

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at a National Governors Association Meeting

February 21, 2025

The President. Hello, everybody. Hi.

This is a nice, friendly group. Lovely.

Well, we're in a very good mood. We just had the highest poll numbers I've ever had, ever. And actually, a record for a Republican. Now, I don't know about—have they checked the Democrats too? But we have a record so far for a Republican. Now, it's 4 weeks. We have a lot of weeks to go. We want to finish that way, right?

But I just wanted to thank everybody, because you've been really amazing. The job you've done has been incredible. In terms of this 4-week period, it's been a very—somewhat historic 4 weeks.

And we have a couple of things in the works. We're negotiating with Russia, Ukraine, trying to get that horrible situation over with. It's terrible. It's just so terrible. I've—I see pictures that you fortunately don't get to see. You don't want to see them. And that is a killing field. They have young soldiers being killed, thousands a week, and we got to get it over with. It's bad for Russia, and it's bad for Ukraine, and it's bad for us on a humanitarian basis.

I've had very good talks with Putin, and I've had not-such-good talks with Ukraine. They don't have any cards, but they play it tough. But we're not going to let this continue. This war is terrible.

It would have never happened if I were President. But it did happen, so I got stuck with it and the whole world is stuck with it. And right now you have a country that has its cities—they look like demolition sites. Those beautiful towers, those thousand-year-old golden domes that were so beautiful—the most beautiful in the world, they say—they're all in smithereens. Millions of people are killed. I think, far more people than anyone understands.

And we have people that better get to the table and get it ended. It should have never happened. It would have never happened.

But I'm delighted to welcome America's Governors to the White House. You're amazing people. Even the Democrats are amazing people, some of you. *[Laughter]* And we've worked together. Actually, we work very well together. I don't—I can't think of anybody—well, there's one or two—yes—that it doesn't work out so well, but that's—that's sort of normal.

But I do want to welcome you, and I want to let you know that anything I can do, I'm here. I'm here for you. And we can—we can do a lot.

I—do want to say that I left a great place, North Carolina, and we're really working hard there since I've been in. For 4 weeks, we've done more than they did in—in, you know, all of the period of time. And FEMA was a disaster. FEMA wasn't there. They didn't do the job. And it was a terrible, terrible situation. I've never seen anything like it.

And then they actually—when they did get there, a very small group, they chose anybody with an American flag or the name Trump on the front of the house—they would sort of skip that house, very nicely. And it was just a disaster. And we've done it the other way.

And we're working with a very nice person that we've had good relationships: the newly elected Democrat Governor—who's here, I assume. Is he?

Governor Joshua H. Stein of North Carolina. [Inaudible]

The President. Okay. Thank you very much. We're working well together, very well together. And we're not using FEMA so much. But it doesn't matter, as long as we get the job done. But they're very—the people are becoming very happy. So I want to thank you very much. Great job.

But we are—and now I'm of the opinion—I understand FEMA very well. We had a good situation with FEMA, but it was a very expensive thing to do. And I really believe when there's a natural disaster—a hurricane, a tornado, or whatever it may be—you're very capable people. It's called: You fix it. You take care of it yourselves.

You don't have to call some faraway State and have people planed in from areas that they have no idea. You—they come in from Alaska to help you in Florida. They say, "Boy, this is hot here. This is"—by the time they figure it out, everything would have been fixed. It's—it's not a good situation. It's very expensive. You spend at least twice as much. They don't negotiate. They go out and hire local contractors, and they have no idea who they are.

And I'd rather have my Governor from South Carolina, Henry. I'd rather have Ron. I'd rather have—from Florida. I'd rather have—I could name just about everybody in this room. I'd rather have you do it. You'll save a lot of money.

And we'll send the bill—the bills. You'll—we'll pay, I think, far less. We have to have you have a little bit of skin in the game. Otherwise, you—those bills will be much higher than they're supposed to be, especially with a couple of you in this room, who I know very—we'll get bills that you wouldn't believe. Record-setters. *[Laughter]*

But—so, I think 75–25, with the Government—the Federal Government paying 75. And we'll go right through to the—I think, go right through—probably, they'll go through Commerce, maybe go through Marco, because Marco is very good with money. I don't think I'm going to give them to the Environmental gentleman, Lee Zeldin, here—*[Laughter]*—because Lee is going to say, "What's this all about, huh? They gave me this too?"

You have found some big stuff, by the way. Some big fraud. You have—as he said, this one is not even explainable. We're talking about billions of dollars. So, great job, Lee. Really, it's sad, but it's a great job you've done in a very short period of time.

But I think Marco or Scott or Howard. And if—wherever Howard may be, he's—we want to congratulate him. He did a great—it was a great session. He got no Democrat votes. I thought, "He's been a Democrat all his life, and he got no Democrat votes." *[Laughter]* They all called him to apologize. And you know, honestly, that shouldn't be. But he got approved yesterday.

But today I'm delighted to welcome America's Governors to the White House, and I've known many of you for a long, long time. And this week, we're forging even stronger bonds of cooperation to better serve the American people.

I also want to thank the members of my Cabinet who have joined us for this meeting. And they really have—they have gone right off the bat.

And I also want to thank Senator Thune, because I'm hearing we set a record on approvals. And I was screaming—I thought it was going so slowly. I think we—and we have a record. So I apologize to anybody I screamed at. *[Laughter]* But no, it was announced this morning. I think we had a record for the number of positions. So that's great. And they're great people.

So I'll begin by introducing Secretary of State Marco Rubio. He scares me because he got 99 votes. So that's either unbelievably good because he's an incredible diplomat, and, therefore, he's Secretary of State and you couldn't have picked a—or I'm a little nervous about you, Marco. [Laughter] And the only vote he didn't get was our Vice President, who couldn't vote because he was—he had just left. So that's a—you got a hundred percent.

But it really says something. I think it says "working together." It's an amazing tribute, I think. [Laughter] I'll let you know about it—I'll let you know about it in about 2 years, everybody. [Laughter]

Marco has been great. And he's been in some big meetings with people at the highest level of states that we would say—states, meaning other countries—that we would have said wouldn't have dealt so well, but they're dealing very well. You have a great group of people, with Steve Witkoff and Michael Waltz.

And we're making amazing progress. I mean, we've made more progress on that situation, which is Ukraine, than they have in 3 years. Again, it's so sad that it began.

But we're also working very hard on the Middle East. Another one that wouldn't have happened. We would never have had—you wouldn't have had October 7. They had no money. Iran was broke. We had sanctions up on Iran that nobody has ever seen before. They were literally broke, and they were not giving any money to Hizballah, to Hamas.

And how about Hamas yesterday with the babies? How about that? You know? We're going to take that? We're going to continue to take that? I don't think so.

But I want to just thank you, Marco, for doing a great job.

And, Scott, you also. Scott went all the way to Ukraine. I said, "Don't do it. That's why they have telephones." But he—it's—look, it's always better to meet in person. But I just didn't feel that it was good, and it was dangerous. You saw things on that train ride that you didn't like, I understand. You know, it's a pretty dangerous ride. The long ride. How long was that?

Secretary of the Treasury Scott K.H. Bessent. Ten hours.

The President. Ten-hour ride. That's after you get there. And a very dangerous journey, but he wanted to do it. He's a patriot. He wanted to do it. It's better to do it than it is with a telephone. Always better. I always say it's much better to meet in person, but that was dangerous. I didn't like—I like him. Therefore, I didn't want him to do it. If I didn't like him, I would have suggested he do it. [Laughter] In fact, I'd say, "Go back today, and let's give it another shot." [Laughter]

But I hear that—I hear that they're going to agree pretty much with what—but that's—that's not the big thing. The big thing is getting it done, and we'll get it done.

Also, somebody who's been so popular right from the beginning—very, very little opposition, but she's fantastic. She was the attorney general of—Florida for 8 years, highly respected. And just an amazing person, amazing leader and woman: Pam Bondi. Good, Pam. How's it going? Good? You've got enough work? [Laughter] You've got a lot of work over there, I'll tell you. [Laughter] And she's going to be unbelievable—I don't even think about it.

Interior Secretary Doug Burgum. And, Doug—I don't know if Doug is here. He was last night. Oh, good. You just disappear right into the woodwork, huh? [Laughter] Doug is a man who made a lot of money, actually, but in technology. Sold to Microsoft for a lot and decided he wanted to do a Trump thing, and he did, and he won easily. And then he became a great Governor of North Dakota, and—really good, and he was all of a sudden thrown into the oil business, right? And he took that to a level that nobody ever thought possible. The job you've done there has been amazing.

And I watched—he ran. And then I said, "I like that guy." He was one of the few that didn't hit me. He was after my position, but he never said anything bad about me. I said: "Okay. That's one checklist that we have good." [Laughter] You know, it's one of the ones. But—but he's been—he was an amazing Governor, and he really became an expert on energy.

And when I—when I was with him, I realized I wanted him someplace. I didn't know exactly where, but I thought it would be the Department of Energy—I kept talking—because the State has done so well. And I said that, "Look, I want you to just hold it, and I want to put you there." He said, "Sir, I have somebody much better than me on energy." "Who?" "Chris Wright?" I said, "Who the hell is Chris Wright?" [Laughter] He said, "He"—is Chris here? I don't even know. Is Chris here?

Hello, Chris. Boy, am I giving him some buildups. I did the same thing last night.

But he's the top guy in the whole—they said, the—on the planet for energy, in all forms of energy. Even clean, beautiful coal that we're going to be using, like Germany does now. They're opening up a plant a week. And they're opening up, in China, more than—somebody told me—two plants a week. You know, but we're supposed to use the wind, which doesn't work. It doesn't work from a practical standpoint.

But I just want to welcome you, because you had the greatest man. He—when he said—you're probably the only man, because I know Doug. He's got a big ego. [Laughter] And you're the only man—I've actually heard him say something—he said: "He's so much better than me on energy. He's better than anybody." And so we made a move, and you gave up a tremendous position to do this. And we want to thank you.

But we have to get going, because when we bring the energy costs down, we're going to—we have more energy than anybody in the world. We just didn't use it. Can you imagine?

Biden set us up in Venezuela instead of taking ours, so that we go to Venezuela where they'd have very heavy, heavy stuff. And we have the best stuff in the world. We have more liquid gold—and it's really great liquid gold, too—we have more under our feet than anybody else.

But we went to Venezuela to buy oil instead of taking it from our own land and, you know, drilling a little hole in the ground about—how big is that hole? About a foot?

Secretary of Energy Christopher A. Wright. Smaller.

The President. About a foot, yes?

Secretary Wright. Nine inches.

The President. And if we drill a little, tiny hole, and we could have taken it, instead of all of the problems. And then we made Venezuela strong again. You know, they've given them a lot of money. They never thought they were going to have so much money. And all the people are leaving, so you're going to have one guy sitting there with a lot of oil under his feet. That's not a good situation.

But we're having talks about that whole mess. What a mess it was. That was another one that was done. He was ready to quit. He was going to be out. Marco, you know that better than anybody. Marco has been very staunch against what took place there. And we were going to have that in any form we wanted it, but Biden made them strong.

It was the worst administration in history. And I say that with a lot of Democrats, but I think you believe it too. You just don't—you can't say it, but you believe it.

But I just want to thank you. And if you get those prices down—you know, that's what caused inflation: the energy. I mean, the spending but, I think, even more so, the energy. The

energy went up. They stopped the oil leases. They stopped a lot of things that we were doing, and then they went back to what we were doing as much as they could because the prices were going through the roof. Remember that initial surge? It was brutal.

And they went back. They let any—any rig—they let any rig that we had up just drill. You know, they didn't—and they ended up doing similar numbers, but we wouldn't have been at those numbers. We would have been double or triple those numbers. Those were from years ago.

But energy caused our problem.

But I just want to thank you for recommending him. And what we've done is, he's the head of Department of Energy. He's Department of the Interior. And it's really screwy, because the Department of the Interior has all the energy, other than some nuclear energy that you're in charge of. But he has all the energy. He has all the land, all the great places, the best—we have more than any other country in the world, and he's in charge of it. The problem is, he can't drill. And he drills, but he has no land. *[Laughter]*

So what do we do? We said: "Let's—I have an idea. Let's merge them." So, we merged them intellectually. I don't know if we did it legally, but we did it intellectually. *[Laughter]* So, now he gives up the land, and he gives up the drillers, and they have—you're going crazy, right? You're going wild. And you'll do it beautifully, environmentally well. Lee, we'll make sure.

But we have a lot of things, but we had to merge. That was—I always wondered, "Why doesn't the Energy Department do more?" And they didn't do more because they don't have any energy. It's the craziest thing I've ever seen. We'll probably have to make maybe even a change in that—you know, somehow merge them or do something, because it's a—it's pretty tremendous what you're going to be able to do.

Agricultural Secretary Brooke Rollins, who's so fantastic, and she's been at the head of so many different things and loyal from the beginning. She even opened up—when we had a rather shocking defeat, she opened up a—we call it an institute. I've never seen anybody raise money like her. She raised hundreds of millions of dollars on this fabulous thing.

But I said, "Look, we want to win another race because I think it's really important to win twice." And I won three times, if you think about it. So it's—*[Laughter]*—but it's very—only the Republicans smile when I say—it happens to be true. *[Laughter]*

But Brooke has been amazing.

And it was really tough, because this last—this last election, I go to a person. They say, "Sir, I just gave you \$10 million." "Oh, where did you give it to?" "I gave it to Brooke." "You gave it to Brooke? She's spending it on policy." *[Laughter]* We don't have to worry about policy. We have to worry about getting elected, right?

But Brooke is fantastic, and she's done such a good job, and she's "Make America Great Again" and top of the line, right? And she's—going to—and what I didn't know, and—as soon as I found out, I said, "That's that"—she studied—that's what she studied: agriculture. She knows everything about it, and she's going to be a fantastic Secretary.

And you'll do something with the eggs, because I'm hearing so much about eggs. You'll figure it out. You got to figure something out fast.

Secretary of Agriculture Brooke L. Rollins. We're working on it.

The President. But—and we inherited all of those—the problems. You know, at some point, a few months down the road, we won't be able to say it's so much us. But the big things, really, we can blame other people for. To allow criminals into our country at levels that nobody has ever seen before. To allow people from jails—to have countries from all over the world be allowed to

empty jails into an open border. They opened—they—emptied jails and prisons, mental institutions, insane asylum—gang members, drug lords, drug people, people on drugs, people that are very sick. They allowed them to come into our country totally unchecked, unvetted.

And right now we have a great gentleman, Tom Homan, who's doing an unbelievable job, and Kristi Noem. It's—they're doing a great job, but it's such a—it's something we should have never had to be done.

And you see the levels of crime that these—these are serious—they make our criminals look nice. I'll tell you, that's the only thing we get out of it. Our criminals are very nice people by comparison. These are seriously tough people. The various gangs, whether it's MS-13 or the Venezuelan gangs, they're as tough as—nobody has ever seen toughness like this.

Secretary of Health and Human Services—nobody knows this particular gentleman. He sailed right through. *[Laughter]* I thought he'd get a lot of—I said, "Well, he's going to get a lot of Democrat votes, Ron." I said, "He's—he's going to be an easy one, right?" I told Ron DeSantis—I said: "This one is going to be so easy. He's going to get all those Democrat votes." I don't know, you—thank goodness for the Republicans, right?

Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. And where is—where is Bobby? Where is Bobby? So congratulations. Was that as easy as you thought? Just quick.

Well, in the end, they all voted for him. *[Laughter]* They all—he did pretty well. You got through.

But you know, we have one stat that I quote—the autism stat. And you hear different numbers, but it's thousands. They say between 10- and 20,000. So, if you go back 15 years ago, we had, like, nobody. It was 1 in 20,000. Now we have 1 in 34. Is that right—34?

Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. Thirty-six.

The President. So 34—or 36 kids have autism. And if you go back, I guess, 18 years or whenever that was done, it was 1 in 20,000. So, we've gone from 20,000 to 34, 36. That's unbelievable.

So there's something wrong. There's something wrong. We've—done something wrong. There's something. You're going to figure it out. Maybe it's a spray that we spray all over the place that nobody else does, other countries don't. The Pennsylvania Dutch, they don't do anything, and they're amazingly healthy.

And he understands. He's working with Dr. Oz, who's a really smart guy. I know him very well. And those two guys are going to figure it.

And they're also going to figure out why, in the United States, we pay \$1,300 for a drug—one that we were talking about—and in London they pay—literally, they pay \$200. Even less—\$88, I heard, in one case yesterday. They pay \$88. We pay \$1,300 for the exact same drug from the exact same factory, from the same plant where it's made. We've got to figure that out.

So I hope you focus really a lot on the cost too, because Americans are being screwed, and it's no good. They're not going to put up with it.

Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. Another one I know very well. He's going to be fantastic. Scott Turner. So, Scott, congratulations. Man, oh, man, you are something. He got up and—we had a great meeting yesterday, right? He got up and spoke. He's a good speaker, that one. And everybody loves you. Everybody knows you. And a great guy. You're going to do fantastic. And—well, you got a good recommendation from Ben Carson. Once Ben Carson recommended you, I said, "All right. That's okay." We love Ben Carson. There's nobody like Ben.

The Secretary of Energy, I introduced: Chris Wright.

And Secretary of Veterans Affairs Doug Collins. I know Doug so well. Oh, where is Doug? Where is Doug? That voice during the Mueller hearings, that beautiful voice. "Do you know"—remember the catastrophe that—every Democrat remembers this, when Mueller went to testify. This was not a good situation. That's where it all ended, Pam, when he didn't know anything about anything. And Doug said, "You don't know what we're talking about, do you?" [Laughter] "No."

This was not a good day for them, but it was a good day for justice, I can tell you that—for fair justice.

EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin. He ran for Governor of New York. In theory, you have no chance, but actually, he almost won. He did a—it was a fantastic run, amazing run.

And he's very smart. He was a Congressman. He was fantastic on the hoax, the various hoaxes I had. I had a lot of hoaxes. So many, I don't want to name them all. We don't have enough time.

But he was always very strong. Great lawyer, tremendous lawyer. And also a big believer in the environment and keeping it good and clean and healthy. And I just want to thank you for the job. And I—the only thing I ask is that you go speedily, because, you know, a lot of people use the whole process—the environmental impact process to delay projects. We just want them to go quickly.

And you can get the same answer in a matter of months, as opposed to a matter of years, I feel so strongly. Because people are coming in with tremendous amounts of money. I—have been spoken to by every—yesterday, I had Tim Cook in the office from Apple. He's investing hundreds of billions of dollars. I don't know if—I hope he's announced it. Hope I didn't announce this, but what the hell. [Laughter]

All I do is tell the truth. He—that's what he told me. Now he has to do it, right? So it's a good—but he's investing hundreds of billions of dollars and others too. We're going to have a lot of chipmakers coming in, a lot of automakers coming in. They stopped two plants in Mexico that were under construction, starting construction. They just stopped them. They're going to build here instead because they don't want to pay the tariffs. The tariffs are amazing. It's good.

I said it's—I got myself in a lot of trouble. I said it's my favorite word in the dictionary, the word "tariff." It's such a beautiful word. And the—the fake news killed me. They—said, "What about love? What about God? What about family?" And I said, "I'm in trouble." [Laughter] I said, so now it's my fourth favorite word. [Laughter] I say, "love, God, family." There's a couple of others I could add in there too. But it's my fourth favorite word, so.

And OMB Director Russell Vought. Thank you, Russell. You're going to be incredible. I know he took a little—took some hits, but I know how good he is, how honest he is, and he's fantastic with the numbers. And you're seeing these numbers coming out with the theft, right? And it's tremendous fraud, waste, and abuse. And all three of them, but I think the fraud is really the biggest. I think you're going to see it. You come out as soon as you can, I think, with your numbers, but—because they're not explainable. They're not explainable.

So I just—Russell, do a great job. That's all.

SBA Administrator—Small Business. Now, small business is really big business. It's actually one of the biggest banks in the world. It sounds a little bit like, oh, small, little business. It is a massive—it is one big sucker, right? And Kelly Loeffler is here, so she's going to be incredible.

And she's got an incredible husband Jeff, who is one of the most important people in the world of finance. And he knows—he owns a thing called the New York Stock Exchange. So that's not so bad, right?

And you have natural experience, but I think you're going to do great.

And there's a lot of fraud in there from the past, you know, with all the money that was handed out. It was, you know, billions and billions of dollars.

Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard. Where is Tulsi? Is she here? Hi, Tulsi. I haven't really seen you. Good luck. *[Laughter]* Do well. Have fun. We built a building. The building cost, like, \$12 billion. The building—it's loaded up with intelligence. Lots of luck figuring it out, right? Good.

It was—she was—treated pretty rough for a person that's an incredible patriot. We've all known that. So it's nice that you're sitting with Bobby, because you two, you went through a lot. But you know what? You're going to be stars.

And over the past month, our new administration has taken unrelenting action to fix every single disaster that we inherited. And we inherited a lot of them, the border being, I think—actually, I think it's the most difficult one of all. The rest we can get fixed, including foreign countries that are doing things that they shouldn't be doing.

And one of the reasons that we won the election by so much, because we won it in every way. We won the popular vote. We won the seven swing States, all seven, by a lot. And we won, by millions of votes, the popular. It's always hard—I guess it hasn't happened in a couple of decades—for a Republican to win the popular vote. I think that that's changing so rapidly.

But we had another thing that was pretty amazing. We had—of the 3,000 counties, we won 2,500 of them, and the Democrats won 500. That's a lot. It's—they've never seen anything like it. It would—actually, you would have thought that—the numbers would even be much higher. When you win—2,500 counties to 500 counties, that's a—when you look at the map—you've all seen the map, the one that got certified and came out just recently—it's, like, almost totally red.

And it's my honor. We're going to just work it out. But we've really become the party of common sense. And I think it's important.

I think it's important for the Democrats, common sense too. We're going to deal with you, and we're going to deal on a commonsense basis. And I know a lot of you agree with a lot of the things. I don't know if—sometimes you're not allowed to say it, unfortunately, but I think we'll be all better off if everybody says—that includes Republicans saying the right things.

So, on day one, I declared a national emergency on our southern border to stop the invasion of our country, because we were being invaded—millions and millions of people. I figure 21 million people, and, of that, 2 or 3 million were criminals, and many of them were people that countries didn't want. They would put them in the—in these massive, large caravans.

I came up with that name a long time ago. That's what it is: It's a caravan.

And these are people—in many cases, they might not be criminals, but they're people that the country didn't want. They didn't work. They didn't—they needed help all the time, or they needed assistance or whatever. It's—our country has got a lot of people in it right now, and we're going to make sure that everybody is treated fairly, but we got to change it. It's the—it's the most difficult problem, I think.

Additionally, the heroes of ICE have been really hunting down the really bad ones. And we are going—they're incredible people, ICE. They were being shunned by Biden. They were being mocked. And let me tell you, these are tough, tough men and women, but they're tough.

They'll see, like, a MS-13 band of thugs out on Long Island, and they'll bring up—they'll bring up the paddy wagons. They get in, and they'll say, "No, one of them—two of them killed two young girls in Long Island." For some reason, they like Long Island. MS-13 loves Long Island. I don't know what that's all about. But two young girls walking to school, 16 years old, in the morning. They were accosted by a group of MS-13 thugs.

And they—they don't use guns as much. They use knives. They like using knives. And they cut them up, cut them into pieces, and then left them and killed them. Cut them up into pieces, little pieces. And they used—they used knives because it's more painful.

And ICE went in. They have no fear of these guys. They went in and they just knocked the hell out of them. And they'll go into a pack. They call it a pack. Not like a political PAC. Political PACs are slightly nicer. But a pack of these MS-13 people or Tren de Aragua people from Venezuela—and they'll just walk in. It's—all you'll see is fists going for 5 minutes, and then you'll see these guys walk out, and they got them between their legs, and they're bringing them—getting them the hell out of the country.

These are rough people that we have to deal with. But ICE is incredible. Border Patrol is incredible. Law enforcement—the people in law enforcement, we make their jobs so difficult by allowing people like this into our country. We just shouldn't do it.

So I've just designated the—the group from Venezuela, Tren de Aragua, as a foreign terrorist organization. I mean, they—in Colorado, they went and they—and other places, they literally take over. They're like me. They're in the real estate business. They take over real estate. And they literally take it over. They just claim it, and they tell tenants to get the hell out, and if you don't get out—they had one case where a guy called the cops, and they went in, "You called the cops?" "Yes." And they cut off his fingers. He says, "You don't call them anymore, or we'll cut off the other fingers on your other hand." These are not nice people.

But Federal, State, and local cooperation has to be the backbone of border security. So, I hope, as Governors—I know all the Republicans are very much in tune with Tom Homan and Kristi and everybody—but I hope everybody, because, ultimately, you want to get the criminals out of your State. And just—and we're focusing on the really bad ones. It's—we have 11,088 people that we know of that are murderers—that are actually murderers. And I can't imagine anybody wanting them in their State, whether you're a Republican or whether you're a Democrat or whatever you may be.

I mean, we have—many of them murdered more than one person. Some murdered more than five people, and they're in our country. They let them out of jails. These—were convicted people, and they let them out of jails because it's very expensive to have somebody in jail for a lifetime or whatever it might be. And they brought them in here.

The American people expect every city and State to fully honor ICE detainer requests—and we hope they can—and to ensure the safe transfer of criminal aliens into Federal custody for immediate removal from our country.

You know, many of the countries said, "We're not ever going to let them back." Under the Biden administration, I remember—it's Venezuela—he's a tough guy—and others—they said: "We're not letting them back. They're out of here, and you'll never bring them back. They're not coming into this country." And Biden said, "Well, we can't bring them back. They won't take them."

Well, we took them. And every single country now—you saw it with Colombia. You saw it with Venezuela.

In fact, they actually offered to send planes to pick them up, and they'll pick them up so that we don't have to go through the expense of sending a plane. Is that correct, Marco? You—even Marco couldn't believe that one. But we—they literally are sending planes to pick up these people. And they're rough people, and they're picking them up, and they're putting them in the planes.

There's no excuse for any State attempting to aid and abet dangerous criminals, killers, drug dealers, really bad people who are violating Federal law and violating the law by being in our country.

To combat inflation, I declared a national energy emergency, and we had to do that. One of the things we've done is, by doing that, we can go very quickly. You know, a lot of companies are coming in, but they need tremendous electricity—amounts of electricity. Who would have thought, Doug, right?

But they need more electricity for AI than we have right now in the country. In other words, we have X—we have electricity now for the whole country. They need that just for that one industry.

So they're coming in with—and we're going to be leading. We're now leading on that. We've really opened it up. And I hope it's good, but we opened it up. And we're leading China by a lot. But China is giving them tremendous electricity because they do whatever they want to do. But we're working with Lee.

And I've told these people, they spend—they're going to spend hundreds of billions—trillions of dollars, actually. So I need double the energy that we have right now and even more than that, from what I'm understanding, which is hard to believe. In other words, take every car, everything—every building. We need whatever it is—a hundred percent of the energy, we need that amount just to be in the number one position. And we need, really, more than that to—to really dominate, which I think we'll be dominating.

But I told them, and they can't believe it. I said: "We're going to get you quick approvals. Then you're going to build your own electric plants so that you're going to create your own electricity. When you build your—your plant, which will be massive." These are massive plants. But when you build your plant, we're going to let them build an electric generating plant, where they build—like a utility. In other words, instead of using Con Edison, like we have in New York.

Hello, Governor. Nice to see you back there.

Governor Kathleen C. Hochul of New York. Nice to see you, Mr. President.

The President. And we do have Con Edison, and they don't do a bad job, actually. It—they could be a little cheaper with the price, perhaps—[laughter]—but they aren't too bad.

But we build our own utility. They can have their own utility. If they have any extra, they can put it onto the grid. But this way, they're not subject to a bad grid or a dangerous grid or a grid that gets taken out by bombs or war or anything else.

So they actually couldn't believe it. They said, "You think you could get that approved?" "Yes, I'll get that approved very quickly." They couldn't believe it. And they're so happy.

And they're going to do some in Virginia, some big ones. But we're going to go. And this way, it's really a self-serving—they just have this massive building with a large electric-generating facility that'll be powered by natural gas, mostly. Some will use coal. Some will use nuclear. Clean coal. I only say "clean coal," but some will use nuclear. They have their right to do it. None will use wind, because wind doesn't work.

It's just terrible how an environmental person can like wind. It kills the birds. It's very expensive. It's seven, eight times more expensive than other forms of energy. Every wind turbine in the country that goes up needs massive subsidies. It's the only—it's really the only energy that needs subsidy, essentially. The solar is doing okay, so it's the only one.

But to combat inflation, I declared that national energy emergency, and we're going to unleash the liquid gold under our feet to bring the prices way down. That's going to happen.

And, again, we're going to have—a big part of that is going to be natural gas—which is very, very clean—and clean coal. We're going to do as many forms of energy as we can. And it's going to be something. I think everybody knows—and you're going to call me or anybody else if you have difficulty or problems.

But you're going to have levels of business being brought to this country that you've never seen before. The tariffs are bringing them more than anything else. The country is bringing them, but the tariffs are bringing. They hadn't been here, and we're creating tax—tremendous tax incentives. But the biggest incentive is they don't want to pay 100-percent tariff or 200-percent or whatever it may be.

And as you know, we're going to be announcing tariffs on cars from foreign countries of 25 percent. That will be done in—probably April 2. I was going to do it April 1, but I said, "I—don't like that date." [Laughter] It's going to cost a lot of money to wait one day. You know, that's—I don't know, what do I do there, Pam? Maybe I'll—should I do it just April 1? It costs a lot of money, that extra day, Marco. You figure what that costs. Let's do it April 2, right? I just don't want to take the abuse.

We created the new Department of Government Efficiency, which you may have heard about—[laughter]—DOGE, which is now waging war on Government waste, fraud, and abuse. And we've begun the largest deregulation of industries and other things—it's proper deregulation—that it has ever done.

I lead the way on—my first 4 years, we did more deregulation than any other President in history.

And I brought a little list along that I thought I'd just read some of the places—when you mention DOGE, some of the places that this money has gone, and these are the ones that I feel I could read. There are some that are so nasty and dirty and horrible that I don't want to really read them, because they—I assume they have television on. We have—guarantee they do.

I let the press in today, because we have nothing to hide, right? It's much better. They said, "Do you want to let the press in?" I said, "Why not?" You think Biden would do that? I don't think so. [Laughter]

Five hundred and twenty million dollars was given for a consultant to do ESG—that's environmental, social, and governance—investments in Africa. Five hundred and twenty million dollars. Twenty-five million dollars to promote biodiversity conservation and social responsibility behavior in the country of Colombia. Twenty-five million dollars.

Forty million dollars to improve the social and economic inclusion of sedentary migrants. They have no place, in particular, they were thinking of. There is no location. The money was sent out, but they have no idea where it's going.

Forty-two million dollars for social and behavior changes in Uganda. And \$10 million for Mozambique medical male circumcision, people that want to be or have to be circumcised in Mozambique. Fourteen million dollars for improving public procurement in Serbia.

Four hundred and eighty-six million dollars to Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening, which \$22 million was for inclusive participatory political process in Moldova. And \$21 million going to my friend Prime Minister Modi in India for voter turnout. We're giving \$21 million for voter turnout in India.

What about us? I want voter turnout too, Governor.

Twenty-nine million dollars to strengthen the political landscape in Bangladesh. Went to a firm that nobody ever heard of. Got \$29 million. They got a check. Can you imagine, you have a little firm. You get \$10,000 here, \$10,000 there, and then we get \$29 million from the United States Government. They had two people working in that firm—two people. I think they're very happy. *[Laughter]* They're very rich. They'll be on the cover of a very good business magazine pretty soon for being great scammers.

Twenty million dollars for fiscal federalism, and \$19 million for biodiversity in Nepal. And \$47 million, also, for improving learning outcomes in Asia. Asia. Asia has got a lot of money. Fifty million dollars, plus another \$50 million, for condoms for Hamas. They gave \$50 million, and it worked out so well, they gave another \$50 million a little bit later. Condoms—\$100 million for Hamas.

And we're also uncovering outrageous incompetence and fraud in the Social Security. And I read this last night, so, Governor, you're going to be bored hearing this, but you know, it's—you never get bored, because it's not possible to even believe it.

So, if you live 100 years, it's a long time. But let's assume that they had millions and millions of people living, because they have, like, 10 million people in the Social Security living. But let's go over—over 100. So now you're more than 100 years old.

We have 4.7 million Social Security numbers, people from the age of 100 to 109. So, if you're 100 to 109, we have 4.7 million people on our Social Security rolls, right? Well, that's a lot of people.

I haven't—you know, I knew one guy who was 100, the great Lenny Litwin. He was a builder in Manhattan. He lived to 103. You knew him. He was one of the greatest builders. He was so happy. He was—the reason he lived, he loved building. He'd build a building a year, right? Never had a problem.

You knew Lenny Litwin, I would think, Governor, right? He was a great guy.

And got along with everybody. He got along with Democrats, Republicans. Everybody loved Lenny. When he died, it was a bad day for New York, I'll tell you. He was a great guy. But he lived to 103, 104, because he just loved his business. He was designing a new building at 103, and that was the end of it. He didn't quite get the design finished.

But you had 3.6 million people aged 110, substantially older than good ol' Lenny.

From 110 to 119, you have 3.6—these are the people on the rolls. And we're looking to see whether or not they've been paid, because if they've been paid, then you're just using those numbers to take out their—the money, all the money that's paid to those people. Three-point-forty-seven million people from the age of 120 to 129. Three-point-nine million people age 130 to 139. Three-point-five million people age 140 years old to 149 years old. I think this is a case for Pam.

I think I might give you this, Pam. Just you can have it. In fact, I will. One point three million from age 150—there's 1.3 million people they're saying are alive and receiving Social Security. Now, that's the only thing we're checking. Are they receiving it? Because if they're

receiving it, that makes it much worse. If they're not receiving it, that just makes it incompetent. They shouldn't be on the rolls.

And the only thing good about this is that when we take all these people off the rolls—and we have tremendous fraud underneath with people that are 80 and 60 and 50 and everything else, but this is really incredible. One point three million from 150 to 159.

And over 130,000 people are on the rolls of Social Security over the age of 160 years old, including 1,039 people between the ages of 220 and 229. So we have—think of that. We have 1,039 people who are 220 years old to 229. We have one person at 240 years old.

And here's the beauty of them all. We have one person at 360, which is strange because the country is 250. *[Laughter]* So it's been there 110 years older than the country.

Here, Pam, you'd better take a look at this. *[Laughter]*

Attorney General Pamela J. Bondi. I have it, President.

The President. This is much—that's much better for you than for me. Now the question is are they getting paid, because somebody maybe is getting paid.

Attorney General Bondi. We're on it.

The President. Yes, I have a feeling you were.

I said what a convenient thing. This is so nice.

We created this department, DOGE, and the kind of numbers are—are incredible. It could be \$500 billion, but it could be a trillion dollars. It could be even a trillion five. We're going to find out. I mean, we're going to—

We—I'm actually going with Elon, and Elon is doing a really good job. And I said, "Who are these people that travel?" "We call them the DOGErs." And I said, "What are they?" He said, "They're generally young people with extremely high IQs who are very good with computers." Because you have to be good with computers, so when one of these scammers talks and tries to tell them why it's perfect, they'll say, "No, no, it doesn't work that way." You know, it's very hard to talk them out of something when they have you.

But we're actually going to Fort Knox, because I want to see, do we have the gold? Do we still have—whatever it is—tons of gold? I hope we do. Wouldn't that be disappoint if Fort Knox—you grow up hearing about Fort Knox—you can't get in, you can't even see it, nobody sees it. You go there, and the place is dry. Would that be terrible? There's another one. Maybe you should go with us to that one. *[Laughter]*

But we're going to go in there pretty soon. We—they're going to open the doors to Fort Knox. If any Governor would like to go with us, we'll go. Do you want to go with us on that one, Ron? That could be good. It could be interesting. Can you imagine if we open it up and there's no gold?

Well, I think there will be, for one reason: It's really heavy. You know? *[Laughter]* You steal a bar of gold, you've got to be strong. So it's not like other things.

But we're looking at everything. We have the largest deregulation campaign in history, and we are—again, I—I did more than anybody, but this blows it away. And for one in—every time we put in a new regulation, we're not allowed to put it in unless we terminate 10 old regulations. So it's 1 in 10. We did one in seven in my last administration, and the problem is, some of them were put back—foolishly put back. There was no reason for them.

So, if you truly want a turbocharged economy, you have to do that, and you have to get rid of the regulations.

I think one of the reasons we—I mean, before COVID—and we did a great job with COVID in getting—it was a hell of a thing for all of us, everybody here. But some countries were—some countries will actually never recover for what they went through. But we ended up giving back—when we turned over the reins, we—the stock market was higher than just previous to COVID coming in, which was an amazing achievement.

But we were—just prior to that, we were—I will never forget, I was sitting down with two consultants, the two great pollsters. They said, "Sir, this economy is so good." We had the greatest economy in the history of the world. We were doubling up China. We were—I was also charging China hundreds of billions of dollars in tariffs, which nobody—no President charged them anything, but they were killing us.

And—but we were beating everybody. Everybody said that, in 2018, China was going to overtake us as the biggest economy in the world. And by the time I got finished, we were so much bigger than China, and we still are now. But another 4 years like we had just past, you will have China being much bigger than you. There's no reason—if we have a smart President, there's no way that they should ever be able to catch us.

But this pollster said to me, "Sir, if Abraham Lincoln and George Washington came back from the dead and they ran as President and Vice President, they'd never be able to beat you." And I said, "Thank you very much." The next day, I go into my office and a group of scientists are sitting there. "Sir, we'd like to tell you, there's something very bad happening in China. There's dead bodies all over the place." And that's the first time I heard the word "pandemic" in a long time. And that's where it started.

And you know where they were? All around the Wuhan lab. That's why I was—from day one, I was saying—they had little slits like this. You saw them from the air, from the—from the—from space. And they were just little slits, but they were body bags. There were black body bags all over. So many. And that's why—that's where it came from.

One other thing I—just before we leave, I think you should do this. If—I mean, for —safety and security and for the good of our Nation, you should do it anyway, regardless, even if it costs 10 times more, but it actually costs you just a tiny fraction. If you went to paper ballots in your voting—and I—would hope that every Republican would.

So it costs exactly 8 percent of what the machines cost. These machines, they've got something going. They got—they get—they get business. It's amazing. So paper ballots. And paper is very sophisticated today. A paper, the—it's called watermark. It's impossible to copy, impossible to cheat. It's actually hard to believe that a piece of paper is highly sophisticated, but it's watermarked, and it's a very—it's amazing, actually, when you see it. You can't cheat.

But if you went to paper ballots and same-day voting and if you went to voter ID and, also, one other thing: You want a proof of citizenship. Those four things: proof of citizenship, voter ID, paper ballots, 1-day voting. And if you went to 2-day voting or 3-day voting. But some of these States, you go, and you had 64 days.

You know, California just finished up just a short while ago. They've—they were voting a week and a half ago. They're trying to finish them up. And other States too, they were weeks after the election. I mean, if that were a close election, you'd have to wait for weeks and weeks and weeks.

You got finished fast, Brian. Thank you for your help. We did very well in Georgia. That was very nice.

But some of these States, if you had a close election, you wouldn't know who won, and then, you know, once that happens, then you really never know who won.

But you would save tens of millions of dollars. Forgetting about right, wrong, and security, safety, our country, our Constitution, and all of these: number one, you'd have a much safer election.

Number two, everybody—you'd know the results of your election by 10 o'clock, everybody. It's a beautiful system. It's boxes of 5,000—boom, boom. And you can go and examine each box. It's so simple and so good.

I was—I did ask Elon, because he knows more about computers than anybody I know, I said, "What do you think of the voting system?" He said: "Computers are not meant for voting. It's just not a good—it's too many transactions taking place too quickly. It's just not"—he said, "Honestly"—and I've gone to the best people, the smartest computer minds from MIT, from others. My uncle was a professor for 41 years at MIT and a brilliant guy. And I got to know a lot of the people up there, and they will tell you that the most secure way that you can secure the election and probably the fastest way, because there can be very little hanky-panky, is paper ballots. Can you believe it?

So I hope, Sarah, that—certainly, the Republican Governors, but if you want to save a lot of money, you go to paper ballots. It will cost you 8 percent of what the costs are now. And that's based on a good deal for machines. And then when you go through the, you know, days and weeks and months of waiting.

France had mail-in ballots. Mail—anytime you have mail-in ballots, you're going to have fraud, without question. And France had it, and they went back to paper ballots. And I saw their election, and their election was over at 9 o'clock, and their numbers came in at 10:05, and there were no complaints. There was no—they had a winner. They had a loser. Thirty-nine million votes, and it was done.

We're one of the only people that has now mail-in voting. One of the only countries that has mail-in voting.

Remember Jimmy Carter, when he did a Commission, and I think they had Scoop Jackson. They had some, you know, at the time, big Senators. And their conclusion was, if you have mail-in voting, you're going to have massive fraud.

And we had it in New York with a congressional race. Remember the congressional race where they—it took them forever to—like, 6 months later, they declared. Who was it? Jerry Nadler or somebody? They declared him the winner, oh, 6 months later. But it was somebody. Oh, no, it was the woman or the Congressman. I won't mention her name, but she—she won, but she—she didn't win. And it was—it was really very sad to see that whole thing. Democrat. That was a Democrat and a Democrat. That was a primary. But they had the mail-in voting. It's just a disaster.

So it's very, very expensive. If you want to save money—if you're not—and if you really believe that the computers work, which they don't—but if you want to save a lot of money, all you have to do is go to paper ballots, and you'll be cutting it down by, you know, millions and millions of dollars.

So America will take off like a rocket ship. You're going to see things that's so great for the Governors. And—and Democrat Governors are going to have, you know—you're going to get the benefit of this. You're going to be opening up plants, and you're going to be—I hope we have enough people. We're going to let—and we want people to come into our country, by the way. I

do. But they have to come in legally. So we need people in the country, but they have to come in legally.

Two weeks ago, I signed an Executive order banning men from playing in women's sports. Many Democrats are fighting me on that. I hope you continue, because you'll never win another race.

And it's just crazy. If you look at what happened with the boxing. If you look at what happened with the weightlifting numbers, where a record that hadn't been broken for 19 years got shattered. But you know, they put up an eighth of an ounce here, an eighth of an ounce there, and it's 218 pounds or whatever. A lot. And hadn't been broken in 19 years. And then a guy walks up who transitioned—he transitioned, and he knocked out that record by about 100 pounds. That will be a record not going to be broken again in a long—so we put a ban on it and—to protect women.

I mean, the women—if you watch the Olympics, you had two transitioned people that were fighting in the women's boxing. They have women's boxing category. And if you saw that, it was brutal. What happened to the—the Italian woman was a really good boxer. After one punch, she said: "No, no. No more. No more. I've never been hit"—it was a left. It was not even a—it was just a left jab. She got hit so hard, she said, "I can't do it." They forced her to go out. "No, go out. Go out again. You'll do it." Goes out again, hits—gets it again. "No, no, that's it." She didn't want to die. And it's crazy.

But the NCAA has complied immediately, by the way. That's good. But I understand Maine—is Maine here? The Governor of Maine?

Governor Janet T. Mills of Maine. You're damn right I am.

Audience member. Right here.

Gov. Mills. Yes, I'm here.

The President. Are you not going to comply with it?

Gov. Mills. I'm complying with State and Federal laws. And——

The President. I—well, I'm—we are the Federal law.

Gov. Mills. There's statutes.

The President. Well, you'd better do it. You'd better do it, because you're not going to get any Federal funding at all if you don't.

And by the way, your population, even though it's somewhat liberal—although I did very well there—your population doesn't want men playing in women's sports. So you'd better comply——

Gov. Mills. We're going to follow the laws.

The President. You better comply, because, otherwise, you're not getting any—any Federal funding.

Gov. Mills. We'll see you in court.

The President. Every State—good. I'll see you in court. I look forward to that. That should be a real easy one.

Gov. Mills. It should be for me.

The President. And enjoy your life after, Governor, because I don't think you'll be in elected politics.

Every State has a responsibility to comply with title IX. They have an obligation, a legal obligation. And we'll be enforcing aggressively, and we're going to be protecting our citizens. We're going to protect.

So, just to end, this administration has been fighting for parents' rights and universal school choice. We want to do something that I—I think many people in this room want, and even if you don't, I think you do want it, but you might not be able to say it. We want to move the schools back to the States, so that Iowa and South Carolina and Georgia and all the States can run your own school system. And you'll do a fantastic job.

Kim, you're going to do great. I mean, I use your example, because you're so much into the education. Done a great job with school choice. And you'll do it—your school choice. That will be the easy thing. But we want to get it back—take it away.

So just some stats. So, at last—it's usually we're 38, 39, or 40 out of 40. They take the 40, I guess, biggest, most important, whatever it might be, but 40 countries. And we were 38, 38, 39, and, congratulations, but 2 months ago, 3 months ago, we hit number 40. So we were last in terms of education in the world. And we were first in another category, though. We were first in cost per pupil.

So we spend much more. And, by the way, second wasn't even close. So you have Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, China. So there goes the big country theory, right? They have 1.4. They're rated number five. That's a little bit scary, isn't it?

But they're all rated well, spend much less per pupil than we do. We spend the most per pupil, and we're rated last. Think of that. That's—can anything be worse than that, Sarah, huh?

So what happens is, we are going to make a very strong push on closing up the Department of Education. We'll have one person sitting there just to make sure that they're teaching English, reading, writing, and arithmetic. Okay? Just—that's all. The rest of it is up to the Governors. We have great Governors. Really smart people.

Brian, I think you'd love to have it in Georgia, because you could do a great job. And you're—you're being told—Ron would love it. Ron is sitting there saying, "Oh, give me the education." You're being told by people in Washington that don't know much about your State—and maybe don't like your State, maybe don't like you, maybe don't like your pupils—about what they should be doing.

And I'll tell you what. We will compete, many of our States—I figure 35 of them—we're going to have 35 great ones. We're going to have five that are okay. Then we'll have another five that are blah. And then we're going to have four or five not so good.

But in a place like New York, we could take it—as an example, Westchester County, you go Westchester, Suffolk. You go out, and Long Island, you do. You do upstate New York. You know, you break it up into quadrants. Manhattan. But I think you could do a great job.

I think that—I think the States will do a fantastic job, and we send the money directly to the States, and we send—we're not looking even for the cuts, but you'll spend a lot less money. You're going to spend a lot less money.

You know, as somebody that spent a lot of time in Washington over the last number of years, it seems like every building is the Department of Education, but I'm saying: "What do these people do? What do they do?"

But if we could send education back—and Linda, as you know, is going through the process right now, and I think she's doing really well. She's great. Linda McMahon. And I said: "Linda, you're trying—I really want you to do a great job, but you're really only doing a great job if you

have no job by the time we finish. You have to—you have to create no job for yourself, because we want this to go back to the States." And she agrees.

And if we can do that, I think it's going to be one of the most important things we can do. So, the governors, the people in this room—Democrat, Republican—will run their own school system. And we'll back them a hundred percent, and we'll pay like we do now, but I think we'll have to—we'll end up having to pay probably half. But that's not the reason I'm doing it. I'm doing it because we give really bad education.

And as far as the teachers union, I love teachers, and I imagine unions might form in some of these places. And if they do, that's fine. You'll deal with it. So this isn't against unions. This—because I—won unions. I won the Teamsters. When you win the Teamsters, that's serious.

But I put in a person as Secretary of Labor who—I really did it because the unions treated me so well. The autoworkers—I mean, so many of the unions—the firefighters. The police unions, I got, like, 98 percent of the vote. We're looking for the other 2 percent. Nobody can find them. So, you know, I grew up in New York, which was union—union territory.

But we want to be able to have great education. If we don't have education in this country, this country is going to go down. When you hear China is rated number four and five every year, and, you know, they're a serious competitor.

So I want to thank you all, and—I do want to say, again, I—call me at any time. I will take your call. If you're a Democrat, I will put you ahead of the Republican. If I have a Democrat or Republican call—I will put the Democrat first. [Laughter] Okay? I promise. And probably. Sort of promise, right? [Laughter] No, I will. We'll take good care of the people in this room.

And it's an honor to be with you. You're very, very smart people. To do what you do, to get elected, it's a tough business. But if you could take back education and if we could do some of the things that we just laid out very easily in this plan—and you have a Federal Government that's behind you all the way—all the way. We'll be sending help.

As an example, if we do get rid of FEMA—which we should. It's very expensive. Doesn't work. But we'll be sending Federal help in if you have a big hurricane or a tornado or all of the things that I've been watching. And you'll be taken care of much, much better than you're taken care of now. You have to wait around for these people to come, and they come so late.

But the worst example was what you had to go through in North Carolina. What happened there was a terrible thing.

So congratulations on your victories, and you're going to have many more victories. And I'm here for you. If you want to ask a couple of questions, you could, if you'd like to.

Yes, please.

Federal Disaster Assistance

Governor Jared S. Polis of Colorado. Thank you, Mr. President. So I think we share excitement about disaster response and how we can make it better. We've all had disasters. We usually love to see the President after a disaster. That's, you know, never fun—[inaudible].

The President. Right.

Gov. Polis. But we have fires, and other people have floods, hurricanes. We want to be a part of helping to make a Federal emergency response work——

The President. Good.

Gov. Polis. —changing FEMA so they're not putting square pegs in round holes. So, involve our group, because we're the ones on the other end of it saying: "Oh, my god. Why they coming with this when we need that?"

The President. Right.

Gov. Polis. So we're ready to help.

The President. Good. Thank you very much. That's very nice. I agree.

Yes, please.

Entitlement Programs

Governor Joshua B. Green of Hawaii. Mr. President, thank you for welcoming us. As we go through the process of putting in your priorities as President, would you give us an opportunity to speak with you about, say, return on investment——

The President. Sure.

Gov. Green. —before we go, for example, into—oh, forgive me. We have heard and we await the decisions you make and the Secretary will make. But for instance, on Medicaid or Medicare——

The President. Sure.

Gov. Green. —if cuts are proposed, perhaps give us an opportunity, as Governors, to prove to you that we can make these programs worthwhile. That might help us in our budgets.

The President. I love that. I think it's great. Bobby, I think it's great. One of the things we're really focused on is bringing down the costs. And we haven't been treated very fairly, especially over the last 4 years.

And as you know, we had transparency, which is one of the biggest things that could have happened. And Biden, for whatever reason, terminated that. That would have brought down the cost tremendously.

But we'd love to have your ideas on any of the Medicare, Medicaid—any of it. And we will, if those ideas are good—you probably have better ideas than anybody, as Governor. So we would love that.

Gov. Green. Thank you.

The President. Thank you.

Health Care Costs

Governor Michael K. Braun of Indiana. On that issue of health care, we've talked about it before. If we reform the health care industry—and you tried to do that in the first administration, and they tried to fight it back every step of the way. We all deal with high health care costs——

The President. Right.

Gov. Braun. —in government and the private sector. And if we reduce that from 20 percent of our GDP down to 10 to 12, you can pay for a lot of things——

The President. That's right.

Gov. Braun. —in government that we can't currently do it. We need to get the industry in line in helping us do it as well.

The President. Well, you're a good example of it. And in your State, they've done a good job. But you—you can do—you're going to get those numbers down even lower. I know that. That's something very strong for you. And as you have ideas, I'd love you to pass them along to the other Governors here.

But there are some States that have done a really, really good job with that, and we are totally open to suggestions. All right?

Gov. Braun. Thank you.

The President. Thank you.

Yes, Henry.

China/Synthetic Opioid Supply Chain/Drug Use Prevention Programs

Governor Henry D. McMaster of South Carolina. Mr. President, thank you for having us here. It's the *de minimis* rule in tariffs. We've got—oh, the amount that is self-declared now is \$800. If you package—you say your package coming from wherever is under \$800, it's not inspected. There's—there's no tariff on it. The problem is, there's a lot of things coming in that are over that.

The President. That's right. And we're not doing that anymore.

Gov. McMaster. And also, there's fentanyl coming in to——

The President. Yes.

Gov. McMaster. ——I think, to all of these States. That's a real problem, and I think that everyone is sharing that.

The President. Thank you, Henry. So I had a deal with President Xi just prior to leaving office, but before the election, that President Xi was going to give the maximum penalty to anybody sending fentanyl into the United States. His maximum penalty is death. If you notice that—every country that has the death penalty has no drug problem. They execute drug dealers.

And when you think about it, it's—it's very humane, because every drug dealer, on average, they say, kills at least 500 people, not to mention the damage they do to so many others. But they kill large numbers of people.

China, Singapore—actually, there are quite a few, many in Asia, where they have the death penalty. There's no drug problem whatsoever.

They come to our country because we have a much softer policy. We give them a slap on the wrist and say, "Kill a lot of people." So we are going to—I mean, I'm—I don't know if our country is ready for it. I am ready for it: the death penalty if you—deal drugs. You know, you have to set out guidelines, like fairly large numbers, et cetera. But you'll have—you'll have it go down very greatly.

I—one of the things we're going to do is we're going to do an advertising campaign—they're working on it right now—and that's saying how bad drugs are for you. I was speaking, actually, to the President of Mexico saying, you know, "You can't send the people through your country." And I said: "You know, you're not a big drug-taking nation. You send us plenty of drugs, but the people aren't drug-taking." And she said, "Yes, we're not a consumer nation." And that was a very interesting term.

And I said: "So why aren't you? What—are the reasons? Why is it?" It's true. Mexico, they don't have a lot of drug problems, in terms of taking the drug. He said, "Well, two things"—and a lot of you could do with the second thing. He said, "We have very strong family values." I said,

"But so do we." I mean, I see people, they die of a drug overdose—the daughter, the son—the mother and father will never be the same. Never be the same. Their life is ruined. Their life is over. I've seen it so much. So we have strong family values, also—family members and relationships. Just as strong as Mexico.

"What's the other?" "Well, we spend a lot of money on advertising saying how bad drugs are for you." And I said, "Oh." I never learn anything on phone calls. This time I learned something. I said, "You know, I never thought of that."

Because we set up, like, committees, and you can't have the death penalty, I guess. But, I don't know, someday somebody's going to get sick of it and do it, and you won't have any drug problem in this country. But—and you can do it on an individual State basis, for the Governors in the room that want to do it. But you will not have a drug problem in your State if you did it.

But I will say this. We have a situation where we have now hired a couple of the best agencies, and we're going to spend about \$100 million, maybe \$200 million, on advertising, saying that when you take certain drugs—the drug fentanyl, et cetera, et cetera—it destroys your skin, it destroys your teeth, it destroys your brain, it destroys everything. And really horrible commercials. I mean, I've seen the first of them, and they are brutal. They are brutal.

And when some young kid is sitting down watching this commercial a couple of times, I really don't think they're going to be taking drugs.

So I think that this is—I mean, this is a big statement, but I think we can drop it 50 percent—five-oh—by doing this. And I give her credit. She was talking to me about it, telling me about it, and I—but I knew immediately, as soon as she said it, it was not—she didn't have to say anymore. She went on to tell me different things, but it was just the concept of it.

And I think States can do that too. If you do commercials talking about how horrible it is, drugs—I mean, what it does. I mean, you look at their skin gets eroded. Their teeth are—you can tell. I mean, you—can see a person that takes a lot of drugs, especially fentanyl and some of the others, the bad ones—the real bad ones. Some of them—the heroin. It's unbelievable what it does to people.

And we're going to put out very, very strong ads. And now that I'm thinking about it, I think you should put on strong ads too. Really strong ads. I think it—it's an unbelievable thing. We'll all do it. We're going to do it on a national basis, but you can do it individually—on an individual basis.

And you can also—look, I think—you'll have to get rulings on this, but your States have the right to go death penalty, also, for drug dealers. And—but only do that if you want to get rid of drugs, because if you don't do that, it's a little tough.

But I think the advertising will—have a huge—I think we can get it down by 50—five-oh—percent. We set up—we did great. We got it down 18 percent. I said, "That's not a lot though." It's—everybody was giving us credit. "Oh, 18." And 18 percent, to me, we set up committees with the First Lady of the United States on a blue-ribbon Committee, but they didn't know too much about El Chapo and the various people that we're talking about. It's a smart group of people.

But I'll tell you what, the advertising could be unbelievable, and I hope the States do it. It's—you're not talking about a lot of money. You're talking about peanuts, actually. I mean, with \$50 million, you could just cover the State. And if you did that—and I'm going to do it—I think we can get drugs way down. I think we can get it down by 50 percent when you see it. I've seen some of the ads. It's—man, I don't—if a person looks at these, the ads that I saw, they're not going to be taking drugs.

So good question. Thank you, Henry, very much.

How about we'll do one more.

Yes, please. Hi.

Social Welfare Programs

Governor Gregory R. Gianforte of Montana. Mr. President, thank you so much for having us here.

The President. Thank you.

Gov. Gianforte. As we've talked as Governors, we implement a lot of the social welfare programs, whether it's Medicaid or job training or rental assistance. Each one has different requirements that create cliffs in benefits that make it hard for people to recover. Things as simple as work requirements for able-bodied adults, if we could synchronize across TANF, Medicaid—

The President. I think it's great.

Gov. Gianforte. —work programs.

The President. Yes.

Gov. Gianforte. Let's make it—let's make it a—

The President. Volume.

Gov. Gianforte. —trampoline to get people back on their feet, instead of a hammock they climb in and never get out of.

The President. I think it's great. I think if you could get together and work together, you'd—you'd bring down costs, just on that basis. I think it would be—I think it would be really great.

Did you want—go ahead, please.

The President's Leadership

Governor James D. Pillen of Nebraska. Mr. President, I want to just say thank you. It's a word—two words a lot of times we don't say. Thank you for your extraordinary leadership, your courage, all that you do.

And just so you know, even in the State of Nebraska, you're inspiring Nebraskans to get comfortable with being uncomfortable, to stand up for what we believe in—faith, family, hard work, the American dream—to stand up and talk about common sense. So we're incredibly grateful.

The President. Thank you, Governor. Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

Thank you. Thank you very much, everyone. Thank you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:25 a.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia; Secretary of Commerce Howard W. Lutnick; U.S. Special Envoy to the Middle East Steven C. Witkoff; National Security Adviser Michael G. Waltz; former President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.; President Nicolas Maduro Moros of Venezuela; White House Border Czar Thomas D. Homan; Gov. Ronald D. DeSantis of Florida; Mehmet Oz, Administrator-designate, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services; former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Benjamin S. Carson, Sr.; former Department of Justice Special Counsel Robert S. Mueller III; Timothy P. Cook, chief Executive Officer, Apple Inc.; Jeffrey C. Sprecher, husband of Administrator of the Small Business Administration Kelly L. Loeffler; Alexi Saenz, who plead guilty in the murder of

Brentwood, NY, residents Kayla Cuevas and Nisa Mickens in Brentwood on September 13, 2016; White House Senior Adviser Elon R. Musk; Gov. Brian P. Kemp of Georgia; Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders of Arkansas; professional powerlifter Anne Andres; Algerian boxer Imane Khelif, Taiwanese boxer Lin Yu-ting, and Italian boxer Angela Carini, who competed in the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris, France; Gov. Kimberly K. Reynolds of Iowa; Secretary of Education–designate Linda E. McMahon; Secretary of Labor–designate Lori M. Chavez-DeRemer; President Claudia Sheinbaum of Mexico; and Sinaloa drug cartel leader Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzmán Loera. The transcript was released by the Office of Communications on February 24.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : National Governors Association meeting and question-and-answer session.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Andres, Anne; Bessent, Scott K.H.; Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Bondi, Angela J.; Braun, Michael K.; Burgum, Douglas J.; Carini, Angela; Carson, Benjamin S., Sr.; Chavez-DeRemer, Lori M.; Collins, Douglas A.; Cook, Timothy P.; DeSantis, Ronald D.; Gabbard, Tulsi; Gianforte, Gregory R.; Green, Joshua B.; Guzmán Loera, Joaquin "El Chapo"; Hochul, Kathleen C.; Homan, Thomas D.; Kemp, Brian P.; Kennedy, Robert F., Jr.; Khelif, Imane; Lin Yu-ting; Loeffler, Kelly L.; Lutnick, Howard W.; Maduro Moros, Nicolas; McMahon, Linda E.; McMaster, Henry D.; Mills, Janet T.; Modi, Narendra; Mueller, Robert S., III; Musk, Elon R.; Noem, Kristi L.; Oz, Mehmet; Pillen, James D.; Polis, Jared S.; Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich; Reynolds, Kimberly K.; Rollins, Brooke L.; Rubio, Marco A.; Saenz, Alexi; Sanders, Sarah Huckabee; Sheinbaum Pardo, Claudia; Sprecher, Jeffrey C.; Stein, Joshua H.; Thune, John R.; Trump, Melania; Turner, E. Scott; Vought, Russell T.; Waltz, Michael G.; Witkoff, Steven C.; Wright, Christopher A.; Xi Jinping; Zeldin, Lee M.

Subjects: 2024 Presidential election; Arkansas, Governor; Artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies; Attorney General; Autism spectrum disorders; Border security; China, President; China, synthetic opioid supply chain; Colorado, Governor; COVID–19 pandemic; Director of National Intelligence; Drug and alcohol addiction, treatment and reduction efforts; Education, global competitiveness; Election security and integrity, strengthening efforts; Electricity production, expansion efforts; Environmental permit process, improvement efforts; Environmental Protection Agency; Federal disaster assistance, improvement efforts; Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA); Federal regulations, reduction efforts; Florida, Governor; Georgia, Governor; Government accountability and transparency, strengthening efforts; Hamas political-paramilitary organization; Hawaii, Governor; Health care costs and affordability; Illegal immigration; India, Prime Minister; Indiana, Governor; Inflation; Iowa, Governor; Iran, U.S. sanctions; Israel, attacks by Hamas of October 7, 2023; Lebanon, Hizballah political-paramilitary organization; Maine, Governor; Medicare and Medicaid programs; Mexico, President; Montana, Governor; National Governors Association; National Security Adviser; Nebraska, Governor; New York, Governor; North Carolina, Governor; North Carolina, Hurricane Helene damage and recovery efforts; Office of Management and Budget; Oil and gas drilling, Federal oversight and regulation; Oil and natural gas, domestic production; Opioid epidemic, efforts to combat; Prescription drug costs, reduction efforts; Russia, conflict in Ukraine; Russia, President; School choice and voucher programs; Secretary of Agriculture; Secretary of Commerce; Secretary of Energy; Secretary of Health and Human Services; Secretary of Homeland Security; Secretary of Housing and Urban Development; Secretary of State; Secretary of the Interior; Secretary of the Treasury; Secretary of Veterans Affairs; Senate confirmation process; Senate majority leader; Small Business Administrator; Social Security program; Solar and wind energy, promotion efforts; South Carolina, Governor; Sports, efforts to restrict

transgender participation; Teachers; Transgender athletes, efforts to restrict participation; Transnational criminal organizations; U.S. DOGE Service; U.S. foreign aid programs, funding and policies; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement; U.S. Special Envoy to the Middle East; U.S. tariffs on imports, adjustment; Ukraine, Russian invasion and airstrikes; Undocumented immigrants, deportation of criminals; Venezuela, oil supply and refining; Venezuela, President; White House Border Czar; White House Senior Adviser.

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