.

Could you answer the other part, Deborah?

*Ambassador Birx.* So the—I think you're referring to the model that looks at mortality.

*Q.* Yes, we talked about this yesterday.

*Ambassador Birx.* And the mortality is very variable; that model has gone from 60,000, now to 134,000. Obviously, we track mortality very closely. You can see the rate of new hospitalizations has gone dramatically down, and so we're following that and mortality very closely.

[*Ambassador Birx continued her remarks, concluding as follows.*]

And that's why Governors using that strategic testing to ensure that the most vulnerable—those in disadvantaged areas of the cities and multigenerational households, those in group housing, those in nursing homes, those in prisons—are really—they're aggressively doing what we call surveillance and surveillance testing. And I think we've just been very proud to watch the Governors pick up on the Federal guidelines that called that out as a very key point in—

*Q.* Do you think we'll be in a place in August where schools, at least in some States, will be able to reopen?

*Ambassador Birx.* Well, again, it's a county-by-county, State-by-State decision, and that's how we're collecting data. And we're hoping—and we're asking all of the States to have a very, very great data system so that every community member can see what's happening in their community—both of hospitalizations and testing and, unfortunately, any mortalities—so these decisions can be continuously updated. And we're seeing that. We're seeing much better sites at the State and county level to really inform the public in a very clear way.

### *School Closures and Reopening/Older Teachers*

*Q.* But, Mr. President, you say you'd like to see schools open, just to have people or teachers who are in risky age groups not go in or be more careful?

*The President.* I would like to see schools open wherever possible, which I think is in much of the country, most of the country.

No, I would say that until everything is perfect, I think that the teachers that are a certain age—perhaps, you say, over 60—especially if they have a problem with heart or diabetes or any one of the number of things, I think that they should not be teaching school for a while. And everybody would understand that fully. That we understand.

But other than that, you see how well children seem to do. It's incredible. We realize how strong children are, right? It's—their immune system is maybe a little bit different. Maybe it's just a little bit stronger, or maybe it's a lot stronger. Right? It could be a lot stronger. We've learned a lot by watching this monster.

Thank you very much. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:01 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Administrator Seema Verma; Darius Adamczyk, chairman and chief executive officer, Honeywell International Inc.; Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer; and David J. Muir, anchor, "ABC News's "World News Tonight" program. Ambassador Bixx referred to her mother Adele. Secretary Azar referred to his mother Lynda.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : National Nurses Day, signing the proclamation; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters :: White House.

*Locations:* Washington, DC.

*Names:* Adamczyk, Darius; Adams, Luke; Arvonio, Maria; Azar, Alex M., II; Barlow, Lisa; Barr, William P.; Bixx, Deborah L.; Blakenship, Marty; Elliott, Caroline; Grant, Ernest; Muir, David J.; Obama, Barack; Pence, Michael R.; Schumer, Charles E.; Thomas, Sophia L.; Verma, Seema; Zelno, Allen.

*Subjects:* Armed Forces, U.S. : Funding; China : Coronavirus outbreak; Communications : News media :: Accuracy and fairness; Congress : Senate :: Minority leader; Coronavirus pandemic, international cooperation efforts; Diseases : Coronavirus, domestic prevention efforts; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Education : School closures due to coronavirus concerns; Employment and unemployment : Unemployment rate; Government organization and employees : Federal regulations, review; Health and Human Services, Department of : Medicare and Medicaid Services, Centers for; Health and Human Services, Department of : Secretary; Health and Human Services, Department of : Strategic National Stockpile; Health and medical care : Health care workers, service and dedication; Health and medical care : Health insurance reforms; Health and medical care : Individual insurance mandate, tax penalty; Health and medical care : Medical equipment and supplies; Health and medical care : Research and development; Holidays and special observances : Nurses Day, National; Homeland Security, Department of : Emergency Management Agency, Federal; Honeywell International Inc.; Justice, Department of : Attorney General; Navy, Department of the : Naval hospital ships, deployment; Taxation : Tax relief; White House Coronavirus Task Force; White House Office : Coronavirus Response Coordinator; White House Office : Vice President.

*DCPD Number:* DCPD202000333.