

**Remarks Announcing the 2025 Kennedy Center Honorees and an Exchange With Reporters**

*August 13, 2025*

*The President.* Thank you very much. This is a very exciting project. We're going to do something that will go rapidly, relatively inexpensively, and will make it better than it ever was, frankly. It will be something that people are going to be very proud of, along with, in the bigger picture, a place called Washington, DC. That is the bigger one, and we'll talk about that in a little while.

But let's talk about, right now, the Kennedy Center, and I'm delighted to be here, as we officially announce the incredibly talented artists who will be celebrated later this year at the 2025 Kennedy Center Honors.

It's going to be a big evening. I've been asked to host. I said, "I'm the President of the United States. Are you fools asking me to do that?" "Sir, you'll get much higher ratings." I said: "I don't care. I'm President of the United States. I won't do it." They said, "Please." And then Susie Wiles said to me, "Sir, I'd like you to host." I said: "Okay, Susie. I'll do it." [*Laughter*] That's the power she's got.

But I just—so I have agreed to host. Do you believe what I have to do? And I didn't want to do it, okay? They're going to say, "He insisted." I did not insist. But I think it will be quite successful, actually. It's been a long time.

I used to host "The Apprentice" finales, and we did rather well with that, so I think we're going to do very well because we have some great honorees, some really great ones.

Since 1978, the Kennedy Center Honors have been among the most prestigious awards in the performing arts. I wanted one. I was never able to get one.

This year—[*laughter*—it's true, actually. I would have taken it, if they would have called me. I waited and waited and waited, and I said: "The hell with it. I'll become Chairman"—[*laughter*—]—"and I'll give myself an honor." Maybe I'll—I'm going to honor—next year, we'll honor Trump, okay?

This year, the Board has selected a truly exceptional class of honorees. I mean, really exceptional.

First is country music star, actor, and producer George Strait. [*Applause*] Great. Over an extraordinary four-decade career, George has sold more than 120 million records worldwide, amassed 60 number one hits—wow—and produced 33 Platinum-certified albums, more than any other living American. That is amazing.

He's beloved by millions of people to just be as good as—as you can get, and he's beloved by hundreds of millions of people all over the world. He's really something. And they call him the "King of Country," and we know him very well. George Strait. Thank you. Please.

[*At this point, the President gestured to a picture of musician George Strait displayed on stage.*]

Oh, and it looks nice. You're a good-looking guy. I hope he still looks like that. [*Laughter*]

Second is actor, singer, philanthropist, and star of the Broadway stage—one of my favorite talents. I think he's one of the greatest talents I've ever actually seen, I've always said. And just so

we don't get in trouble, I'll say "among"—but among the greatest artists in the world are the Broadway-London actors, back and forth.

That's all they want to do is they want to do Broadway, and they want to do London. They want to do eight shows a week, including matinee on Wednesday. And if you said, "Make a movie," they can't even think about it. If you say, "Go on television," they don't want to. All they want to do is be on the stage, the live stage, and it's an amazing—but I've always said they're the most talented people. And this man may be the most of all. Michael Crawford is being honored.

Michael was born in England in 1942. He made his Broadway debut in 1967. I was there. I shouldn't say that—[*laughter*—but I was there. Seems like a long time ago. And he became an international sensation in the 1980s for his original portrayal of the "Phantom of the Opera," one of the greatest ever, ever, ever—you don't see them like that very often—winning him the esteemed Tony Award for Best Actor in a Musical. He's won so many awards.

Michael is truly a generational talent, had a voice that was unbelievable. It was unbelievable.

There's never—I don't know, it's—Luciano Pavarotti had a very different voice. The power was incredible, magnificent.

Michael had a different kind of a voice. These are just unbelievable talents. But Michael is very special and one of the greatest roles in the history of Broadway, and nobody did it like him. Michael Crawford, thank you very much. Great guy.

Next, we look forward to honoring three-time Oscar nominee, Golden Globe Award winner, and action movie icon—and a friend of mine. He's a very unique man. He's somebody that doesn't do these things. I said, "I wonder if he'll accept," because some people don't really want to be honored. They don't care. But he was very honored to be honored, I will tell you. He was—he's very special guy. A real talent. Never been given the credit for the talent. There was nobody else could have done the roles that he did like he did them. Not even close. And they've tried, and they didn't work out too well. His name is Sylvester Stallone.

So it's very few—almost—if any, people that could have taken a name and made it so incredible, like "Rocky," "Rambo," "Creed," and others. But think of it: "Rocky," "Rambo"—if you did one, you're good. You do two—and I'll never forget, I was a young guy, and I went to see a thing called "Rambo," and it had just come out. I didn't know anything about it, but I got—I was in a movie theater, like we used to go to movie theaters a lot. And I said: "This movie is phenomenal. What the heck?" And that turned out to be a monster.

"Rocky" is "Rocky." I mean, the way that happened—you know, Sly had no money, nothing, and he went around—and everybody wants to do a boxing movie. It's the most—you know, probably more than any other type of character, boxing. Boxing. Always boxing. It's so great. And there's rarely been anything like this one.

Jon Voight did a great one, as you know. "Champ." Great. I think that was right there too. You—Jon Voight is a phenomenal person, phenomenal actor.

But Sly came in, and he had no money. He wrote a script, along with thousands of other people writing scripts on a boxer.

And for some reason, a studio picked up this—and liked it. And Sly had—he's in an old car that he came in from Brooklyn—or someplace in New York, but I think Brooklyn. It barely made it to California. He was sleeping in the car. He—I mean, he had nothing. And he wanted control over who the actor was going to be, because he said it can't be successful if you're going to pick a movie actor with a bad build. Okay? A nice face, but a bad body.

And he said, "I can't have these guys," because he's a tough cookie, and he knew exactly what it took. He knew what a boxer's body was.

So they brought him one, and I won't tell you who it was, but it was a big name. But the chest wasn't exactly what you need. One shot, and your heart would pop out. That wasn't too good. Then he did another one. He was fat, sloppy—[*laughter*]*—*but had a good face. Then he did another one and another one and another one, and he turned it down. He wouldn't take \$1 million. He wouldn't do it.

And it turned out that when they saw him, they said, "You know, you'd be actually pretty good for this role." And he had never done this before, a thing—anything like it. But think of it, he turned down a million dollars. He had nothing. He refused to let somebody else play. He didn't want to play it. He wasn't originally—he did it as a writer, but he ended up playing it because he couldn't find anybody else that fit the role. And who knew what would have happened?

He's become a legend of the silver screen—a true legend, and he's a great guy. He's a little bit tough, little bit different, I will tell you. He's a little tough guy. But he's a phenomenal person with a phenomenal wife and family—incredible wife, incredible family.

His films grossing more than \$7.5 billion, which is either a record or very close to it. I can't imagine anybody doing more. If you add up "Rambo" and "Rocky" and these others, it—I can't imagine anybody doing much more. \$7.5 billion worldwide over the course of six decades.

And Sly is a pillar of the—really, American pop culture, and a Hollywood superstar like few others, and one of the biggest names on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. In fact, the only one that's a bigger name on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, they say, is a guy named Donald Trump. [*Laughter*] I'm on the Hollywood Walk of Fame too, if you can believe that one.

But he's amazing. He's really amazing, and he's actually a great actor.

Fourth will be—together, celebrating one of the most revered singers of the American disco era, Gloria Gaynor, best known for her chart-topping 1978 hit, "I Will Survive." Gloria won the 1980 Grammy for Best Disco Recording, and her song was inducted into the National Recording Registry in 2016, four decades later. Gloria won a second Grammy in 2020 for her gospel album "Testimony," which is incredible. Truly a historic achievement, not only in times of the—not only in terms of the years that have gone by—to be great that long—but to have the two top—two top of anything in that span of time and with that kind of period between is pretty amazing.

But I will say that "I Will Survive" is an unbelievable song. I've heard it, you know, like everyone else here, thousands of times, and it's one of those few that get better every time you hear it. And nobody can sing it like her. And that's an honor.

So, Gloria Gaynor, thank you. Thank you very much.

And finally, we'll be honoring one of the greatest rock bands of all time, Kiss.

So Kiss was formed in 1973 in New York City by founding band members—and incredible people, by the way—Paul Stanley, Gene Simmons, Ace Frehley, and Peter Criss.

Kiss became a global phenomenon, sold more than 100 million records worldwide, and produced 30 gold albums and lots of other things they produced. They made a fortune. And they're great people, and they deserve it. And they work hard, and they're still working hard. And it's an honor to present Criss—Kiss.

Thank you very much. Got it? Yes. Thank you.

And they're going to do something very special. Kiss is going to be here on—a little bit before the show. I think they're going to do something very special. We're going to have a good time.

The 48th Kennedy Center honorees are outstanding people, it's—standing group. Incredible. We can't wait to celebrate the Kennedy Center Honors. It will be in December. It will be on CBS.

In a few short months since I became Chairman of the board at the Kennedy Center, we have completely reversed the decline of this cherished national institution. It was being run down.

Money wasn't being spent properly. They were building things they shouldn't have built that nobody wanted, instead of taking care of the great gem that it is. You look at the marble—look at the quality of the marble and the things that, with a little fix-up and a little work, we can make it unbelievable. These columns, when you see them the next time, they'll be magnificent. I mean, we have some great plans for this. The bones are so good—the bones of a building. If you don't have the bones, you might as well forget it.

I'm working on another building, a thing called the White House. We're fixing it up so beautifully. It needed it. It's been many, many years since it's been properly taken care of. It's incredible, one of the great places of the world. Maybe—I mean, truly, to me, it's—is there anything else even close? But we're doing that and doing some other things.

And we're going to also fix up a place called Washington, DC. We're going to make it so beautiful again. We're going to be redoing the parks, redoing the grass. You know, grass has a lifetime like people have a lifetime, and the lifetime of this grass has long been gone, when you look at the parks where the grass is old, tired, exhausted. We're going to redo the grass with the finest grasses. I know a lot about grass because I own a lot of golf courses. And if you don't have good grass, you're not in business very long.

Lindsey Graham—by the way, you have very good poll numbers, Lindsey. I just saw. Congratulations.

But a few short months ago, I became Chairman of the Kennedy Center, and we completely reversed it. We reversed what was happening. We ended the woke political programming, and we're restoring the Kennedy Center as the premier venue for performing arts anywhere in the country, anywhere in the world. This has the potential to be anywhere in the world.

We're going to make it something that people can't even believe. We have some unbelievable plans. And ultimately, it's about the talent you get, though. You know, you can have a beautiful—you can have a beautiful building, you can have nice marble walls, you can have nicely done columns, as I was saying, but if you don't have the talent on the stage—and we're going to get the best talent in the world.

To that end, the world-renowned musical "Les Mis" had a phenomenal 5-week, sold-out run this summer. It beat projected revenues by 35 percent, and we've raised over \$10 million in private funds from a lot of generous donors. And we closed the \$26 million budget shortfall that they had for—before we got here.

And with the help of Congress, we secured the critical funding necessary to rebuild the building and to—we're going to get all brandnew, highest level seats—magnificent seats—and going to be all new. We could have taken the existing ones and do a little paint job, a little fabric, but it's not the same thing. So we'll be taking out—next season, all of the seats will be taken out. The room is being completely rebuilt.

And I just want to thank the Republicans in the Senate, headed by Lindsey. In that case, Lindsey was very much—he's a big fan of this building. And they got a record \$257 million that's

going to go toward renovations the building really needs, and all of the exterior is going to be incredible. It's going to be exciting.

So I thank you very much, and thank all of your Republican Senators. I don't think we had too many Democrat votes, probably. You never have—we don't have Democrats voting, even for crime.

But I shouldn't make this political, because they made the Academy Awards political, and they went down the tubes. So they'll say, "Trump made it political." But I think if we make it our kind of political, we'll go up. Okay? Let's see if I'm right about that.

But I want to thank the Executive Director for an incredible job. He's done great. He's been with me for just about the beginning, and everything he's touched has been good. He was on high intelligence. He worked in low intelligence and high intelligence. He did better with the high-intelligent people. But he's been fantastic. He's the Executive Director, Ric Grenell. For his work, thank you very much, Ric. Unbelievable job.

And as well as Lindsey and all the people that helped us in Congress, I want to thank. And the Senate has been incredible.

By the way, Leader Thune has been unbelievable. And Speaker Mike Johnson. They—these are great—these are great people. What we're doing with the "Great Big Beautiful Bill" is, you're going to see a whole different country. You're seeing it already.

We're coming in—we're—trillions of dollars is coming in from tariffs from all over the world, from countries that took advantage of our country. They were—they thought we were children. They took advantage of us for decades, and now the money is flowing to us. And we have—we've become the hottest country anywhere in the world.

But the Kennedy Center Board members, many of whom I knew and many of whom I put on the Board—and they're—it's an outstanding—it's as good a board as I've ever seen.

And on the Board also and some people that are doing an incredible job—one, in particular, is Attorney General Pam Bondi. The job she's doing is incredible. Thank you very much. Long beyond the Kennedy Center. *[Laughter]* The Kennedy Center is the easy part. She's incredible.

And she's—you're going to see a big change in Washington crime stats very soon—although, not the stats that they gave, because they turned out to be a total fraud. The real stats—the stats went through the roof. You know, they had a man that was forced to put up stats like they were doing better. They're not doing better. The crime is the worst it's ever been.

But it's—it started—as of about yesterday, it started to—you see a big change, and people are feeling safe already. I've had so many calls. "Thank you, sir. Thank you." They were afraid to walk out. They're not afraid anymore.

And we'll—this will get—this will be like the border. We started off with millions and millions of people coming in from all over the world—gang members and people from jails. They were unloading their jails into our country. All over the world, they were coming. Drug dealers. They came from Africa. They came from Asia. They came from South America. Venezuela, in particular, they were coming in—Tren de Aragua and the toughest people you've ever seen—and by the millions.

And for the last 3 months, we had zero, zero, and zero. We had zero people come in for 3 months. They respect our country again. That's the other thing. All over the world, our country is respected again.

So I also want to thank the Chief of Staff, Susie Wiles, who's fantastic. She's done an incredible job.

And Sergio Gor for the job he's done with personnel. Thank you very much, Sergio. Fantastic.

In the coming months, we'll fully renovate the dated and—well, the—really, the entire—the infrastructure of the building and make the Kennedy Center a crown jewel of American arts and culture once again. I think we'll bring it to a higher level than it ever hit. Actually, it hit a certain level, but we're going to bring it to a higher level than it ever hit.

We have the right location. And soon, we will be a crime-free area. This is going to be a crime-free area, by the way. You'll be able to go out. People tell me they can't run anymore. They're just afraid. And they'll be running again. We're going to have a crime free—it's a big statement, because you'll cry—if one thing happens all year, Pam—you'd better be good, because they'll say, "Trump did not fulfill his promise"—one person gets a little injured by somebody, they'll say, "Trump did not fulfill his promise."

No, we're going to be essentially crime free. This is going to be a beacon. And it's going to also serve as an example of what can be done.

We have to get rid of this cashless bail nonsense. It's—if you look at New York, Chicago, Los Angeles—which is so badly run, Los Angeles. They can't get the houses—they can't get the people their permits to build their houses. They're trying to rebuild the houses from the ridiculous fire that should have never allowed to have taken place. They should have had the water coming down from the Pacific Northwest, but they didn't do that. But they can't get the permits for the people that want to build their houses.

But I want to thank Lee Zeldin, because the Federal Government has gotten all of their permits—which are much more difficult permits, actually—and had them—literally within 30 days after the fire, everybody had their permit. But you don't have the city and State permits. They've got to get going. The Governor and the mayor have to get going.

It will just be a matter of time that we—we're going to do something that's going to be incredible. We're going to use the Kennedy Center as a big focus of it, and that's the 250th anniversary celebration that we're having. So it's 250 years. So we have the Olympics, we have the World Cup, and we have the 250th anniversary celebration all in this administration.

And it's an honor that we were able to—not be allowed to do what we were illegally—and what we were supposed to do, and that was we—we had a great election in 2020. We won the election by a lot, but it was a rigged election, and we had to wait 4 years. And we waited 4 years. And it's interesting because I got the Olympics, and I got the World Cup. I can't claim that I got the 250th. That one's a big one, but I happen to be here.

But I got the Olympics, I got the World Cup, and I said, "The shame of it is that I'm not going to be President when it happens." And lo and behold, look what happens.

We have—some bad things took place, and now I'm going to be President for the Olympics, I'll be President for the World Cup, and the 250th is going to be maybe more exciting than both. It's a great celebration of our country. We're going to be using this building for a lot of the celebration having to do with 250 years.

But, as I said earlier, I'm determined to make Washington, DC, safe, clean, and beautiful again. It's going to take place very rapidly. Be prepared. And a big part of that's going to include the Kennedy Center, so thank you very much.

And I want to thank everybody for helping us. This is mostly the group right here that's—they're young. They're smart. They're ambitious. They want my job. Someday, one of them will probably have it. But we have a great group of people that are putting this together, and they're also helping us with Washington, DC.

We're going to make Washington beautiful. We're going to redo roads. We're going to redo the medians, the pavers, and the medians all throughout the city. We're going to take all the graffiti off. We're going to have to remove the tents and the people that are living in our parks. We're going to be redoing the parks, the grasses and all.

We're going to be going to Congress for a relatively small amount of money, and Lindsey and the Republicans are going to be approving it. I don't know about the Democrats. They don't approve anything. It's amazing. It's like they just don't want to vote for anything.

They've got the yips. You know, in golf, they say "the yips." The Democrats are afraid to do anything because they don't want to be criticized.

But fighting crime is a good thing, we have to explain. We're going to fight crime. That's a good thing. Already, they're saying, "He's a dictator." The place is going to hell, and we've got to stop it. So, instead of saying, "He's a dictator," they should say, "We're going to join him and make Washington safe."

But—[laughter]—they say, "He's a dictator," and then they end up getting mugged, and, you know—but the stats are very bad. [Laughter] But we're going to—I think we'll actually get Democrat support. I really believe. They can't—they can't do this one too.

It's—you know, they talk about 80/20s—80/20 issues, but I think many of those 80/20 issues, like men in women's sports, I think it's 97 to 3, not 80/20. And I think crime is maybe 100 to nothing.

So I think we may get, very well, some Democrat support. But I hope so. But even if we don't, we have the majority, so we're going to vote it in as Republicans and we're going to do something. And that's going to serve as a beacon for New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and other places all over the country. This whole—our whole country is going to be so different and so great. It's going to be clean and safe and beautiful, and people are going to love our flag more than they've ever loved it, and we're going to do a great job.

So I want to congratulate all the nominees. They're unbelievable people. And we're going to have a tremendous day in December, and that evening is going to be special. Some really special people and real talent.

Do you have any questions?

[Several reporters began asking questions at once.]

Yes, please.

#### *U.S. Federal Court System Computer Network*

*Q.* Hi, sir. There's new reporting that the Russians have hacked into some computer systems that manage U.S. Federal court documents. I wonder if you've seen this reporting and if you plan to bring it up with Putin when you see him later in the week.

*The President.* I guess I could. Are you surprised? You know, are you surprised? They hack in. That's what they do. They're good at it. We're good at it. We're actually better at it.

But no, I have heard about it. I have heard about it.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Please.

#### *Democratic Party/Tax Code Reform/Cashless Bail*

*Q.* Thank you, Mr. President. You mentioned congressional Democrats. You have not yet met with Democratic leadership, but there's a funding deadline at the end of September. Would you—do you plan to meet with Leader Schumer and Leader Jeffries to discuss that situation?

*The President.* Well, I will, I guess, but it's almost a waste of time to meet because they never approve anything. If we want money to fight crime, if we want money to do only good things—just good things; let's not even talk about controversial—they don't want to meet about anything.

They really are—they're stuck. They don't know what to do. They have probably more—I would say more than half are sane, but they are led by insane people. And they—the kind of things that they're pushing are not something—we have a Communist running for the mayor of New York, and I wish him well. I may have to deal with him. I mean, it's not—it's not even conceivable. It's not even conceivable that that could happen. And maybe he won't win, but he won the primaries by quite a bit. You know, shockingly, he won the primaries. So—and—you see some of the people supporting him that truly don't believe what he's espousing.

So, I mean, we will meet, but nothing is going to come out of the meeting. But here's the advantage we have, is that we have a great—we just passed the "Great Big Beautiful Bill" that had all the biggest tax cuts in history—no tax on tips, no tax on Social Security. Think of it. The—think of that for the seniors. No tax on overtime and all sorts of things. You go out, buy a car, you can deduct the interest payment. If you borrow money, you can deduct the interest payment from your taxes. So many things.

But the biggest thing is, from a business standpoint, deductions. You know, that was tremendous.

It's going to—our country is roaring. Our businesses are—you're going to see some numbers in 12 months when these factories are open. You know, we're opening up factories all over the world—all over the—country. But that's all spreading to—I think we're spreading the wealth all over the world, if you want to know the truth. But we're opening them in this country at a level that we've never seen before—we've never seen.

So they just don't want to prove anything. They just—we meet with them, and they say—as Nancy Reagan said, "Just say no." They go, "Just say no." They're afraid to approve anything. If we say we want to stop crime in this country or, as an example, bail—we want to make it so that people, if they're—if they murder somebody, they're in jail. They don't get out on no bail. They say, "We don't want that. We want people to murder somebody and they immediately are released," and they go out and murder somebody else. It's a big problem—a tremendous problem.

By the way, we're going to go for statutes in DC and then, ultimately, for the rest of the country, where that's not going to be allowed, because it was when they did the cashless bail thing that the numbers really started going up. In this city, in New York, in Chicago, in Los Angeles, no matter where they have it, the numbers went through the roof.

So we're going to meet with them. Of course, I'd like to meet with them. We're going to tell them all these good things, and they're going to tell us no, and then we're going to go out and we're going to vote it in by the Republicans. Because I don't believe that we—I don't believe that anybody is capable of making a deal with these people. They have gone crazy.

*[Several reporters spoke at once.]*

Go ahead.

*Q.* Thank you, Mr. President.

*The President.* Thank you.



### *District of Columbia Police Department*

*Q.* Your federalization of the police has a 30-day limit, unless Congress acts to extend it. Are you talking to Congress about extending it, or do you believe 30 days is sufficient?

*The President.* Well, if it's a national emergency, we can do it without Congress, but we expect to be to Congress—before Congress very quickly. And, again, we think the Democrats will not do anything to stop crime, but we think the Republicans will do it almost unanimously.

So we're going to need a crime bill that we're going to be putting in, and it's going to pertain initially to DC. It's almost—we're going to use it as a very positive example, and we're going to be asking for extensions on that—long-term extensions, because you can't have 30 days. Thirty days is—that's—by the time you do it—we're going to have this in good shape.

And don't forget, in the border, everyone said it would take years and you'd have to go back to Congress. I never went to Congress for anything. I just said, "Close the border," and they closed the border. And that was the end of it. I didn't go back to Congress.

We're going to do this very quickly, but we're going to want extensions. I don't want to call a national emergency. If I have to, I will, but I think the Republicans in Congress will approve this pretty much unanimously.

*Q.* Mr. President——

*[Several reporters spoke at once.]*

*The President.* Please, go ahead.

### *District of Columbia Crime Statistics*

*Q.* Thank you, Mr. President. Would you encourage members of the press to do ride-alongs with the DC police to understand how serious this crime issue is?

*The President.* Sure. Sounds—it's okay to me, if they want to do it. We're going to work with the DC police. A lot of very good people in there—not all, but a lot of very good—very, very professional.

And you know, we have a big force. I think they said 3,500. They—you know, they're always asking the Mayor—who's a very nice woman, but got to do the job. You know, we've worked with the Mayor for 6 months, and she's been here for many years, and the numbers are worse than they ever—don't let anyone tell you they're not.

And the whole statistical charts that they made—the whole thing is a rigged deal. They got rid of the guy that—because he didn't want to do the numbers the way they wanted to, and they put their own numbers out. They said it's the best in 20 years. No, it's the worst in 20 years. But we're going to have—we're going to be very open about what we're doing. So, if the media wants to ride with police, if they want to do it, if they feel it's safe, that would be okay.

*[Several reporters spoke at once.]*

Yes, please. Go ahead.

*Q.* Your virtual meeting, sir——

*Q.* Thank you, Mr. President.

*Q.* ——with President Zelenskyy today—I'm sorry.

### *District of Columbia Statehood Movement/Architectural Improvements/The President's Foreign Policy*

*Q.* Thank you, Mr. President. Mary Margaret [Olohan] with Daily Wire. Two questions on DC, if that's okay.

How do you feel about Mayor Bowser's level of cooperation and her choosing to advocate for DC statehood right now? And do you have a message——

*The President.* Well, the statehood—let me do that one first.

*Q.* Okay.

*The President.* Statehood is ridiculous. We want to straighten the place out. Statehood is ridiculous. It's unacceptable. It's—the Democrats want it because the Democrats have, you know, about 95 percent in this little area. Even I didn't get very much. They want that—they want to pick up two Senators, and it's not going to happen. It's not going to happen.

And that's the least of the reasons why, by the way, but that's one of the reasons why. What we want to do is make Washington, DC, the greatest, most beautiful, safest Capital anywhere in the world, and that's going to happen.

I mentioned the word "bones" before. The bones here—the bones—we have the greatest bones. When you look at that Supreme Court building, I think it's one of the most beautiful buildings. When you look at some of the buildings here are so magnificent, and the—everything's good, but it's just dirty and not properly maintained. It's not taken care of. Potholes in the roads. All of it's going to happen very quickly. We're going to seek a relatively small amount of money for fix-up, and we're going to put it out to bid.

And we have great contractors here, great road builders over there. And we're not ripping roads apart so they're closed for 4 years as they redo the concrete bases and—you don't need that. We need a beautiful topping by a very talented asphalt-type person, somebody that does the job. We go out—you know, when we get—when I get contractors, I use great contractors. They—to me, contractors are—a great contractor is a very special—like a great surgeon, like a great teacher, like a great nurse. A great contractor is very important. We'll only use the best.

And we—when you put a coat of asphalt on that—2 inches of asphalt, 3 inches of asphalt—it looks brandnew. You take all the garbage off. They—recede it, as we call it, or different names, but they take the bad stuff off, and they put the good stuff down. It takes not a long period of time. A matter of a few days, you'll have a beautiful, magnificent road. You fix up the curbs. You get rid of—the medians in this town are just horrible.

You know, you're riding on a—I think to myself, leaders come from foreign countries. You see I'm with leaders all the time, different leaders. They came in from India recently and from everywhere. They came in from—a war that we just ended, Azerbaijan and—you know that—and Armenia. We just ended the war. The two leaders came in. One of them said, "My country looks better." The roads are better than—you know, we were talking about it. I said, "What do you think?" He said, "Well, the roads are better in Armenia than they are in Washington, DC." It's embarrassing.

And I was asked at the last press conference—they said to me: "How important is it? You're doing world peace." We're going to Friday—on Friday to Alaska. We're meeting with President Putin, Russia. "How important it is that the Capital is important?" I said, "Very, very important." I told—my father said to me, "When you see a restaurant and you want to go and you want to have dinner, and then you go up to the front door and it's dirty, turn around and go back, because the kitchen is dirty." It's the same thing with the Capital of the United States of America. If it's dirty and unsafe, it sets a bad tone for the rest of the world.

So we're not going to do that. We're going to have this Capital fixed up, safe, clean, and beautiful in a very short period of time.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Go ahead, please. In the back. Yes, please.

*The President's Consultation With European Leaders/President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine/Russia*

*Q.* Mr. President, how were your calls this morning with European leaders? And was it your call not to invite President Zelenskyy to your meeting with Putin?

*The President.* No, just the opposite. No, no. We had a very good call. He was on the call. President Zelenskyy was on the call. I would rate it a 10. You know, very friendly.

I know the leaders, because I was at NATO. As you know, I took it from 2 percent to 5 percent. Two percent that wasn't paid, five percent that is paid, which is trillions of dollars in defense capability.

No, it was always going to be I was going to meet with President Putin, and then, after that, I'm going to call the leaders and President Zelenskyy. I'm going to call President Zelenskyy, and then I'll call—probably in that order—the leaders.

There's a very good chance that we're going to have a second meeting, which will be more productive than the first, because the first is, I'm going to find out where we are and what we're doing.

Again, this is Biden's war. This isn't my war. He got us into this thing, and it should have never happened. This war would have never happened if I were President. But it is what it is, and I'm here to fix it, and I'm here to stop—6,000, 7,000 people last week. Seven thousand two hundred and thirteen people last week were killed, mostly soldiers, but missiles being lobbed into towns don't exactly help either. But mostly soldiers and—Ukrainian and Russian. They're not American soldiers. But the—you know, if we can save a lot of lives, it would be a great thing.

I've done five—I've stopped five wars in the last six months. And on top of that, we wiped out the nuclear capability of Iran. Obliterated it. It's turned out to be a correct word, by the way, because, you know, some of the press said, "Well, maybe it wasn't obliteration." It was obliteration.

And we're going to meet with—I would say, the second meeting—if the first one goes okay, we'll have a quick second one. I would like to do it almost immediately. And we'll have a quick second meeting between President Putin and President Zelenskyy and myself, if they'd like to have me there, and that would be a meeting where maybe it could be absolutely worked. But the first meeting will not work that out.

Certain great things can be gained in the first. It's going to be a very important meeting. But it's setting the table for the second meeting. I think the second meeting—if the second meeting takes place—now, there may be no second meeting, because if I feel that it's not appropriate to have it because I didn't get the answers that we have to have, then we're not going to have a second meeting.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

*Q.* Thank you, sir. Thank you, sir.

*The President.* I didn't ask you. Go ahead, please, in the red dress.

*Kenedy Center Honors Recipients*

*Q.* I just wanted to ask you—thank you, Mr. President. What is—what—how involved were you in the selection process of these honorees?

*The President.* I would say I was about 98-percent involved. No, they all went through me. They came over, Ric and Sergio and everybody. They said—I turned down plenty. They were too woke. I turned them—I had a couple of wokesters.

No, we have great people. This is very different than it used to be. Very different. These are great people and—not—they're not—I don't have any idea if they're Republican, because I want people that—the Kennedy Center has everything. Look at the Academy Awards. It gets lousy ratings now. It's all woke. All they do is talk about how much they hate Trump, but nobody likes that. They don't watch anymore. That used to have 45 million people watching.

Remember "The Apprentice," first season? "The Apprentice" had 42 million people. The Academy Awards had 41 million people. We were the second show to the Super Bowl. But since then, the Academy Awards have gone down to—I think they've gone down to numbers that are like a regular show, because it went woke.

We're not doing it for that reason. We're doing it because we want the great talent. But these are great people. So I was very—I was—just a very long answer, but I was very involved.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

### *Border Wall Construction/Illegal Immigration*

*Q.* Thank you, Mr. President. The Biden administration was auctioning off border wall materials, but we're hearing now that those—the auctioneer is selling those materials back. Are you finishing building the wall?

*The President.* Well, I built hundreds of miles of wall, and I was getting very close. I actually finished the wall, but then I added another 200 miles, because when you do the original wall that I said I was going to build, which I got built—and I got it to the specifications of the Border Patrol and ICE—the exact—they wanted steel. They wanted concrete inside. They wanted rebar inside that. They wanted it to have wires. We have wires—the walls are wired for, you know, all of the internet stuff and security things.

And we built it. Hundreds of miles. We did great. That's one of the reasons, even now, we're able to have such good numbers at zero, essentially. Very little people coming in.

But Biden—I ordered for another 200 miles. I was going to do another 200, because it's the way it is, and we were all set to do it. Then we had the bad election result. The horrible, horrible—what happened to our country, what they've allowed to happen to our country. And we are taking, now, that wall back.

They sold the wall. Now, this is expensive stuff. Hardened steel, very expensive. Nine-thousand-pound concrete and rebar. Rebar is very expensive. The hardest rebound—no—no, it's very—very hard to cut. You have different materials. It's very hard to cut, because they cut it down if they can. It's very hard to cut.

And Biden sold it for pennies on the dollar—3 cents on the dollar, 4 cents on the dollar. He sold it. And I said, "These guys really don't want"—that was when I first realized—when I saw the wall was being put up, because we could have finished the rest of the wall in about 4 weeks. Anywhere from 3 to 4 weeks. It was all set to go. It was laying down, ready to be put up. The foundations were—and they took over, and they said, "We're going to sell the wall." And they sold it, as you know, for pennies on the dollar.

Well, Pam Bondi has been working very hard on suing that company, and I think they reached a settlement where we're taking the wall back. But they stole the wall from us. That wall is so expensive to build, and we had it—as you know, hundreds of miles of it. And they came along, and they basically sold it for scrap. And what a shame that is.

But that was when I first realized that these people actually want to have open borders. And no country has—who has—poor countries don't have open borders. No, we had open borders, where people just walked in that—didn't matter what they looked like, who they were. They could have—we had 11,888 murderers, half of whom killed more than one person. They—I mean literally killed more than one person. And this is who we took into our country.

So the wall is the least of it, but we're going to buy—we're going to take the wall back. We're paying a small amount of money, as I understand it, to get it back, to get rid of the litigation. We'll take it back. We'll put it up.

Yes.

*[Several reporters spoke at once.]*

Go ahead. In the back, please.

*"Les Misérables" Run at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts*

*Q.* I want to take it back to the Kennedy Center, if I can, just for a second, Mr. President.

*The President.* Sure.

*Q.* From what I understand, the "Les Mis" show exceeded everyone's expectations—attendance, revenue—across the board.

*The President.* It's great.

*Q.* Do you anticipate future shows to basically do the same?

*The President.* I like that guy. *[Laughter]* Now, that's called a question. Okay? And he's a great reporter, actually. Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

Yes, it did great. "Les Mis" did great. Broke records and was sold out and beautiful. And we anticipate a lot of that happening. It's a—there's a thirst for it. And especially when the crime is knocked out—you know, when we knock out crime. Some people probably stay away from places like restaurants and other things. It ruins your whole fabric. It ruins a—it ruins your country.

And when somebody thinks they have about a 25-percent chance of getting mugged, they say, "Let's not go to restaurants tonight." We're going to make it so that they have no chance of getting mugged. And it's going to happen soon.

And yes, we think we're going to have a lot of very successful evenings here.

Please.

*[Several reporters spoke at once.]*

*Russia/Ukraine*

*Q.* Thank you, Mr. President. Will Russia face any consequences if Vladimir Putin does not agree to stop the war after your meeting on Friday?

*The President.* Yes, they will. Yes.

*Q.* What will the——

*The President.* Yes, there will be consequences——

*Q.* ——consequences be? Sanctions? Tariffs?

*The President.* There will—I don't have to say. There will be very severe consequences.

Yes.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Yes, please.

*Chairman of the Federal Reserve System Board of Governors Jerome H. Powell/Renovation Work at the Federal Reserve System Headquarters/Interest Rates*

*Q.* Can I ask you a question about the Fed?

*The President.* Right next to you, please. Yes.

*Q.* About the Federal Reserve, please.

*The President.* Oh, Federal Reserve. My favorite. "Too Late."

*Q.* You posted yesterday that you're considering——

*The President.* He's too late.

*Q.* ——you're considering threat——suing Jay Powell. Can you update us on your thinking about that and tell us—where you are in your search for a new Chair?

*The President.* Well, he took a building that could have been painted and fixed, like we're going to fix this building, for very little money. He took—and that was in better shape. He took a building, and they just—what they did to that building—they built a basement under the building. It didn't have a basement.

This is simple to understand. The building is right next to a thing called the Potomac River. The beautiful Potomac River. That means lots of water, and the water is right under the building, and they decide to build a—basement under the building, in the Potomac River.

So, in order to do that, you need the biggest pumps that God ever created, and they were pumping their hearts out. But, as big as those pumps are, you can't pump it fast enough, because it's the Potomac River. If the pump were bigger than this room, you couldn't pump it.

But they tried, and they've been building a basement. And I said, "Why did you want to build a basement?" "I thought it would be a good idea, sir." A basement is the least valuable floor in a building. I know a lot about real estate. The least valuable thing is the basement, and you don't build a basement under a building that is 2 feet above the river that's right next door. You know, it's right near the river. People don't realize the river is right out their window.

And that's the beginning. They did a—just a terrible job. They—instead of—I could take a ceiling like this. They'd rip out the ceiling because they see a crack. "Let's rip out the ceiling." And I would fix the crack, and I would paint the ceiling.

And under the ceiling, they put the most incredible protective material. They go out, buy three-quarter-inch—brandnew, gorgeous three-quarter-inch plywood and Sheetrock—hardened Sheetrock—and they had it all over the building, so if a little piece of flake came down—but the problem is, when they took the ceiling down and it would hit—they spent millions of dollars on protective material that you didn't have to spend anything.

I—you could have done that job for \$25 million, and they spent \$3.1 billion. He said 2.7, but it's really 3.1. They just don't want to include one of the buildings in the deal. But it's going to be much more than that, and I think he'll be long gone by the time it finishes because they've got a long way to go.

And then I hear they want to hire 3,000 economists. What are they going to do? And he got it all wrong. He's too late. We call him Jerome "Too Late" Powell. It will live with him forever. I

believe that name will live with him forever, along with the name "Pocahontas" and some of the others that we—[*laughter*]. He worked closely with Pocahontas, by the way. She's another beauty.

But we have a real problem there. They're way over budget, and they did a job that shouldn't have been done. It was unnecessary to be done. Instead of—I could have gotten the greatest wallpaper anywhere in the world, from the finest stores in the world. I could have fixed up a wall a little bit—it would have taken about 2 hours—and covered it with the most magnificent silk and most magnificent paper for thousands of dollars, as opposed to tens of millions of dollars. What a shame it is that they did.

But they would take down areas of the building that shouldn't have been taken down. They could have literally been painted, and they didn't do that.

So they've got a long way to go. And I think it's just grossly incompetent, but not quite as incompetent as his decision not to do interest rates—take down interest rates, because, just like they shouldn't have taken down a ceiling, they should take down interest rates.

Every point costs us \$360 billion a year. Think of that: \$360 billion for 1 point. And we should be down at 1 percent because we're the leader of the world. We were always the lowest interest rate for—until, like, a certain time ago—decade, a couple. But we were always—because we were the United States of America. So, even if the country was run badly, we were considered, like, to be super prime. And now he's got us in a bad place.

So we're paying \$360 billion a year for each point. Now, I believe we should be 3 or 4 points lower. So that's over a trillion dollars we pay every year in interest, and it's really just a paper calculation. You sign a document, and you save almost a trillion dollars, because that number equates very much to the bonds that we have to buy.

But despite that, we're powering through it, and we have the greatest economy maybe we've ever had.

But the housing sector, people aren't able to get good mortgages. They're paying too much because of Jerome "Too Late" Powell. He's truly incompetent, and we'll be making another—we put a very good man in temporarily in the one spot because one of the people that was appointed by the Democrats—left early, and I heard left because that person wanted lower interest rates. And I heard—"quit," but I have no idea. She—I'm sure she won't say that.

#### *Federal Reserve System Board Chairman*

*Q.* When will you pick a new Chair?

*The President.* I'll be naming a new Chairman sometime within the—I think I'll name it a little bit earlier—the new chairman. I'm down to three or four names. All good, all great.

The problem is, you name them and then they turn out to be not good. That's happened to me a couple of times. You name somebody, they tell you everything you want to hear, and then they go in and they turn out to be not good. I mean, he told me everything that I thought was appropriate. He turned out to be a stiff—you know, a real stiff. But other than that, I think he's doing a very good job.

Yes.

[*Several reporters spoke at once.*]

Okay, maybe one or two more. One or two more. Yes, sir. Please, go ahead.

*Q.* Mr. President——

*The President.* He looks like Scott Bessent. [Laughter] Are you the Treasury Secretary?

*Q.* You don't want me for Treasury. Trust me.

*The President.* I don't know. I don't know. You look like he could do a good job. Go ahead.

*President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia/Investigation Into Russian Election Interference*

*Q.* I keep my family budget okay. Sir, when you meet with Vladimir Putin Friday in Alaska——

*The President.* Yes.

*Q.* ——do you believe you can convince him to stop targeting civilians in Ukraine?

*The President.* Well, I'll tell you what. I've had that conversation with him. I've had a lot of good conversations with him. Then I go home, and I see that a rocket hit a nursing home or a rocket hit an apartment building and people are laying dead in the street. So I guess the answer to that is no, because I've had this conversation.

I want to end the war. It's Biden's war, but I want to end it. I'll be very proud to end this war, along with the five other wars I ended. But I guess the answer to that is probably no, because I would have had a good conversation with Vladimir. I knew him very well. I got along with him great, actually.

We had the Russia—I had to go through the "Russia, Russia" hoax. And it was actually—it's—it was a strain on the relationship. I actually told him—I said, "You know, they got this phony investigation going on. 'Russia, Russia, Russia.'" Totally phony, created by Adam Schiff—Shifty Schiff—and Hillary Clinton and the whole group of them. And it made it very dangerous for our country, because I was unable to really deal with Russia the way we should have been.

I'm looking at Pam because I hope something is going to be done about it. These people put our country at great danger. And Adam Schiff—it was all made up. It was a hoax. The Mueller report came out. They all hated me.

They had 18 Trump haters, and they said I did nothing wrong. They were the—they could—they couldn't believe—they couldn't find anything after years of investigation. It was all a hoax. It was a hoax created by the Democrats—but in particular, Schiff and Crooked Hillary, the whole group.

And now we've learned—all the stuff that's come out over the last 2 months is incredible, through intelligence. And hopefully, something's going to happen with it. These are people that put our—country in danger—in real danger.

I want to thank you all very much. Thank you very much.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:34 a.m. at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. In his remarks, he referred to Jennifer Flavin Stallone, wife of actor Sylvester Stallone; U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Special Missions Richard A. Grenell, in his capacity as Executive Director and President of the Board of Trustees of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts; Michael Pulliam, former third district commander, Metropolitan Police Department of the District of Columbia; White House Director of Presidential Personnel Sergio Gor; Gov. Gavin C. Newsom of California; Mayor Karen R. Bass of Los Angeles, CA; New York State Rep. Zohran K. Mamdani, in his capacity as a New York City mayoral candidate; President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan; Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan of Armenia; Sen. Elizabeth A. Warren; Stephen I.



Miran, the President's nominee to replace former member of the Federal Reserve System Board of Governors Adriana D. Kugler, who resigned on August 8; Sen. Adam B. Schiff, in his former capacity as a U.S. Representative; former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, in her capacity as the 2016 Democratic Presidential nominee; and former Department of Justice Special Counsel Robert S. Mueller III.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : 2025 Kennedy Center honorees, announcement; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters, Washington, DC.

*Locations:* Washington, DC.

*Names:* Aliyev, Ilham; Bass, Karen R.; Bessent, Scott K.H.; Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Bondi, Pamela J.; Bowser, Muriel E.; Clinton, Hillary Rodham; Crawford, Michael; Criss, Peter; Frehley, Ace; Gaynor, Gloria; Gor, Sergio; Graham, Lindsey O.; Grenell, Richard A.; Johnson, J. Michael; Kugler, Adriana D.; Mamdani, Zohran K.; Miran, Stephen I.; Mueller, Robert S., III; Newsom, Gavin C.; Pashinyan, Nikol; Powell, Jerome H.; Pulliam, Michael; Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich; Schiff, Adam B.; Simmons, Gene; Stallone, Jennifer Flavin; Stallone, Sylvester; Stanley, Paul; Strait, George; Thune, John R.; Voight, Jon; Warren, Elizabeth A.; Wiles, Susan; Zeldin, Lee M.; Zelenskyy, Volodymyr.

*Subjects:* Armenia, Prime Minister; Attorney General; Azerbaijan, President; Bipartisanship; Border security; California, Governor; Cyber attacks; District of Columbia, law enforcement improvement efforts; District of Columbia, Mayor; Diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, restriction efforts; Environmental Protection Agency; Federal Reserve System; Illegal immigration; Interest rates; John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts; Manufacturing industry, domestic investment; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Russia, conflict in Ukraine; Russia, President; Secretary of the Treasury; Senate majority leader; Speaker of the House of Representatives; Tariffs; Tax Code reform; U.S. Border Patrol; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement; U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Special Missions; Ukraine, President; Ukraine, Russian invasion and airstrikes; White House Chief of Staff; White House Director of Personnel.

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