

**Remarks on Signing the Laken Riley Act and an Exchange With Reporters**

*January 29, 2025*

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

*The President's Agenda*

Before we begin, I want to provide a brief report on the unprecedented success our country has been witnessing in recent weeks.

Since even before the election, we've been making extraordinary progress. The American people gave us a clear mandate to save our country, and we won all seven swing States by large margins, historic. Very importantly, we won the popular vote by millions and millions of votes. Also, all 50 States, as you know, shifted toward the Republican Party, and that's never happened before—all 50, every single one of them.

In our first week in office, we set records, taking over 350 executive actions. That's not been done before. And it has reportedly been the single most effective opening week of any Presidency in history.

And we want to keep it that way. We want to keep it going. We want to keep it going.

And we've broken from decades of failed Washington policies and restored common sense and sanity to our Government. We've unleashed American energy. And we've already achieved record-low illegal immigration. As you see, there's nobody trying to get in, and that's what we've been waiting for for a long time. And gotten woke ideologies out of our Government and out of our military.

The water has now begun flowing in California, as we continue to increase the flow in coming days. Nobody has seen anything like that. And I've also taken strong action to regain control of the Washington bureaucracy.

Just for clarification purposes, because it was incorrectly reported yesterday, we have informed the Federal workforce, which they've looked to do for many years, that if they're working for the Federal Government, they must show up to the office on time and on schedule. We don't want them to work from home, because, as everyone knows, most of the time, they're not working, they're not very productive. And it's unfair to the millions of people in the United States who are, in fact, working hard from jobsites and not from their home.

As Federal employees, they must meet a high standard. They're representing our Government. They're representing our country. If they don't agree by February 6 to show up back to work in their office, they will be terminated, and we will therefore be downscaling our Government, which is something that the last 10 Presidents have tried very hard to do but failed.

Most of the people we're talking about have not been going to their Federal offices in many, many years, from even before COVID, but they have nevertheless been paid. Some have worked. Some haven't worked. And most of the studies say that some have just gone through the motions.

We may ask these people to prove that they didn't have another job during their so-called employment with the United States of America, because if they did, that would be unlawful, as you understand. A lot of people are getting paychecks, but they're actually working other jobs, so they'll have to prove that to us that they weren't.

In any event, we're requiring them to show up to work or be terminated. We think a very substantial number of people will not show up to work, and therefore, our Government will get smaller and more efficient. And that's what we've been looking to do for many, many decades, frankly. *[Applause]* Thank you.

In addition, there was a short-term pause or funding freeze on certain discretionary spending, payments such as government grants, only for us to quickly look at the scams, dishonesty, waste, and abuse that's taken place in our Government for too long.

As was explicitly stated, this in no way affected Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, or other entitlements that Americans depend on. I've made abundantly clear from the very first day that I ran from ~~for~~ White House ~~correction~~ office—that was a long time ago now—that's 2015—if you think about it, I announced in 2015, and we won in 2016; we did very well in 2020, but we did really well just recently—*[laughter]*—and I'm restating right now to correct any confusion that the media has purposely and somehow, for whatever reason, created: Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid have not been affected by any action we're taking in any way, shape, or form.

We are merely looking at parts of the big bureaucracy where there has been tremendous waste and fraud and abuse. In that process, we identified and stopped \$50 million being sent to Gaza to buy condoms for Hamas—\$50 million. *[Laughter]* And do you know what's happened to them? They've used them as a method of making bombs. How about that?

We stopped an attempt to make an illicit payment for illegal alien resettlement. We canceled \$181 million in DEI training contracts. This is just for the training of people in DEI, which has been terminated—and completely terminated. And we paused \$1.7 billion in unauthorized payments to foreign organizations, including stopping more than \$40 million that was on its way out the door to the very corrupt World Health Organization, which has not done its job and not done it properly.

We also—*[applause]*. Thank you. We also blocked \$45 million for diversity scholarships in Burma. Forty-five, that's a lot of money for diversity scholarships in Burma. *[Laughter]* You can imagine where that money went. *[Laughter]*

These were the types of payments—and many others—I could stand here all day and tell you things that we found, and we have to find them quickly, because we want the money to flow to proper places. But these were the payments and types of payments affected by the temporary freeze, and the American people strongly support these efforts. I talked about it during the campaign, and they voted for us in record numbers.

Every single day, we're now putting America first and fighting to get the most out of every single tax dollar for our great citizens.

### *Laken Riley Act*

We've gathered this afternoon to take another historic action, however. In a few moments, the Laken Riley Act will become the very first bill that I proudly sign into law as the 47th President of the United States.

Laken was a brilliant and beautiful 22-year-old nursing student from Georgia. The best in her class—she was always the best. They would say, "Laken, how do you do this?" and "What do you do?" They were always asking her questions. She was respected by everybody, even her teachers. They respected her so much.

From the time she was in first grade, Laken knew she wanted to spend her time caring for others. That's what she did. To her friends and classmates, she was a light of warmth and

kindness in every single room. To her parents and family, she was everything in the world. They've had a miserable period of time.

Just after 9 a.m. last February 22, Laken went out for a jog on the campus of the University of Georgia, but she was—just never returned. She never came back, did she? Huh?

Her parents are here, sister, all of her relatives.

While on her run, Laken was attacked, viciously assaulted, beaten, brutalized, and murdered by an illegal alien gang member who was set loose into our country by the last administration.

We are deeply honored to be joined today by Laken's parents Allyson and John and her sister Lauren. Thank you very much. Thank you. So sad.

We were together right after that happened. And it's a tremendous tribute to your daughter, what's taking place today. That's all I can say. But it's so sad we have to be doing it at all. Thank you very much for being here.

To Laken's family, we will keep Laken's memory alive in our hearts forever—everyone's hearts.

With today's action, her name will also live forever in the laws of our country, and this is a very important law. This is something that has brought Democrats and Republicans together. That's not easy to do. Laken did it. Laken did it. America will never, ever forget Laken Hope Riley.

The vicious criminal who murdered precious Laken was an illegal alien member of the barbaric Venezuelan prison gang known as Tren de Aragua. He trespassed across our southern border in 2022 and was apprehended by Border Patrol, but under the cruel policies of the last administration, instead of being deported as he should have been, he was released into the United States, as were millions of other people—many of them very dangerous people.

And you see what we're doing. We're getting them the hell out of here.

He was soon arrested again in New York City on charges of endangering a child, but because of New York City's deadly sanctuary policies—as we have in California and many other places, which we're ending; we're going to end them—he was released again to reoffend.

The Biden administration then provided this illegal alien criminal with a free, taxpayer-funded flight from New York to Georgia, where he was arrested yet again—constantly—this time for stealing from a Walmart along with his gang member brother, who was a bad one. Only after being released a third time by the U.S. law enforcement did this cold-blooded criminal go out on that fateful morning hunting for women on whom to pray.

That's what he did, he hunted. He hunted. It was like a hunter. And we're going to show him who the hunter is.

This horrific atrocity should never have been allowed to happen, and as President, I'm fighting every single day to ensure that such a tragedy never happens again. We don't want this to happen.

And under the law—thank you. Under the law I'm signing today, the Department of Homeland Security will be required to detain all illegal aliens who have been arrested for theft, burglary, larceny, shoplifting, assaulting a police officer, murder, or any crime that results in death or a serious injury.

In addition, for the first time ever, this act gives State governments the ability to sue the Federal Government for immediate injunctive relief if any future administration ever again refuses to enforce the immigration laws of the United States, like happened for 4 long years.

And that was happening for 4 long years—frightful years. Amazing. You'd say: "How—how can people do this? How can they allow this to happen? How can they allow criminals to pour into our country and then try and defend it?" And they're still trying to defend it, but they can't. That's why I'm here instead of somebody else, actually. It's the biggest reason. I believe it's the single biggest reason.

Inflation was horrible. Many things were horrible during that administration. When you look at what took place in Afghanistan, the way they got out—not that they got out, but the way. So many things were horrible. But, to me, this was the worst of all.

It's a landmark law that we're doing today. It's going to save countless innocent American lives. I want to thank every House Republican, every Senate Republican, as well as the 12 Senate Democrats and the 48 House Democrats who voted to pass this vitally important bill, and many of them are with us today. And I really do appreciate it.

And I very much especially appreciate the bipartisan support—the Democrats, really, a big percentage of them came through, and plenty of them wanted to. They probably felt they couldn't, but they really wanted to. They don't understand that would have made them a lot more popular, would have made them a lot better with their people. The ones that didn't are going to be—they're going to be sorry, because the people are not going to forget that they wouldn't sign. This is a perfect, incredible tribute to an unbelievable young lady.

We're joined today by many great supporters of our new strong border policies—and they are indeed strong—including Vice President Vance. Thank you, J.D.

The Secretary, Scott Bessent, who just got approved, by the way. Where's Scott? He just got approved. Scott, I'm very impressed. Got a lot of Democrat votes too. He got a lot of Democrat votes. That's great. I don't know—is that a good thing or a bad thing? [*Laughter*] I'll have to think about that.

The Secretary of Homeland Security, who's going to be fantastic. I know her so well. And I know it's probably not complimentary because she is a woman, but she is tough. Where is she? Where is Kristi? Kristi? Kristi? Great. Stand up, please. You have such an important job to do. Really great. Thank you very much. And don't let that look fool you. That look is—she's tough, and she cannot stand what she's—that she's having to sit here and even listen to this today.

Another one who's done a job like nobody that I've seen in a long time, Tom Homan. He's my friend, but he is something special. He's something special. Great.

And, Tom and Kristi, the numbers are unbelievable, what's happened. It's, like, just shut down. Nobody thought that was even possible. It's just shut down. They showed a—an area that a year ago had thousands and thousands of people rushing into our country, and today there was nobody there. It was, like, a beautiful sight.

And, also, Senate Majority Whip John Barrasso—great guy. Great guy. Thank you, John.

And I also want to thank the bill sponsors, Senator Katie Britt. Katie—thank you, Katie. And Congressman Mike Collins. And, Mike, you were fantastic—from Georgia. He took—he took this—he loves his state, and he took this very personally. So it's—thank you very much, Mike.

As well as Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley. Chuck is here someplace. Chuck, thank you very much. You look great. And House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jim Jordan, who is a special guy—special man. And House Homeland Security Committee Chairman Mark Green, thank you very much. Thank you, Mark.

And we have many other Congressmen and Senators, but I'm not going to introduce because this is about your daughter. This is about something that's so important, and we're going to just go along.

Thank you, also—we have to say Burt Jones is in the room, and Burt is your Lieutenant Governor, and he was on this like you wouldn't believe. Thank you very much. I see you sitting there. Thank you very much.

So we have State, local officials. We have law enforcement organizations. We have everybody. Most of them are in the room or represented in the room, and they're incredible people, and I've never seen them come together like they have for this. I've done many of these—not of this kind, but different bills, different passages having to do with many different things, from—from Homeland Security to inner security to taxes to 50 different items. I've never seen such support as you have today and as your great daughter has today.

So I've never seen anything like it. And we have to thank your daughter for that, because she's going to save a lot of lives. She's going to be responsible for saving a lot of lives.

So I'd like to just say to the angel families—I've been with them, and they've been with me from 2015 when I first got this crazy idea in my head to run for President, because we can do better as a country. I want to thank so many of the people that are here that have been the angel moms. And we call them angel moms, but they're angel families—fathers and sons and daughters. But they've suffered tremendously, like you have, for no reason whatsoever.

I want to thank Alexis Nungaray, the mother of 12-year-old Jocelyn Nungaray, murdered last summer by two illegal alien gang members released into the United States by Joe Biden's open-border stupid policies. And thank you very much, Alexis. I want to thank you very much. We had a—an amazing trip, and we're—it was really special to meet you and your family. Appreciate it very much. So bad—so sad we have to be here, frankly.

And Jocelyn, as you know, is in our hearts, as she was then. It was an amazing day we had—a great day. But it was a day of celebration of somebody that unfortunately won't be with us. But she is with us now. You know that.

Here also is Patty Morin, the mother of Rachel Morin, killed 2 years ago by an illegal alien who was let into our country by the last administration's ridiculous, weak policies—open border. Can you imagine?

When I heard open border, I said: "Oh, that's terrible. They're going to release their prisons, all over the world. They're going to release their prisons into our country." That's exactly what happened.

Patty is joined by Rachel's brother Michael; Rachel's daughter Clementine; and sister-in-law Shannon. Thank you all for being here. We appreciate it very much. Thank you very much. Thank you.

With us as well is the loving family of Kayla Hamilton, a 20-year-old girl murdered in July 2022 by the MS-13 illegal alien gang member who is violent, vicious, and they knew it, and they didn't do anything about it. And I want to thank you too—Kayla's mother Tammy; and her grandmother Cathy; and her stepfather Jeremiah—very much.

And finally, I want to thank others who have also suffered this horrible scourge that goes on with young people being killed—and other people too, but young people—largely young people being killed.

Thank you to Scott Root, the father of Sarah Root, killed at 21 years of age—think of that, 21—by an illegal alien, shouldn't have been in our country. Would have never been in our country if we were here. What a sad thing.

To each of these angel families, we love you, and we stand in awe of your courage and your strength. It's the toughest thing anybody has to go through.

Many of the angel families here today were betrayed by the last administration and—with this heartless and foolish and really very, very arrogant and very, very dumb policies, policies that aren't even believable, when you talk about common sense. I say we're the party of common sense. But the Democrats also, they have plenty of common sense, and that's why so many are here today and so many supported what we're doing.

The very Government that was supposed to protect their daughters instead opened our borders and transported the world's most dangerous criminals straight into their communities. They came from prisons and jails and insane asylums and mental institutions from all over the world, not just South America. People think South America. They come from all over the world. They come from every continent.

And they came here by plane, and they were loaded onto busses, and they were driven right up to our border. And they drove right through the border, and nobody even said a word to them. And in those busses and those cars and those trucks were some of the meanest criminals anywhere in the world.

As of last September, 425,000 illegal alien criminals were roaming free, including 13,099 convicted illegal alien murderers, of which about almost 50 percent killed more than one person, and they were roaming all over the country—in our farms, in our cities.

Under the Trump administration, we're moving with urgency and speed to get these vicious and violent criminals the hell out of our country and to restore law and order to our suburbs, our cities, and our towns. And we're going to do it with Tom and with Kristi and with all of the people that are working so hard on this.

This week, compared to a comparable time a year ago—think of this—the number of illegal border crossers has already fallen by more than 100 percent, and because the election was coming, they started getting a little bit tougher on the border. They tried to follow our policies, and they did much better, but it still was horrible. The numbers were still horrible. So that's 100 percent over those.

They only did it because of the election, so they knew—they knew what they were doing was wrong.

And those who do cross the border—and you're seeing that every time. All you have to do is turn on your television set or pick up a newspaper or read any form of new media, because we have a lot of new media today, fortunately, that's letting the word get out. But they're watching these people be captured and removed from our country.

ICE arrests have risen by 15 times—15 times, in just a short period. And over the past 8 days, the heroes of ICE and Border Patrol—I—we can never forget Border Patrol, those people. I've gotten to know so many of them.

Our border czar, as you remember, never went to the border and never made a phone call. She was the border czar. She never made one phone call. They went to the heads of Border, they went to the heads of ICE, "Did you ever get a call?" "No." And she admitted she never made one call, but she was the border czar. And that's exactly what our border was all about.

The heroes of ICE have arrested thousands and thousands of illegal alien criminals, including hundreds of gang members, traffickers, child predators, terrorists, and murderers. For the first time in history, we're loading dangerous and illegal aliens into military aircraft and flying them back to the places from which they came.

You probably read about Colombia 2 days ago. They said, "No, we're not taking them." I said, "Well, you're going to take them. You're going to take them. You're going to like it too. You're going to take them."

They talked about, "We're not going to take people that are in shackles." I said, "Well, but the people that are in shackles are murderers. They're drug lords. They're rapists. They're very tough people." They make our criminals look like very nice people. That's about the only thing that comes out of this. And I say, could you imagine you're a pilot on the plane, and you have your copilot, and you're sitting there, and you have 150 people, no shackles, and they like to murder people? This is not a good—this would not be a good flight. [Laughter]

So, actually—so, Colombia apologized to us profusely within an hour, based on something I said—meaning, "You're going to pay tariffs like nobody's ever paid tariffs before." But they actually wanted to terminate his position. Their, essentially, Congress met, and they were very angry with him, but they actually said they were going to send the Presidential plane to pick up these criminals and to bring them because they didn't want to inconvenience us or have us do a second flight, and that's what they did. And I appreciate it.

And I do appreciate—the people of Colombia are wonderful people, and the representatives really acted well. And I appreciated they took back that tough talk. But, you know, we may have tough talk from others, but it's not going to mean anything. They're going to all take them back, and they're going to like it too. They're going to like it. [Laughter] They're going to take it back, and they're going to like it.

Today, I'm also signing an Executive order to instruct the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security to begin preparing the 30,000-person migrant facility at Guantanamo Bay—most people don't even know about it; we have 30,000 beds in Guantanamo—to detain the worst criminal illegal aliens threatening the American people. Some of them are so bad we don't even trust the countries to hold them because we don't want them coming back, so we're going to send them out to Guantanamo.

This will double our capacity immediately, right? And tough—that's a tough—that's a tough place to get out of.

Today's signings bring us one step closer to eradicating the scourge of migrant crime in our communities once and for all. And it was just a purely—it's just an unforced error that we even have to be doing this.

Now we need Congress to provide full funding for the complete and total restoration of our sovereign borders, as well as financial support to remove record numbers of illegal aliens. And these are illegal alien killers, criminals at levels that nobody has ever seen before.

And you would have known that—and you were there when I said it. I said, everybody that's bad is going to be thrown—if you look at Venezuela, Venezuela's crime is down 77 percent because they've taken their gang members, their prisoners, their drug dealers, their drug lords, they've shipped them all into the United States. Many other countries, their crime is way down, and our crime is not doing well. But we're going to have it do really well very soon, and we're shipping all these people back where they came from.

And now, before I sign the Laken Riley Act into law, I would like to ask Laken's really incredible mother, who I've gotten to know—a very sad day, I got to know her. But this is an amazing tribute to an amazing young person.

And if you could come up, Allyson, and say a few words, that would be great. Thank you very much.

*Athens, GA, resident Allyson Phillips.* Thank you, President Trump.

*The President.* Thank you very much.

*Ms. Phillips.* We would like to thank Senator Katie Britt for her diligent bipartisan work to get this bill through the Senate. We'd also like to thank Congressman Mike Collins for his unwavering passion and for leading on the Laken Riley Act from the start. Our family will forever be grateful for the prayers of the people across our nation and for helping to get this legislation into law.

We also want to thank President Trump for the promises he made to us. He said he would secure our borders and that he would never forget about Laken, and he hasn't. He's a man of his word, and we trust that he will fight for the American people.

Most importantly, I want to thank our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, because without his sacrifices, Laken's story would have ended on that horrific day that she was taken from us. But because of him, we can continue living knowing that we will see Laken again.

There's no amount of change that will ever bring back our precious Laken. Our hope moving forward is that her life saves lives. We're so thankful that her passion for helping others and her legacy for doing good in the name of Jesus Christ will carry on.

Thank you.

*The President.* Thank you. Unbelievable. [*Inaudible*]

Come on, why don't you stand right behind me. Stand right over here.

Thank you. I'm going to sign this in honor of Laken Riley.

Come on up here, some of the people that we love and have been so instrumental. Okay?

[*At this point, the President signed the bill.*]

Okay. In honor of Laken.

Thank you, everybody.

### *Federal Budget*

*Q.* Mr. President, Government funding. Can you take a quick question on government funding, the pause?

*The President.* I don't think this is appropriate time, really.

*Q.* Okay.

*The President.* I respect that, but I don't think it's appropriate. I can just tell you, Government is doing very well, and we're cutting way back. But this is not the appropriate time.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:15 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Jason Riley, father, John Phillips, stepfather, and Lauren Phillips, sister, of Laken H. Riley, an Augusta University nursing student who was killed on the University of Georgia

campus in Athens, GA, on February 22, 2024; José Ibarra, who was convicted for the murder of Ms. Riley, and his brother Diego; White House Border Czar Thomas D. Homan; Lt. Gov. Burt Jones of Georgia; Johan Jose Martinez-Rangel and Franklin Jose Peña Ramos, who were charged in the June 17, 2024, murder of Jocelyn Nungaray in Houston, TX; Victor Martinez-Hernandez, who was charged in the August 6, 2023, murder of Rachel Morin along the Ma and Pa Trail in Bel Air, MD; Walter Javier Martinez, who was convicted in the July 27, 2022, murder of Kayla M. Hamilton in Aberdeen, MD; Tammy and Jeremiah Nobles, mother and stepfather, and Cathy Weakley, grandmother, of Ms. Hamilton; Eswin Mejia, who was charged in the January 2016 traffic accident that caused the death of Sarah Root in Omaha, NE; former Vice President Kamala D. Harris; and President Gustavo Petro Urrego of Colombia. S. 5, approved January 29, was assigned Public Law No. 119–1.

*Categories:* Bill Signings and Vetoes : Laken Riley Act, signing remarks; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters, White House.

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*Names:* Barrasso, John A., III; Bessent, Scott K.H.; Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Britt, Katie Boyd; Collins, Mike, Jr.; Grassley, Charles E.; Green, Mark; Harris, Kamala D.; Homan, Thomas D.; Ibarra, Diego; Ibarra, José; Jones, Burt; Jordan, James D.; Martinez, Walter Javier; Martinez-Hernandez, Victor; Martinez-Rangel, Johan Jose; Mejia, Eswin; Morin, Clementine; Morin, Michael; Morin, Patricia; Morin, Shannon; Noem, Kristi L.; Nungaray, Alexis; Peña Ramos, Franklin Jose; Petro Urrego, Gustavo; Phillips, Allyson; Phillips, John; Phillips, Lauren; Riley, Jason; Robles, Jeremiah; Robles, Tammy; Root, Scott; Vance, James D. "J.D."; Weakley, Cathy.

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