

**Remarks in a Briefing on Wildfire Recovery Efforts in Los Angeles, California**  
*January 24, 2025*

*The President.* Thank you very much. Well, thank you very much, everybody. This is an honor to be with you.

Unfortunately, it's a very sad period, but what makes you feel good is, I met so many of the homeowners, and every one of them—a lot of them—and every one of them said to me they want to rebuild. I said, "Will you go elsewhere?" "No, no, no, no." It wasn't even, like, a question. They love the area. They love the people. The—it's like a family. It's incredible, actually, when you see some things like that.

We just left North Carolina, and we had just a similar type of disaster. It was water instead of fire, but, boy, that water did damage like I've never seen before. And then you come here, and you see this.

But the people are so amazing, and your fire department was so beautiful. Every one of them is in perfect physical shape. I said, "What do you guys do?" They have very high standards; I could tell you. [*Laughter*] And we took pictures with all of them, but very nicely, they gave us a little helmet. And I said: "Are you really—you wear this, huh? Is this real?" And they said, "Yes." I said: "It's awfully heavy. You have to be very strong to wear that." But that—that's the original, right? So it's pretty good.

But I just wanted to thank everybody. We're going to be with you. Your Governor met us at the plane, and we had a good talk—a very, very positive talk. We have to work together to get this really worked out.

I don't think you can realize how—how rough it is, how—how devastating it is until you see it.

I didn't realize. I mean, I saw a lot of bad things on television, but the extent of it, the size of it. We flew over it in a helicopter. We flew to a few of the areas, and it is devastation. It's incredible. It's really an incineration. Even some of the chimneys came down. Okay? When you have the chimneys come down, you know that's pretty hot stuff, and a lot of them were down. That was a bad sign too.

But I just want to commiserate, and we're going to celebrate—we'll be back to celebrate one day soon. I hope soon.

The Federal Government is standing behind you 100 percent. The First Lady and I are in California to express a great love for the people of California. We've had a—I've had great support always in California. We did very well recently, as you know, relatively speaking, at least, I can say. [*Laughter*] And it's been—it's been amazing. I have property in California, not too far away, actually. Right up the road in Palos Verdes—a big property. And I've always loved it. I've always loved being here.

But we have to grieve for the 28 Californians who have tragically perished. And sadly, you're going to be finding more. And that's going to be very sad, because I know people are missing. And when you look at that kind of incineration, you know what's going to happen; you're going to find some more.

But with all that we've gone through, I watched your firefighters, and they were really fighting at a big disadvantage. I got to know a lot of them just now, and they're incredible people.

They were so happy. They were saying, "Congratulations, sir." You know, they're thinking about country maybe even before this location that they all love.

But I'm pleased to be joined by many of the great California leaders, both Democrat and Republican. And it's an honor to meet some of you I didn't know, but I know every one of you by name.

L.A. County Supervisor Kathryn Barger. Thank you, Kathryn, very much. Mayor Karen Bass. Thank you, Karen. It's nice to meet you.

Representatives Jay Obernolte. Where is Jay? Jay—hi, Jay. It's been a tough period, Jay, right? Vince Fong, Kevin Kiley. Vince—Vince and Kevin, hi. Hi, Vince.

A man I know very well—I know him too well. *[Laughter]* Actually, and I say that actually with love because he's a great—he's actually been a great Congressman for a long time, and he's a great leader, and he loves the area as much as anybody, right? Darrell. So Darrell Issa. Young Kim, congratulations on an excellent career. I appreciate it.

Another one I know pretty well is—to put it mildly, is Tom McClintock, and he's with—he's been with us for a long time. We have some interesting things going on in Washington, and it's an honor that you have—that you guys are here. Thank you, Darrell, very much. Tom.

George Whitesides. Good, George. Thanks. It's a great name too, by the way. *[Laughter]*

Brad Sherman—oh, oh, I know Brad well. *[Laughter]* I know Brad, but that's all right. When—we're on the same side of this one. I know that. We'll work together, Brad, very well. Lot of respect.

And Presidential Envoy Ric Grenell, who's done a fantastic job for me over the years. He was Ambassador to Germany, and he was fantastic.

So, 2½ weeks ago, over 100-mile-an-hour winds transformed the Palisades Fire and other areas too into absolute infernos of death and destruction. And this is already the most expensive natural disaster, they say, in American history. That's—that's pretty amazing. The numbers are going to be staggering.

Most importantly, we have to get it built, and we have to, hopefully, find as few people as possible. We have already too many—too many. Twenty-eight, at least, they say.

We're going to work very hard with the mayor, the Governor, the supervisor, and everybody and get the resources behind you. And we have some amazing people, and we have some amazing fighters for things like this.

I also had the concept of getting some of the best developers in the country. I've had so many calls from developers, and they want to come in. They don't want anything. They just want to come in and help, and they really know how to get things done and get things built.

I would ask that the local officials, because we're going to waive just about—essentially, waive all Federal permits. We're going to have you go very quickly, because a Federal permit can take 10 years. We're not going to do that. We're not going to—we don't want to take 10 days. I would—*[applause]*. So we're declaring this a national emergency. By doing that, I can give you immediate—like, immediate permits. I'd ask that the local permitting process be the same.

Some of the people were saying they're going to have to—they're going to be forced to wait 18 months for their permits, and I don't think you're going to do that. I can't imagine that. So they are literally in a position right now, they'd like to start tonight. And they'll clean their site; they'll do everything. They just want to start. And they were very concerned with the 18 months.

So I'm sure you can get it down to, I would say, not even 18 days. They are ready. Mayor, they are ready to start.

*Mayor Karen R. Bass of Los Angeles, California.* We're ready.

*The President.* They're—I met so many of them.

The fire took place. It's nice and cool there now, and they want to start taking the debris. They want to take the debris. They want to do everything. They'll get rid of everything. They're going to do it by their own hand. And you're going to see some amazing things happen.

So we're waiving the Federal permits, either waive them or give them so rapidly it's not going to—it's going to be essentially the same thing. But we're going to try and just waive them. And we'll rely on the local. But the local, I hope, is going to do the same exact thing.

They're literally ready to start right away, tonight, so if you could do almost the same thing or the same thing, it would be great. For a building permit, you're going to have to, you know, check things out a little bit.

A lot of them—every single one of them said they're going to rebuild. I didn't have one person say they're selling or they're leaving or they're disgusted. They love their community, and it's incredible.

We even had one from your neck of the woods, right?

*The First Lady.* Yes.

*The President.* Here, stand—do you want to stand up? It was so nice the way you—they—she greeted my wife in an—in a very different—in a very different language, right? [*Laughter*] And it was very nice to see.

And you're staying, and you're going to rebuild and everything else?

*Pacific Palisades, CA, resident Mia Feil.* Yes, we are. We're ready. We're ready.

*The President.* Yes, everybody—everybody. So it's really great.

*Ms. Feil.* Please, let—please.

*The President.* So I'm signing an Executive order to open up the pumps and valves in the north. We want to get that water pouring down here as quickly as possible to let hundreds of millions of gallons of water flow down into Southern California, and that'll be a big benefit to you.

If—look, if you don't want it, you're going to tell me, but just I can't imagine it. I tell you who does like it is the fire department. When I said that, they were very happy with that. They didn't mind hearing that. But we have a lot of water that is available, and I hope you can work that out among yourselves.

But I think this will show that we have to have that water. We have to have that water. You're talking about unlimited water coming up from the Pacific Northwest, even coming up from parts of Canada, and it pours down naturally. It has for a million years. For a million years, it pours down. You'll never run out. You'll never have shortages, and you'll—you won't have things like this. And when you do, you'll have a lot of water to put it out. So I'm going to ask that you figure that out.

But I am—I really strongly recommended this 7 years ago, and I think I'm going to just do it. If you have big problems, you're going to let me know, but I just can't even imagine it.

But we're also surging Federal resources and assistance to the State, and California must adopt the commonsense policies to prevent fires, and we all know that.

You know we were talking—7 or 8 years ago, I was talking to people from Austria, people from Finland, people that live in forests. And one of the gentlemen, the top—one of the top—great leaders of Austria said, "We don't have forest fires, and we have trees that are actually far more flammable than they have in California." But they literally rake their forest.

They take down—if a tree comes down, they take it down. They say you have 18 months; after that, it's like a matchstick. And I know environmentally—some environmental groups like the trees to just melt into the ground, but when they do melt into the ground, they become an inferno. So I think you're going to have to change your ways in terms of that.

You have 30 years of leaves, and those leaves are dry as a bone, and they bur- —they burn. You know, interestingly, because I was at Paradise, who was the gentleman—right?—long time ago, I was at Paradise. What a beautiful paradise it—it was.

And how is it doing, by the way?

*Participant.* We're rebuilding.

*The President.* Are they rebuilding, right? Remember when——

*Participant.* Yes—[inaudible].

*The President.* He said, "You were up here, President." I went there. I never saw anything like it. But you know what amazed me? The—I'll never forget it. The trees were okay, because the trees are loaded with water. They suck that water out of the ground. And this was an inferno, just like—I would say, no different than this. And it was also the wind that caused a lot of problem. I mean, you had tremendous winds that there's not a lot you're going to do with. It was—you had up to a-hundred-mile-an-hour winds. It's unheard of.

But when I was in Paradise, I noticed that the trees—they were dark on the bottom, but they were absolutely living, and they lived because they're soaking wet. But the trees that were on the ground, within 12 to 18 months—they say 18 months at a maximum, you have to cut them up, take them away because they're matchsticks. But we saw that.

You saw that with me. I commented at the time. I said: "Look at this: The house has burned down, and the tree is standing and it's—other than being a little different color on the bottom and it went through an inferno. It's amazing. It's soaking wet."

So I think they have to do it. It's called management of the floor.

And when the gentleman from Austria and also Finland and other countries—they said, "We manage our—the forest floor very, very carefully, and we don't have forest fires." You know, they just don't have them. So I'm sure you're going to do the same thing.

So there can be no golden age without the Golden State. It's a great State. It's a fantastic place, and we're going to have a—we're going to have a big celebration soon. We're going to come back, and we'll come back as much as you need, and we're going to turn it around, and we're going to open the coffers.

You know, America wants this to be taken care of. They—this was a horrible thing to watch, and the way it just kept going and going, and then they'd find another area. It was like a genius on the other side. The fire was a genius the way it kept moving. But we're not going to stand for it.

I just met with the Olympic people, and they're all set to do a real job. So we have the Olympics, and I got them. You know, it was very interesting: I made the deal with the Olympics. I was called by your former mayor, and he said, "Would you call the Olympics," because I must

tell you, the Democrats, as you know, were not calling. They wouldn't do it. I don't—there was a bad experience somehow. And I did, and I got along great with the Olympic Committee, and we got the Olympics.

And then we got you the World Cup. That one, I focused on with Gianni. Gianni was great, the head of it. And so, you have that coming.

And then we have the 250 years coming up, which is going to be a great celebration. But I'll never forget, when I got the Olympics and then I got the—well, I was President when I got them. I said, "Oh, boy, it's too bad I won't be President." Who knew this was going to happen, right? [*Laughter*] I said, "I won't be President," because it would have been the 4 years. And in fact, I'd be retired by 4 days right now, I guess, right? [*Laughter*]

So, anyway. So I got them, and at least I'll be able to celebrate the Olympics, the World Cup, and—and the 250 years is going to be a very big deal. So we have the three biggest there are, and it was an honor to get.

If you have any questions, please let me know. And—and if you have a statement to make, I'd love to have—politically, if you'd like to make a statement. Brad, go ahead.

*Mayor Bass.* Mr. President——

*The President.* Oh, okay. I'll do——

*Representative Bradley J. Sherman.* Mr. President, thank you for coming——

*The President.* Sure. Thank you, Brad.

*Rep. Sherman.* ——to the 32nd Congressional District, and——

*The President.* Thank you.

*Rep. Sherman.* ——making feel—most people don't have adequate insurance because they couldn't get it. One company dropped 1,600 policies just in the last 6 months. We've got 16 times as much property damage here as from Hawaii, and I'm hoping that we get at least 16 times the Federal appropriation for the CDBG program that helps people rebuild.

[*At this point, Rep. Sherman continued his remarks, concluding as follows.*]

So I'm hoping that we can get these funds and that we don't punish individuals for the policies of their State. You can disagree with them, and I think you've got some ideas. I look forward to our——

*The President.* I do.

*Rep. Sherman.* ——us listening. Also, on tariffs——

*Mayor Bass.* Mr. President——

*Rep. Sherman.* ——I often agree with you on tariffs, but how about no tariffs on building materials for the next 3 years?

*The President.* Well, we'll take a look at that, actually. We'll take a look.

*Mayor Bass.* Mr. President——

*The President.* Mayor, please.

*Rep. Sherman.* Thank you.

*Mayor Bass.* Yes. First of all, let me just take the opportunity to officially welcome you to Los Angeles.

*The President.* Thank you.

*Mayor Bass.* Really appreciate you coming and especially you come just a few days after your Inauguration. So——

*The President.* Thank you very——

*Mayor Bass.* ——want you to know that your presence here is very much appreciated.

Let me also say that I know you had an opportunity to see the devastation. You've seen the extreme loss, the grief that people are going through here. And we are a hundred-percent committed to getting this neighborhood rebuilt again.

You mentioned a couple of things in terms of us expediting. So I signed executive directives right away so that we could cut the redtape, we could get people back building as fast as possible, and we're going to continue doing that. We absolutely——

*The President.* Mayor, the one thing is they——

*Mayor Bass.* Yes.

*The President.* ——are saying they will not be allowed to start for 18 months.

*Mayor Bass.* No, that will not be the case.

*The President.* Okay. I just hope you're right, because——

*Mayor Bass.* That will not—you can hold me to it.

*The President.* Because four groups said that, and——

*Mayor Bass.* No.

*The President.* ——that would be a——

*Mayor Bass.* No. That——

*The President.* They should be able to do it—they should be able to start tonight.

*Mayor Bass.* That will not be the case. You know, first, we have to take care—to make sure that there's not the—getting rid of the hazardous waste, cleaning things up so that people can start right away.

And just like you said, if somebody has—their house was destroyed and they're going to rebuild essentially the same—maybe a little bit longer, a little bit higher—they really shouldn't have to go through much of a process. So, I want you to know that we are expediting that. We absolutely need your help. We need the federal help. You're a builder.

*The President.* Well, you've got it, I told you. We—you will have no permit problem. There will be zero delay. And as far as I'm concerned, you already have the permits, but——

*Mayor Bass.* And——

*The President.* But I am——

*Mayor Bass.* And the resources.

*The President.* I am more worried, because I met—I met at least eight groups of—of homeowners, and I—you know, I'm much more worried about the fact that they said it's 18 months, exactly, and they were devastated. They want to start now. They want to start removing things. They're not allowed to do it now.

And you mentioned hazardous waste. Well, the hazardous waste—what's hazardous waste? I mean, you're going to have to define that. We're going to go through a whole series of questions on determining what's hazardous——

*Mayor Bass.* Nope. Nope, nope, nope.

*The President.* I just think you have to allow the people to go on their site and start the process tonight.

*Mayor Bass.* And we will.

*The President.* Okay, good.

*Mayor Bass.* You can come back and check.

*Representative Judy M. Chu.* Mr. Pre- ——

*The President.* It's very important.

*Rep. Chu.* Mr. President?

*The President.* Yes.

*Rep. Chu.* I'm Congressmember Judy Chu, and I represent the areas of Altadena and Pasadena.

*The President.* Yes.

*Rep. Chu.* That's the Eaton fire. And there is a world of hurt there. I know that you've gone to the Palisades and you've seen the devastation——

*The President.* Right.

*Rep. Chu.* ——but it's apocalyptic in Altadena. And thank goodness I have a partner with Supervisor Kathryn Barger in working to help people get back to normal and to rebuild. But right now, they have nothing. And there have been 9,500 structures burned. Most of the deaths have occurred in our area——

*The President.* Yes.

*Rep. Chu.* ——with the Eaton fire.

*The President.* It's very bad.

*Rep. Chu.* And thousands of people are without homes. And these are working people. These are working class people. They are people like Dr. Jackie Jacobs, who was an educator all her life and then finally became the first Black administrator of her educational institution, Pasadena City College. And then retired—now 88 years old. And then her home of 30 years burned in Altadena.

*The President.* Yes.

*Rep. Chu.* She has nothing. She left without—with only the clothes on her back. She has nothing. And so they need this help.

And I just want to make sure that you remember the people in Altadena and Pasadena and that you can come there and see how terrible the devastation has been there——

*The President.* Yes.

*Rep. Chu.* ——so that they can get the help that they need.

*The President.* Just remember one thing—and I like the way you express yourself—beautifully, actually—but I've only been here 3 days. And I'll do a great job, but we had another

President. And this took place during the life of another President, not me, and—but I'm going to be the President that's going to help you fix it, because he would not have been able to help you fix it. Okay?

So we'll take care of it. We'll take care of it. And we'll work closely, yes. We'll work closely.

And I know your community was really devastated.

*Rep. Chu.* Thank you.

*The President.* Incredibly. So we understand that. Thank very much.

*Los Angeles County Fifth District Supervisor Kathryn Barger.* Actually, Mr. President, I'm just going to follow up.

*The President.* Yes. Please go ahead.

*Ms. Barger.* I'm Kathryn Barger, and I also represent Altadena. And what I tell people is, people of Altadena are the exact people you talked to when you were running. You've got individuals from every—every walk of life. And it is the—actually, at one time, was the only place African Americans could purchase homes. It was redlined. And so you've got a lot of generational wealth there.

[*Ms. Barger continued her remarks, concluding as follows.*]

And I have made them this commitment, because this is my last term, that for the next 4 years—you talk about 18—or 18 months—I've told our county staff that if you're going to get in the way, then get another job.

*The President.* Good.

*Ms. Barger.* Because we are an all-hands-on-deck——

*The President.* That's good.

*Ms. Barger.* And quite frankly, if the bureaucracy can't get out of the way, we'll just roll over it. And we've said that, and we've made it clear. The Governor has waved CEQA, which I feel should be completely reformed, if not eliminated. And if it's being eliminated for this——

*The President.* How are they doing with CEQA?

*Ms. Barger.* How are they doing with it?

*The President.* How is it? What's been the attitude of the people running that whole situation?

*Ms. Barger.* It adds sometimes years on to an application.

*The President.* Can't do it. Can't.

*Ms. Barger.* No. And the Governor has waived——

*The President.* And Coastal Commission also.

*Ms. Barger.* He waived that.

*The President.* We're going to have to override the Coastal Commission——

*Ms. Barger.* Right.

*The President.* ——because I've dealt with the Coastal Commission for a long time, and they are considered the most difficult in the entire country. And we cannot have them play their games and wait 10 years to give somebody a permit.



In fact, I'm going to override the Coastal Commission. I'm not going to let them get away with the—their antics. Okay?

Thank you. Thank you very much.

*Representative Vincent K. Fong.* Mr. President, I just want to thank you for your leadership on California water policy. You made it a priority from day one. For those of us in the Central Valley in Northern California, we have catastrophic wildfires as well. California is a wildfire-prone area, so ensuring reliable, stable water supplies is critical.

And so, your leadership, your Executive order moving more water, maximizing flows throughout the State of California, building more water storage, more conveyance, coordinating the——

*The President.* It would have a great impact on—I know your area very well. It would have an unbelievable impact on your area.

*Rep. Fong.* Absolutely. We just want to thank you for making it a priority.

*The President.* Yes. You know, even beyond the fire stuff, the farms—I drive up—I was driving up with Congressmen a few years ago because they were complaining they had no water. And I was driving up, and you'll see all of this incredible land, but it's absolutely bone-dry. And then you'll see little green patches, and the green patches are so beautiful.

You know, they have that land. It's—they say it's as good as Iowa farmland, but it has no water. And it's artificial has no water. They send the water out into the Pacific Ocean.

And when we let that water come through your valleys and down to Los Angeles and everything, you're going to have a different place. It's going to be a whole different place.

*Rep. Fong.* Yes.

*The President.* And you guys have to get together and say, "Gee, we want it." It's the craziest thing I've ever seen. So, at least, you have said that, and I appreciate it.

Because your farmers will be able to—instead of having 1 acre out of 100—which is all they have—they'll be able to have 100 acres out of 100. And it's among the best—they say it's the best farmland just about in the country, as good as any place there is, so—but you can't—it's no good without water.

So that's beyond the fire stuff. But—today we're talking about fire, but it's good for everything. So I hope you can lead a group. And, Darrell, if you can lead a group—I know how you feel—and, you know, support what I'm doing, because what I'm doing, I guess, is controversial.

I don't know what's—I don't know what's controversial about sending millions of dollars—of sending millions and millions of gallons of beautiful freshwater from the Pacific Northwest and further up than even that into an area that's bone dry.

We have to—you know, I have a house in Beverly Hills, and you get notices every once in a while: They want you to go down to 38 gallons per person or something—per house, per person. I say, "You mean you can only have"—you know, 38 gallons sounds like a lot. It's not a lot. And they want to do that every once in a while, and you just think it's ridiculous.

When you have—you have, like, just about as much water as anybody in the country. And we shouldn't be in a position where you have tumbleweed that's dry as a bone—that even tumbleweed can be nice and green and rich and loaded up with water, and it's not going to burn. You don't even have to remove it. It's not going to burn. But it's just dry.

So I hope you can all get together and say, "I'm so happy with the water that's going to be flowing down," because it's—I just don't see anything. They talk about the delta smelt, which is a fish that's this big, but it is—it is really not—doesn't have to be protected, because it's in other areas—it's in numerous other areas. So it doesn't have to be protected. The people of California have to be protected.

*Pacific Palisades, CA, resident Joel Pollak.* Mr. President——

*The President.* Thank you.

*Representative Kevin Kiley.* Mr. President——

*The President.* Please.

*Mr. Pollak.* Mr. President, could I just speak for a moment?

*Rep. Kiley.* Kevin Kiley, California.

*The President.* Yes.

*Rep. Kiley.* First of all, you're absolutely right about the Coastal Commission. I've introduced legislation to rein them in. We've been talking with Ric about this.

*The President.* They're out of control.

*Rep. Kiley.* Absolutely out of control. It's insane the things they've been getting away with.

*The President.* I think they thrive on it actually, if you want to know the truth. [*Laughter*] It's so ridiculous.

*Rep. Kiley.* That's right. They even tried to stop SpaceX from launching rockets. It's just ridiculous.

*The President.* That's true. [*Laughter*]

*Rep. Kiley.* But you mentioned your predecessor and how he didn't fix the situation, which is absolutely right. Not only that, during the Caldor Fire, which is a few years ago, which was in my district, 600 people lost their homes in a town called Grizzly Flat. He came, and he promised that he would help them out, but he broke that promise many times. He never delivered them the individual assistance they were asking for.

[*Rep. Kiley continued his remarks, concluding as follows.*]

But I just want to thank you for your focus on bringing sanity to California water and fire policy. There's no place that needs a revolution in common sense quite like California.

*The President.* You have so much water. [*Laughter*] Use it, and be happy about it.

*Mr. Pollak.* Mr. President——

*The President.* Be happy.

*Mr. Pollak.* Mr. President, my name is Joel Pollak, and I am a journalist with Breitbart News, but I happen to live in the Pacific Palisades, as do other colleagues.

[*Mr. Pollak continued his remarks, concluding as follows.*]

But there was still no water, except for the water in the gutter coming from the burnt homes uphill. So I went to and fro to my gutter and my fence with my bucket. We found two more buckets—bucket after bucket after bucket. Many of my neighbors, including some here, tried to fight the fires. They couldn't. We were lucky our house was saved.

But we should not have to rely on buckets to put out a fire.

*The President.* That's right.

*Mr. Pollak.* You can't stop an 80-mile-per-hour wind or a 100-mile-per-hour wind, but there were many things that went wrong here that are basic and small.

[*Mr. Pollak continued his remarks, concluding as follows.*]

I would like to ask you to follow the 9/11 Commission precedent and appoint a special master to watch the money to make sure that every Federal dollar that gets spent here is spent on fire relief and rebuilding and not on everything else.

*The President.* I like that. It's a good idea.

Here—here's a good one, right over here. I don't know if you——

*Mr. Pollak.* He's—he's very busy.

*The President.* Do we all like Ric?

He was the Ambassador to Germany. He was fantastic. Angela Merkel's happiest day ever in her history—and she had a long history—was the day I removed him from there and put him in charge of a very high level of intelligence and intelligent people—but they were not intelligent enough to fool him.

But Ric Grenell has been fantastic, and he lives here. And I don't know if you want to either think about it or recommend some people—or get together and recommend some people as a group, which is fine—but Ric would be somebody that I would certainly consider.

And Breitbart is fantastic, by the way. Congratulations on that.

*Mr. Pollak.* Thank you.

*The President.* And I was so impressed with the firefighters I met before. And they said that—you know, I asked them, "How many of the pumps—how many of the hydrants were working?" And it was a, you know, large percentage of them were not working at all. They had no water. And the ones that did have water didn't have a lot of pressure.

And one of the things that was missing—many of you have sprinklers in—over your living room and your bathroom and your kitchen. I mean, if those sprinklers worked with some pressure, you would have had a lot of—you would have had a much different outcome. So, we're going to work on that.

I think in terms of that, Ric Grenell would be good. Or Ric, you'll—you'll head up a group of people that would recommend a few people to me, maybe a Commission——

*U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Special Missions Richard A. Grenell.* Yes, sir.

*The President.* ——set up a Commission. I like it. Because we're talking about a lot of money.

The other one is—Kelly Loeffler is now the head of Small Business, and small businesses is big business. It's one of the—it's actually one of the biggest banks in the world. We call it the Small Business Administration. And she's a Cabinet member—full Cabinet member. She's fantastic.

Her husband is the head of the New York Stock Exchange, so they know something about money—and other exchanges, actually. Fantastic people.

And she wants to come here—almost immediately after she gets approved, she wants to come here and open up small business to the area, because you can have—they have a lot of—a

lot of money. I always say that small business is actually a very big business when you add it all up. And she's going to come here, and she—it's a very important thing.

I want to thank also the First Lady, because she wanted to come here. She wanted to be here. She has so many friends.

And she also wanted to see North Carolina, because that was another disaster that was so bad—so different, but so bad. And she just wanted to go there. We said, "We're going to stop at one, and then we're going to the other."

In many respects, it was a depressing day, but in many respects, it was a beautiful day, because the spirit is so incredible. North Carolina and here—very, very similar situation. Different—so different, and yet so similar, actually.

And so I just thought it was very nice. She wanted to be here, and we appreciate——

*The First Lady.* Thank you.

*The President.* ——we appreciate that.

*The First Lady.* Thank you.

*The President.* Please.

*Representative Darrell E. Issa.* Jay.

*Pacific Palisades, CA, resident Chris Feil.* Mr. President, speaking of the 18 months that we were talking, all the Palisades residents were on a Zoom last night—there was about a thousand people; Mayor Bass was on it, and a bunch of other people—and they—we were all told that the EPA said it would be 3 to 6 months to check all the dirt, and then it would be another 18 months to clear all the lots. So we're all sitting here now and——

*The President.* Is that local?

*Mr. Feil.* Yes.

*The President.* You've got to do—you've got to——

*Mr. Feil.* So, like, when we're sitting here now, and Mayor Bass is——

*The President.* I don't want to be the only one to give you permits, like, in 1 day and then I find out that the cities, the towns, and the State is not going to give you permits. Because—and you know, the problem with permits: It only takes one.

*Special Envoy Grenell.* Yes.

*The President.* You might need seven different permits.

You shouldn't have any at this point. You should just let them build, but——

*Mr. Feil.* But, I guess, what we want to know is when——

*The President.* And you know, you're only as good as the weakest one. So, if you have one that's going to hold you up but the others are going to give it to you in 24 hours, it's not going to help you very much. So they have to work on that.

*Mr. Feil.* So, I mean, we—we were told last night 18 months. So what's—if that's not the answer, Mayor Bass, what is the answer? Because that's—that's——

*The President.* That's what everybody said.

*Mr. Feil.* ——that's what we were all told last night.

*Mayor Bass.* Well, and let me just tell you that we are going to do everything we can—slashing regulations, expediting everything—so that people can begin the process right away.

You know, we have the Disaster Recovery Center on Pico and Westwood. We have Building and Safety there. People are already contacting the local agencies. We're bringing our—our city departments together so that people don't get caught in the loop of going from one room to the next. We want them all to be in the same room so that you can get busy rebuilding ASAP.

*Ms. Feil.* But you have to clear the lots sooner.

*Mayor Bass.* Absolutely.

*Ms. Feil.* You have to clear the lots.

*Mayor Bass.* Yes.

*Ms. Feil.* You guys are in charge. You have to do your job——

*Mayor Bass.* Yes. And we will clear the lots.

*Ms. Feil.* Okay.

*Mayor Bass.* Absolutely. In the city and in the county.

*Mr. Feil.* So—so when the——

*Mayor Bass.* We are working together.

*Mr. Feil.* When there's——

*Mayor Bass.* Both levels of government are working in unity.

*Mr. Feil.* But what we were told last night from the Corps of Engineers—that it'd be 18 months. Is it not 18 months? Is it, like—we—that's the answer that we got——

*Ms. Feil.* We need specific answers.

*Mr. Feil.* ——and that's what we're all hanging on.

*Mayor Bass.* Yes.

*Mr. Feil.* So, if you're telling us, it's now faster. Is it 6 months? Is it—I mean, all of our lives, rents, all this stuff is weighing on this.

*Mayor Bass.* Exactly.

*The President.* Six months is no good.

*Mayor Bass.* And the number-one thing that we are going to do immediately, and you will see this happen, is to clear out the debris. And you know, we're concerned right now, over the weekend, because of the potential rain, but we are going to move as fast as we can. But we want you to be safe, and we want you to be back in your homes immediately.

*The President.* But the people are willing to clean out their own debris. It——

*Mayor Bass.* Yes, and——

*The President.* ——doesn't cost a lot.

*Mayor Bass.* ——they can. And they are able to——

*The President.* You should let them do it, because——

*Mayor Bass.* No, no, no. They can do that.

*The President.* —by the time you hire contractors—

*Mayor Bass.* Right.

*The President.* —it's going to be 2 years.

*Mayor Bass.* If a family want—

*The President.* The people are willing to get a dumpster and do it themselves and clean it out.

*Mayor Bass.* And they can do that.

*The President.* There's not that much left. It's all incinerated.

*Mayor Bass.* That's right.

*The President.* And you know, it's just going to take a long time if you do—you can do some of it, but a lot of these people—I know that guy right there that's talking—I know my people. You'll be on that thing tonight, throwing the stuff away, and your site will be—it will look perfect within 24 hours. And that's what he wants to do.

He doesn't want to wait around for 7 months till the city hires some demolition contract that's going to charge him—

*Mayor Bass.* If individuals want to build—

*The President.* —\$25,000 to do his lot.

*Mayor Bass.* Yes.

*The President.* I think you have to—you have emergency powers, just like I do, and I'm exercising my emergency powers. You have to exercise them also.

*Mayor Bass.* I did exercise them.

*The President.* Because I looked—

*Mayor Bass.* I signed an emergency declaration.

*The President.* —I mean, you have a very powerful emergency power.

*Mayor Bass.* Yes.

*The President.* And you can do everything within 24 hours.

*Mayor Bass.* Yes. And if individuals want to clear out their property, they can.

*Mr. Feil.* But—but we can't even—

*Pacific Palisades, CA, resident Emily Bianchi.* We can't even get—

*Mr. Feil.* We can't even get to the houses.

*Ms. Bianchi.* We can't even get in here without Trump.

*Mayor Bass.* Well, yes, but you know that you will be able to go back soon.

*Mr. Feil.* When?

*Mayor Bass.* We think within a week.

*Ms. Feil.* I hope that's true. Everybody wants to go see their homes—

*The President.* That's a long time, a week. I'll be honest, to me—everyone standing in front of their house, they want to go to work, and they're not allowed to do it. And—

*Mayor Bass.* And the most important——

*The President.* ——a week is a long time.

*Mayor Bass.* ——thing is for people to be safe.

*The President.* They're safe. They're safe. You know what they're not safe. They're not safe now.

*Rep. Issa.* We can——

*The President.* They were going to be much safer——

A week—a week is actually a long time, the way I look at it. I watched hundreds of people standing in front of their lots, and they're not allowed to go in. It's all burned. It's gone. It's done. Nothing is going to happen to it. It's not going to burn anymore. There's nothing to burn. There's almost nothing to burn.

And they want to go in there. The people are all over the place. They're standing, and I say, "Why aren't you going in?" "We're trying to get a permit." And the permit is going to take them—everybody said 18 months. You said 18 months. You said 18 months.

*Ms. Feil.* Because that was on the Zoom last night.

*Mr. Feil.* That's what we heard last night.

*Ms. Feil.* That's what you guys talked about last night.

*The President.* And that was last night?

*Mr. Feil.* Just to clear the lots, sir. Eighteen months to clear the lots.

*Ms. Feil.* Yes, just to clear the lots.

*Ms. Bianchi.* We can't even see our homes right now. We are blocked from entering our street. We can't even—this is our—the first time we saw our house was yesterday.

*Rep. Issa.* Mr. President, we're going to be together next week.

*The President.* Yes.

*Rep. Issa.* And during the interim, many of us are involved in—and Tom McClintock, who you know, has been an expert on this for years——

*The President.* That's right.

*Rep. Issa.* We are going to be putting conditions on the money to do two things: require that it be done timely and affordable and then, secondly, that we protect those who will come afterwards.

As we speak, there are 6,000 acres burning in my district on the Mexican border. There will be more fires until we include—in any disaster relief—items which will prevent it or at least mitigate it from happening again. So you're going to see us proposing both of those, the——

*The President.* Like, like water. Little things, like water.

*Rep. Issa.* We're going to—we're going to do that for them.

*The President.* You know, the party of common sense. See, we're the—Brad, we're the party of common sense. You're not, in all fairness.

*Participant.* Yes, sir.

*The President.* We like water to put out fires. It's really quite efficient.

All right.

*Rep. Issa.* Thank you, Mr. President.

*Representative Jay Obernolte.* Mr. President. I'm Jay Obernolte. My district is just a bit east of here.

*The President.* Yes.

*Rep. Obernolte.* And you were talking about the need to better manage our forests and our wildlands to prevent this from happening again. And you were so right about that.

Just last year, a couple months ago, in October, they put out a fire—the Line Fire—in my district. It was over twice as big as the Palisades Fire. And they put it out less than a mile from my house, in an area where we had done thinning. And they stopped the fire, Mr. President, on a firebreak that we had built a couple of years ago.

*The President.* That's right.

*Rep. Obernolte.* We have an area just on the other side of my community that hasn't been thinned in decades because it's being held up by a lawsuit from an environmental group that says we're going to reduce habitat.

[*Rep. Obernolte continued his remarks, concluding as follows.*]

And not to say that they should—the merits shouldn't be heard, but we need to hear them, and we can move on, resolve them.

*The President.* Is this a State group—State or Federal group?

*Rep. Obernolte.* This is a local group, actually, Mr. President, but they—they have help from the State——

*The President.* They use——

*Rep. Obernolte.* ——and the federal.

*The President.* ——the environment to make themselves feel good, and they're destroying our country. And you've got to—at some point, you've got to put your foot down. I know exactly what you're talking—you have local and State groups——

*Special Envoy Grenell.* Yes.

*The President.* ——and you have Federal groups too. And you got to fight them the right way, because you'll—you'll never——

Even if the mayor gives, you're have a local group come in and sue. You're not allowed to go on your property. You're going to give—they're going to talk about asbestos and every other thing.

They want to go on their property, and they want to clean out their property, and you cannot let anything get in their way.

And you'll have this place built up quickly, beautiful—it will be more beautiful than before.

And I would do one other thing. I'd give them a 10-percent, 15-percent bonus on their house, because they went through hell, and they should be allowed to build a little bit—give them a little bit—lot line bonus. Give them a bonus on size, maybe a little bonus on height. They went through hell.



You know, some of them had houses where they were restricted. They have to have an 8-foot ceiling; you let them have a 10-foot ceiling. Let them build a nice house, a nicer house than they had before.

But I would give them a 10- or 15-percent bonus on their plans. And I think it would be a—it would be very well received, because they'll be able to build a little bit nicer house. Do you like that idea, by the way? They deserve it. Because you know what? It's not their fault that this fire took place. This fire took place—could have been stopped. It's not their fault. It's not the homeowners' fault.

*Special Envoy Grenell.* Yes.

*The President.* And I think they should—they should be entitled to a bonus on their house. Okay.

*Los Angeles, CA, City Councilwoman Traci Park.* Mr. President —

*The President.* Please.

*Ms. Park.* Mr. President—

*The President.* Go ahead.

*Representative Douglas L. LaMalfa.* Thank you. Some good news from Paradise—we stood together there 6 years ago—

*The President.* Oh, that was terrible.

*Rep. LaMalfa.* —along with the Governor—

*The President.* That was so tough.

*Rep. LaMalfa.* —that 34 home—3,400 homes have been rebuilt out of the 18,000 lost, and there's 400 more in the wings. And so FEMA was very helpful. Now, my colleague, who has Altadena here, probably a very similar situation. Clearing the lots—they're probably going to have to clear about a foot worth of soil underneath those foundations—

*The President.* Right.

*Rep. LaMalfa.* —to get the toxicity out, so they'll need a lot of help. Those are working-class folks in Altadena.

*The President.* And we did a good job with you people.

*Rep. LaMalfa.* And FEMA was extremely helpful.

*The President.* Yes.

*Rep. LaMalfa.* Thirty thousand—

*The President.* That was the old days when FEMA was good. FEMA is no good anymore.

*Rep. LaMalfa.* Yes.

*The President.* That was when we ran it. FEMA was very good, but now FEMA is not good.

*Rep. LaMalfa.* We've got to get them on track.

But on the water. Thanks so much for your strong efforts on that. Right now Lake Shasta, which is my district, is dumping more water than what is coming in. So is Folsom Lake. And those are Federal projects that should be building up, because we're latter January—latter January here, and there's not—you can't count on the rain and the snow coming—

*The President.* Yes.

*Rep. LaMalfa.* —every year. And so, if we don't fill those projects, then my colleague in San Joaquin Valley isn't going to get his water for his farmers. Well, it might be all right up in the north. They aren't going to get it.

And then, the water needs to go through aqueduct for Southern Cal to refill, maybe the Santa Ynez Reservoir that was empty during this——

*The President.* You know, you don't even need reservoirs. With the water coming down, you don't need the reservoir. You have so much water, you don't need it. You only have reservoirs because you're trying to hold water. But you have natural water coming down along the coast. It's—for a million years, it's been coming.

You know that, right?

*Rep. LaMalfa.* Yes.

*The President.* In addition to that, you have a lot of half pipe. In other words, you have the half pipe that's built, and it hasn't been used. You see, it's bone dry. No water has been in that half pipe for years and years. It's closed up years ago. It's already——

*Rep. LaMalfa.* Had the reservoir—sorry.

*The President.* It's already there. Yes. You've got it—you've got——

*Rep. LaMalfa.* Had the—had the reservoir above Santa—Palisades has been full, they wouldn't have run out of water in a few hours. It would have gone for at least a few days with  
40——

*The President.* Right.

*Rep. LaMalfa.* —40 acre feet out of 600,000—[inaudible].

*The President.* That reservoir has been empty for a long time.

*Rep. LaMalfa.* Yes.

*The President.* And it shouldn't have been empty. Okay, any other questions?

*Rep. LaMalfa.* Thank you.

*The President.* Yes, please.

*Councilwoman Park.* Mr. President, my name is Traci Park. I represent the people of the Pacific Palisades on the L.A. City Council. I wanted to thank you for your loyal support to our military——

*The President.* Thank you.

*Councilwoman Park.* —our police officers, and especially our firefighters.

*The President.* Thank you. Thank you.

*Councilwoman Park.* My top priority going forward is to get these men and women home as soon as possible and open up the pathway to begin their rebuilding process.

It was the Army Corps of Engineers who announced last night that it would be 18 months. I am fully committed to doing my part on the ground with our State agencies and our city——

*The President.* Good.

*Councilwoman Park.* —and our county partners to speed this up.

*The President.* Good.

*Councilwoman Park.* I just ask for your ongoing partnership with FEMA and the EPA and our other Federal agencies to make sure that we have a commitment across all layers of government to get these people back home.

Thank you, sir.

*The President.* I do—and I do thank you very much. It's well said.

I do have to say, FEMA is a big disappointment. We had it working well. We had great people, but FEMA is not good anymore. What FEMA did in North Carolina—you know, they still haven't even gone to certain areas. They don't know what they're doing.

And I say, you don't need FEMA, you need a good State government. And when you have a problem in Los Angeles, or when you have a problem even in the State of California, you have your own, essentially, FEMA. You fix it yourself.

You don't have somebody coming in from a state where they have no idea—like Florida, they come in from hurricanes, they have people staying in Alaska. And now they see, "Oh, this is very nice." But by the time they get familiar with it, they don't know anything.

FEMA is a very expensive, in my opinion, mostly failed situation. We had great people. We did some great jobs. But each State should take care of their problem and get money from the Federal Government. It would be so much better, so much more efficient.

So we're looking at that because we have had—and you're going to have problems with FEMA too. You've already had problems with FEMA. FEMA doesn't even show up. It takes weeks before they even show up.

And what happens is, the State then relies on FEMA, and nobody does that, and I think because FEMA doesn't show up. So it's not a good situation. So we'll make some recommendations on that.

But you have to push like hell to get the permits, because I'm just hearing things that I don't like to hear. I think you're not going to get your permits as fast as people are saying. We have to get them in.

Mayor, if you—if I can help you at all in that regard, you'll let me know, but you're going to have all your Federal permits. That's going to be the easy part—which, by the way, is the most—by far the hardest part.

You know who controls your water is Department of Commerce, and I already have that approval. And that—that's usually a very long process, but that's—that's—the hard part was the Federal, but we already have that done.

So anything I can do, please let me know.

Please, go ahead.

*Councilwoman Park.* Thank you.

*Participant.* President Trump, I think one of the areas for our community that is really important in the rebuild are getting the schools, the rec center, the libraries all rebuilt. And whatever Federal support and whatever support we can get from you, working with the local folks—

*The President.* You lost all your schools?

*Participant.* —we need it. We lost all our schools.

*The President.* You lost four—you lost your four schools?

*Participant.* Four schools, rec center, sports fields, library. And, as you saw, this is an incredible community of families. And our kids, that's—that's what they did all day was go to school, go to the rec center, go to the library. Like, we don't have any of that.

So we can all rebuild our homes, which is great, but if none of that infrastructure is here, then it's—it's not the same community. So we—we need those areas——

*The President.* Were they completely burned down, the schools?

*Participant.* Yes, completely.

*The President.* Wow.

*Participant.* Most of them, yes.

*The President.* All of them? All of them?

*Participant.* Pretty much all of them, yeah. Palisades Elementary, which a number of our kids all go to, I mean, the place is basically destroyed. So we can't wait 5 years for that to be rebuilt.

*The President.* No, you can't. No.

*Participant.* Because we can't live there if there's no schools. So that's an area where we would love your help and support.

I love the idea of having some, you know, local council that can use those Federal dollars, implement them quickly into rebuilding those areas.

*The President.* Well, I'm going to ask Ric to set—I think right from this table—you might put a couple of the fire guys back there on that I just met—okay?—because they're really good.

But get a group and figure out how we can do the processing faster.

*Rep. Sherman.* Mr. President, if I can just defend FEMA a little bit.

*The President.* Yes.

*Rep. Sherman.* They brought thousands of people in. I don't know how they're doing in other States. They're doing a good job for us here. They've got a huge center that's open from 9 in the morning till 8 at night.

But also, when you have a disaster this size, you need to be able to deploy thousands of people, which they've been able to do. Now, California, if we did it on our own, maybe we'd have thousands of people.

*The President.* You do.

*Rep. Sherman.* But if Rhode Island——

*The President.* You do.

*Rep. Sherman.* ——has a Palisades disaster, are they then supposed to keep thousands——

*The President.* How many people do you have in California? Thirty-six—how many—what's——

*Mayor Bass.* Forty.

*Rep. Sherman.* We're close—close to——

*Mayor Bass.* Forty.

*The President.* —how many—how many million people do you have here?

*Mayor Bass.* Forty.

*Rep. Sherman.* But—

*The President.* You have 40 million people. You're not going to get a few thousand people?

The problem with FEMA is they come from all over the country. They end up in arguments with your people from California because they want to do it a totally different way. And—

*Rep. Sherman.* They're getting—[inaudible].

*The President.* I can live either way, but you haven't gotten very much done with FEMA, because—and all you have to do is look at North Carolina. It's one of the great disasters of all time.

*Rep. Sherman.* And, Mr. President, you can't have Rhode Island maintain a staff of thousands and thousands of people waiting to see if they have a disaster.

*The President.* You know who came in and fixed North Carolina—or the process? Other States, people from all over the country came. And you have the same thing. You have a lot of people from all over the country. Getting the people is not a problem. Getting the organization is a big problem.

FEMA is incompetently run, and it costs about three times more than it should cost.

*Rep. Sherman.* I'm hoping that you can get it better run.

*The President.* We can spend money on schools instead of giving money to bureaucracy. It takes you so much longer.

*Rep. Sherman.* I would like to thank FEMA—

*The President.* It takes you so much longer.

*Rep. Sherman.* —for helping our people.

*The President.* No, FEMA—FEMA has a standard, Brad. And I'm a builder. I build—I was a good—very good builder. FEMA has a standard that's so slow. They want permit on permit on permit, and then they want permits on top of that. If you use permit—FEMA, you'll be here for a long time.

What I'm saying is get the city, get the State to give you immediate, 24-hour permits. These people are going to build their own homes. They're going to get them built fast.

How many of the people—could I ask you one question? How many of the people—what are people going to do for financing? What are people going to do—how many people can build a home, percentage-wise, like, where they don't have to go out and get funds? Some people are just not going to be able to rebuild their home because they have a beautiful home, but they don't have cash, right?

So what are—what are people looking to do in that case? You're going to have a big percentage, I would assume, Brad, like that. What are they going to do?

Go ahead.

*Rep. Sherman.* We—Mr. President, without your help, they're only going to get \$43,000 from the Federal Government, even if they have a half a million-dollar uninsured loss.

*The President.* Well, you know, you did something, Brad, with—every insurance company in the country left California.

*Mr. Pollak.* That's right.

*The President.* That's why you have no insurance, because you made it so impossible. People that think like you made it so impossible.

*Mr. Pollak.* That's right.

*The President.* And, Brad——

[*Several participants spoke at once.*]

*Rep. Sherman.* People like me? Mr. President——

*The President.* Every insurance company——

*Rep. Sherman.* ——I don't know—I don't know——

*The President.* I'll tell you this.

*Rep. Sherman.* ——what you know about my thinking.

*The President.* I've never seen a State where almost nobody has insurance. And I said, "What happened?" And they said, "Like, 6 months ago, they all left. And 2 years ago, they had different, you know, quadrants, but they left." And you have very little insurance here. I mean, it's—I've never seen anything like it.

*Rep. Sherman.* We had a lot of insurance companies pull out, but I have no idea what——

*The President.* And the insurance companies actually have been warning you.

*Special Envoy Grenell.* That's right.

*The President.* Now, I'm not a big fan of insurance companies. Okay? They have their big drawbacks too. But the insurance company—I've been reading—I read the papers very well, and you know, they've been warning California for a long time.

They've also been saying, "We want water." You don't have water. We—you know, you're supposed to get fire insurance, and the insurance company goes, "Hey, you don't have any water in your fire hydrants." So it's a tough situation.

I'm not a big fan of insurance companies. I get that.

*Rep. Sherman.* They're pulling out of Florida as well.

*The President.* But you—but, Brad, you lost your insurance company six months ago because the State wouldn't give them what they had to have.

*California Policy Center Director for Water and Energy Policy Edward Ring.* Yes, and, Mr. President, I remember the big——

*The President.* Go ahead, please. Go ahead.

*Mr. Ring.* I'm Ed Ring from the California Policy Center. And in the matter of prevention of fires, in the matter of the cost of rebuilding, both of which affect insurance rates, I think one—to support something one of the other participants said—a reform you might consider—and it could be an act of Congress—is that the losers in environmentalist lawsuits pays the legal fees. And I think that would be a big step in the right direction.

*The President.* What was that?

*Special Envoy Grenell.* The losers of the—of a lawsuit should pay all the fees.

*The President.* Oh, you mean loser pays. I love that. [*Laughter*] Well, if you did loser pays, you could cut your courts in about one—about—you could cut them down about 90 percent. Loser pays.

You know what would also benefit: medical. If you had loser pays for medical, your medical costs would go down by 50 percent. That's an interesting thing.

You know, I'd bring that up. But you know, the only problem, the strongest lobby in the world, you know what it is? The lawyer lobby.

So, when you go back to your local Congressman, "Hello, Congressman, how about"——

*Participant.* I'm not a lawyer.

*The President.* —— "how about going against the lawyers for a little while?"

No, loser pays, you know, very good. In Europe, they use it—in certain parts of Europe, and they have very little litigation. That's right.

*Representative George T. Whitesides.* Mr. ——

*The President.* Yes, please.

*Rep. Whitesides.* Mr. President, I represent the 27th Congressional District——

*The President.* Yes.

*Rep. Whitesides.* ——which is on the north side of the North San Fernando Valley, through Santa Clarita and Lancaster and Palmdale.

I just wanted to tell you a story of heroism. Yesterday we had another big fire. We had several big fires across, and this fire was moving fast. It was moving a thousand feet per minute. But what these heroes did—the firefighters and the sheriffs and the law enforcement officials—they mobilized 4,000 people within about 6 hours. They mobilized 20 air attack aircraft and helicopters, and they saved the city of Castaic.

And so I just wanted to ask you to join us in recognizing those amazing heroes.

*The President.* I love that. I love that.

*Rep. Whitesides.* We——

*The President.* I love that.

*Rep. Whitesides.* I think the thing that we all—and I'm very encouraged by your words—we're all here to help the folks here.

*The President.* Yes.

*Rep. Whitesides.* Right?

*The President.* That's right.

*Rep. Whitesides.* And your words about building quickly—building well, but building quickly—is what I think we are all here to do.

And I think if we can take that spirit out of today—it is really important that you and your wife are here. If we can take that spirit, we're going to help these people as quickly as possible, get them back on their feet, and recreate these amazing communities that we have here.

*The President.* And you'll take—the word "spirit" is such a great word, such an important word. You'll take their guts away, you'll take their spirit away if you don't give the permits. You're going to take their guts.

They're going to say, "Oh, we"—all of a sudden, they'll start looking for houses, and your whole thing is going to blow up on you.

These people want to get going. This place can go quickly, but you don't want to take their spirit away, and that will take their spirit away. So you're a hundred-percent right.

Yes, sir.

*Participant.* Mr. President, thank you for being here.

*The President.* Thank you.

*Participant.* I lost my home. My in-laws lost their home. I want to make you aware of something that I know you know a thing or two about, which is interest rates. The banks, when the insurance company gives you the check on the name of the mortgage company and you, they offer you 2-percent interest on that money. The treasury is at 4 percent.

*The President.* Right.

*Participant.* They're expanding that—that interest margin on the back——

*The President.* That's right. [*Laughter*]

*Participant.* ——of fire victims. Could you please—just like you talked to the CEO of Bank of America—[*inaudible*].

*The President.* Oh, you like—you noticed that? Oh, look at this guy.

*Participant.* I——

*The President.* He studies that.

No, Bank of America, they're not nice.

*Participant.* Would you please——

*The President.* Sounds very nice—the Bank of America; they're not nice.

*Participant.* Will you please tell the banks to pay us—Treasury——

*Participants:* Yes!

*Participant.* ——for the money that the insurance sets aside. [*Inaudible*]

*The President.* Well, we're starting to do—we're doing numbers on banks. Yes, we're doing that.

Is that Leonard Boxer—next to you? Leonard? Huh? We have Leonard, and we have—oh, there's Skip. I have them all here, huh? Look at Skip. I haven't seen you in a long time. He used to be a very good golfer. You still a good golfer?

*Participant.* Not bad.

*The President.* Huh? And he's a good guy too. Hi, Skip. [*Laughter*]

*Participant.* How are you doing?

*The President.* You've got them all, huh? You've got Leonard, Skip.

Thank you. Go ahead, please.

*California State Representative James Gallagher.* Mr. President—Mr. President, I just wanted to say, Paradise is coming back because of the help that you gave us. And we really want



to thank you for that. And that's why we're here also, is because we want to help our brothers and sisters——

*The President.* You did a good job with Paradise. And what a fire that was.

*State Rep. Gallagher.* It was a terrible fire.

*The President.* Well, you had—many, many people were found, and only the—the certain type of German Shepherd could even find it, right? We——

*State Rep. Gallagher.* Yes.

*The President.* You could not tell. The dog would go right up: There's the body. And the incineration was——

*State Rep. Gallagher.* Yes.

*The President.* ——so horrible, so horrible.

*State Rep. Gallagher.* It was terrible. And when we see what—we see the same devastation——

*The President.* So Paradise is going good, right?

*State Rep. Gallagher.* It's going good. We're coming back.

*The President.* Yes. [*Inaudible*]

*State Rep. Gallagher.* And it's because of the help, and we want to help our brothers and sisters here in L.A. to come back too. And I know that's what you're going to do. And so we really appreciate that.

But from Paradise to the Palisades, the problem is fuel. It's the fuel, the vegetation, the dry grasses, the chaparral. It's—there's a tremendous amount of it, and we're not doing enough.

*The President.* You've got to remove it. You've got to remove it. And you've got to remove it, and you got to do the other things that we've said 10 times.

*State Rep. Gallagher.* Right.

*The President.* I mean, you've got to remove it. You just can't have it. I see it——

*State Rep. Gallagher.* And we've——

*The President.* Even now, I saw the fire. We flew over it. And you've got a lot of dry stuff. It's bone dry.

*State Rep. Gallagher.* And the environmental regulations——

*The President.* And you know, I predicted this 7 years ago. I said, "Do it. Get it done." And nobody—everybody just laughed. They thought it was—I said, "Forest management." They thought it was such a funny term. "Ha, ha, ha. That's so funny." Now it's not funny anymore. You know? We were right.

*State Rep. Gallagher.* It's the number-one cause of these fires. Number-one cause.

*The President.* You wouldn't have any fires.

*State Rep. Gallagher.* Right.

And if we just remove those environmental regulations—NEPA, CEQA at the State level, they get in the way of us doing those projects.

*The President.* It's all—it's all a con job, you know that, right?

*State Rep. Gallagher.* Right. Berry——

*The President.* It's all a big——

*State Rep. Gallagher.* Berry Creek——

*The President.* It's all a big con job.

*State Rep. Gallagher.* The town of Berry Creek in my district——

*The President.* Yes.

*State Rep. Gallagher.* ——CEQA stopped them from doing a fuel reduction project. They said 18 months. That's where 18 months comes from, because it's at least 18 months on a CEQA review. That community is no longer here today because of the North Complex Fire. We didn't build that project.

We need to make sure that never happens again. We have to stop those things from happening so we don't have a Paradise——

*The President.* Well, it will happen here——

*State Rep. Gallagher.* ——and Palisades.

*The President.* ——unless you're very strong as a group of people and demand that you have the right to go onto your property and start the process immediately, like tomorrow.

How many people did I see on your street where they're standing in front of their lot, the house is—there's really not much demolition. It's incinerated, right? So it's not like a lot of stuff. It's not like you have three stories' worth of concrete. It's all incinerated. And all of the people were standing there, and they weren't allowed to even go onto their lot.

You've got to let them do—if you can do that, you're going to see this thing go like wildfire.

And if you don't, you're going to have see—you're going to have those lots for years, because people are going to leave. They're going to—as much as you love your location and your place—and you're in the real estate business—as much as you love your location and your—your site, your house—housing sites, they're going to leave. They're going to leave. They're going to find other things. They're not going to put up with it.

They have spirit now, but in a year from now, they won't have spirit if you don't let them go. So just harness it.

Well, I think—look, I'm going to give you everything you want. I'm going to give you more than any President would have ever given you if—most Presidents wouldn't be here, number one. They certainly wouldn't be here after 3 days. They would not be here, I can tell you that.

And we're going to override all of permitting. I—the only thing you have to do is get your state people, which should be very easy, because that's literally so easy to do.

And I know the mayor, and I know she's working very hard, but she's got very powerful emergency—it's called an emergency petition. And you can petition very quickly.

And I just hope you can give them, because it's very rare that the Federal Government would be ahead of the State government, because the Federal Government—Federal permits are much tougher. But you essentially already have your permits. You can just go and go wild.

Brad, as soon as you can get those permits, whatever you can do—if you can put that genius of yours to work on getting a permit, you'll be doing much better than some of the other things you've said. Okay? [*Laughter*] And—but we do appreciate you.

So, Mayor, could I just leave you with that? It's a big permitting deal.

We're going to be back, and we're going to—I'm going to put Ric in charge of re- —just representing me for a period of time until we figure out exactly who we want to do it, whether we want a Commission or an individual. You know, if you have a good individual—if you have a really good individual—and they are rare—but if you have a really good individual, it's always better than a Commission because a Commission gets bogged down a little bit, Darrell, right?

So it's—if you had the right individual. And I know we do. We have a lot of great individuals in this community.

But it's an honor to be with you. It was an honor to be with your firemen before and your policemen. We met some great people, and these are people that are leaders, and they're—they're just fantastic—it's a fantastic group of people. And they were very brave.

I want to tell you, your fire people are so well thought of. You had big fires, and it was hard to put them out, but, boy, were they brave. They were really fighting against a tough thing, and everybody in the country knows it. Everybody in the country knows it.

And it was an honor to be with you.

So I'll be back, and we'll work very hard. And I hope you guys can start doing your cleanup starting, like, tomorrow at around 12 o'clock. Okay?

Thank you all very much. Thank you very much. Thank you, everybody. Thanks, Brad.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:46 p.m. at the Los Angeles Fire Department Station 69. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Gavin C. Newsom of California; former Mayor Eric M. Garcetti of Los Angeles, CA; Gianni V. Infantino, president, Fédération Internationale de Football Association; former President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.; former Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany; Administrator-designate of the Small Business Administration Kelly L. Loeffler; and Jeffrey C. Sprecher, founder, chair, and chief executive officer Intercontinental Exchange, Inc., parent company of the New York Stock Exchange. A participant referred to Brian T. Moynihan, chair of the board and chief executive officer, Bank of America. County Supervisor Barger referred to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). State Rep. Gallagher referred to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The transcript was released by the Office of Communications on January 27.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Wildfire recovery efforts in Los Angeles, CA, briefing.

*Locations:* Los Angeles, CA.

*Names:* Barger, Kathryn; Bass, Karen R.; Bianchi, Emily; Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Chu, Judy M.; Feil, Chris; Feil, Mia; Fong, Vincent K.; Gallagher, James; Grenell, Richard A.; Infantino, Gianni V.; Issa, Darrell E.; Kiley, Kevin; Kim, Young; LaMalfa, Douglas L.; Loeffler, Kelly L.; McClintock, Thomas M.; Merkel, Angela; Newsom, Gavin C.; Obernolte, Jay; Park, Traci; Pollak, Joel; Ring, Edward; Sherman, Bradley J.; Sprecher, Jeffery C.; Trump, Melania; Whitesides, George T.

*Subjects:* California, Governor; California, President's visit; California, water use restrictions; California, wildfires in Los Angeles area; Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA); Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup; Firefighters, service and dedication; North Carolina, Hurricane Helene damage and recovery efforts; Olympic Games; Small Business Administration; U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Special Missions; Water management policy, improvement efforts.

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