

Remarks on the National Coronavirus Vaccination Effort

March 18, 2021

The President. Well, folks, good to see you all. When I announced in early December that I had goal that I set of administering 100 million shots for the virus in the first 100 days of our office—100 million shots in 100 days—it was considered ambitious. Some even suggested it was somewhat audacious. Experts said that it was a—the plan was, quote, "definitely aggressive," and distribution would have to be "seamless" for us to be successful. One headline simply put it, quote, "It won't be easy." End of quote. Well, it wasn't.

When I took office—when we took office, there was a lot that had to be done. We needed more vaccines, more vaccinators, more places for people to get vaccinated. And we needed a whole-of-Government approach.

So I directed Jeff Zients, the Coordinator of our COVID-19 response, to put us on a war footing—and I meant that in a literal sense—to get us on track to truly beat this virus.

And I'm proud to announce that tomorrow, 58 days into our administration, we will have met my goal of administering 100 million shots to our fellow Americans. That's weeks ahead of schedule, and even with the setbacks we faced during the winter storms. And it's another big step on the path to checking the—putting checks in pockets and shots in people's arms.

When we crossed the 50 million doses just 3 weeks ago, I told you that every time we hit the 50 million mark, I'd update you on our progress. So here is where we are today: Eight weeks ago, only 8 percent of seniors, those most vulnerable to COVID-19, had received a vaccination. Today, 65 percent of people aged 65 or older have received at least one shot, and 36 percent are fully vaccinated. And that's key, because this is a population that represents 80 percent of the well over 500,000 COVID-19 deaths that have occurred in America.

We have nearly doubled the amount of vaccine doses that we distribute to States, tribes, and territories each week. We have gone from 1 million shots a day—that I promised in December, before we were even sworn in—to an average of 2½ million shots a day, outpacing the rest of the world significantly.

And here's how we accomplished this: Using the power given to a President under the Defense Production Act, we expedited critical materials in vaccine production, such as equipment, machinery, and supplies. We worked with vaccine manufacturers to speed up the delivery of millions more doses and brokered a historic manufacturing partnership between competing companies who put patriotism and public health first.

These steps put us on track to have enough vaccine supply for every adult American by the end of May, months—months—earlier than anyone expected. And we stood up or supplied more than 600 community vaccination sites that are administering hundreds of thousands of shots per day.

We launched the Federal Pharmacy Program, which has allowed millions of Americans to get a shot at one of 1,000—or, excuse me, one of 14,000 local pharmacies in this country, the same way they get their flu shot. And for folks who aren't near a pharmacy or mass vaccination center, we've supplied more than 500 mobile clinics, like pop-up sites or vans, meeting people where they are—meeting people where they are.

We've developed nearly—we've deployed nearly 6,000 Federal personnel, including FEMA, Active Duty military, and Department of Health and Human Services to support vaccinations and serve as vaccinators, putting the needle in people's arms.

We're also supplying vaccines to community health centers to reach those who have been the hardest hit—the hardest hit—and suffered the most, especially Black, Latino, Native American, and rural communities. This is really important, because we believe that speed and efficiency must be matched with fairness and equity.

Now, when [Vice]* President Harris and I took a virtual tour of a vaccination center in Arizona not long ago, one of the nurses on that tour, injecting people, giving vaccinations, said that each shot was like administering a dose of hope. "A dose of hope." That's how she phrased it.

Behind these 100 million shots are millions of lives changed when people receive that dose of hope. Grandparents can hug their grandchildren again. Frontline workers who can show up at their jobs without the same fear they used to have. Teachers—with the confidence to head back into the classroom.

These milestones are significant accomplishments, but we have much more to do. Much more to do. And the American Rescue Plan will help us do it.

In addition to the cash payments it provides to you and your families, it also provides the funds to add vaccinators, to supply more community vaccination—support more community vaccination centers, and increase testing.

It will help us accelerate nationwide efforts to reopen our schools safely. And as I told the Nation last week, I've directed all States, tribes, and territories to make all adults eligible to be vaccinated no later than May the 1st. I'm glad to see that several States are already taking that step to make more and more Americans eligible, even before May 1.

Tomorrow we will hit 100 million doses our administration has administered. But I've always said that's just the floor. We will not stop until we beat this pandemic. Next week, I will announce our next goal to put shots in arms.

This is a time for optimism, but it's not a time for relaxation. I need all Americans—I need all of you to do your part: wash your hands, stay socially distanced, keep masking up as recommended by the CDC, and get vaccinated when it's your turn. Now is not the time to let down our guard.

In the last week, we've seen increases in the number of cases in several States. Scientists have made clear that things may get worse as new variants of this virus spread. Getting vaccinated is the best thing we can do to fight back against these variants.

While millions of people are vaccinated, we need millions more to be vaccinated. And, again, I need you to get vaccinated when it comes—when it's your turn, when you're able to do that. I need your help. I need you to help, not just the country, but your family, your friends, your neighbors. Get them vaccinated as well.

If we keep our guard up, stick together, and stick with the science, we can look forward to a Fourth of July that feels a bit more normal, with small groups able to gather for cookouts in backyards, and when we'll be—where we begin to declare our independence on Independence Day from the virus.

Look, together—together—we're going to come through this stronger, with renewed faith in each other, in our Government that fulfills its most important function: protecting the American

* White House correction.

people. Let me be clear again: wearing this mask in the meantime; making sure you wash your hands; making sure you socially distance and listen to the CDC. We've got to reach the point where we have herd immunity—meaning where we have a vast majority of the American people have been vaccinated—before we can stop wearing these.

So, please, please, don't let what's happening—you see happening in Europe and you see on television. Keep the faith, keep wearing the mask, keep washing your hands, and keep socially distanced. We're going to beat this. We're way ahead of schedule, but we've got a long way to go.

So I just wanted to bring you up to date. And I thank you very much. And may God bless America, and may God protect our troops.

Thank you so much.

Q. Mr. President, Vladimir Putin wants open talks, would you agree to that?

Q. Your reaction to the photos of children at the boarder detention centers, sir?

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:26 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Brittney Hayes, head charge nurse, Arizona State University's State Farm Stadium vaccination site in Glendale, AZ. A reporter referred to President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia.

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