

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2022

Remarks at the 2021 Presidential Rank Awards Virtual Ceremony and an Exchange With Reporters

May 2, 2022

The President. Well, thank you all. Kiran, thank you for the great job you're doing leading the Office of Personnel Management.

And thank you, Diana. Diana—and thank you most of all for the difference you've made. You've really made a difference in people's lives; you've saved people's lives in the process, helping speed resources to hospitals and health care workers on the frontlines when they needed the help the most.

Because you and your team delivered, there are families who gather around a dinner table tonight, and it's completely filled. There's no empty chairs. A million people have died. A million people have died, but think of all of the lives you helped save.

You know, they may not know your name, but you have their gratitude. And that's what public service is all about. It's that—what the President Rank Awards are all about. They're about the families in every corner of this country whose lives all of you—all of you who are behind me on those screen—all of you have touched. Every single one of you. Those families may never know your names, but you have their gratitude.

It was my honor to reestablish these awards last year after the previous administration made the decision to cancel them. Because these awards are about more than individual recognition. They're a reminder to all of us—to everyone—of the extraordinary capacity, creativity, diversity, and dedication of our Federal workforce and a reminder—a reminder of why you all—all the work you do matters so much.

You know, a couple of weeks before I was sworn in, in January 2021, I sent a message to all career civil servants. And I meant it at the time, and I still mean it. I told them that we're a team. One team. One America. And I meant it.

Over the last 15 months, you've helped us deliver so much to the American people: helping stand up a wartime effort to get the country vaccinated; getting checks into people's pockets of families who needed help, literally just to keep food on the table, keep a roof over their heads; helping communities rebuild in the wake of storms and wildfires; and caring for our veterans; cleaning up the polluted lands and waters; implementing the bipartisan infrastructure law to deliver good-paying job opportunities and game-changing investments to communities all across America; and so much more.

Most of all, you restored the faith—the faith of millions of Americans in their Government: that their Government sees them and hears them, that we listen to them, respect them, and reflect them. You're helping restore their faith that democracy can deliver in America. And by restoring their faith and coming through for them today, you're helping strengthen our country for tomorrow, in a literal sense.

Look, you and your colleagues couldn't have done—if you had the opportunity, looking back on it, probably would've—you could've done anything, almost anything with your careers. You're so talented. But you chose public service. And the families in every corner of this country are better off today because you made that choice.

Not only are you helping to confront the great challenges of our time, you're showing America, the world, that we can do—what we can do when we come together and lead with

honor and integrity, as you all have had, being recognized today, with a Federal Government that looks like America and gets things done for all Americans.

So I want to say simply: Thank you, thank you, thank you, not only to you, but to your families as well, for the sacrifices you've all made to serve our Nation and to deliver for all the folks around the kitchen tables tonight—and today and this morning and tomorrow and the next day—who might never know your names.

It makes a difference. I hope that these awards remind each of you of why you're here and why it matters.

So, let's keep it up. Let's keep delivering for the American people. Because I tell you what: We work for them, and we have to do our job. And you're doing it incredibly well.

Thank you for all your exemplary work, and congratulations to all of you. May God bless you all, and may God protect our troops.

Thank you all so very, very much. Thank you.

Okay.

Captivity of McClatchy Newspapers Reporter Austin B. Tice in Syria

Q. Mr. President, when are you meeting with Austin Tice's parents?

The President. Today.

Federal Student Loan Debt Relief

[At this point, the President turned to leave the room, and a reporter asked a question as follows.]

Q. Mr. President, have you made a decision on student loan debt?

The President. Not yet.

[A reporter asked an additional question as the President was leaving the room.]

Q. Do you plan to commemorate 1 million deaths from COVID, sir?

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:59 p.m. from the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Director of the Office of Personnel Management Kiran A. Ahuja; and Health Resources and Services Administration Deputy Administrator and Presidential Rank Award recipient Diana Espinosa, who introduced the President. A reporter referred to Marc and Debra Tice, parents of Austin B. Tice.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : 2021 Presidential Rank Awards, virtual ceremony;
Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters :: White House.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Ahuja, Kiran A.; Espinosa, Diana.

Subjects: Diseases : Coronavirus, domestic prevention efforts; Economy, national : Household income and wages; Education : Postsecondary education :: Student loans, repayment options; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Environment : Quality and improvement efforts; Government organization and employees : Accountability and transparency, strengthening efforts; Government organization and employees : Federal programs, improvement efforts; Health and Human Services, Department of : Health Resources and Services Administration; Infrastructure, national improvement efforts; Medals, decorations, and awards :

Presidential Rank Awards; Natural disasters : Response and recovery efforts; Personnel Management, Office of; Syria : U.S. citizen and reporter, captivity.

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