

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2025

Remarks on Signing the Miracle on Ice Congressional Gold Medal Act and an Exchange With Reporters

December 12, 2025

The President. Hello, everybody. Thank you very much.

Well, this is very exciting. This was one of the greatest moments in the history of U.S. sports. I wouldn't say—maybe for other countries, they weren't so thrilled, but for U.S. sports. And we have a very exciting team of champions standing behind me.

Mr. Attorney, could you read what we're doing right now?

White House Staff Secretary William O. Scharf. Yes, sir.

The President. And we'll get it done.

Staff Secretary Scharf. This is H.R. 452, the Miracle on Ice bill. The United States Congress has authorized three medals to be struck commemorating the historic victory of the United States men's hockey team in 1980 at the Lake Placid Olympics, where they obviously defeated the Russians in the—or the Soviet Union, excuse me, in the famous "Miracle on Ice" hockey game.

This will serve as a fitting commemoration of that incredible achievement and will hopefully be a lasting memorial of that achievement going forward, sir.

The President. This was an amazing event. Pretty big—I mean, I don't know, there were some other upsets in the world. I haven't noticed them getting any of these, right? *[Laughter]* I think you're the only ones.

That's great. And we don't use autopens here. *[Laughter]*

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

This is a great achievement. Okay. Wait a minute. There you go, Mike. Take that.

1980 Olympic gold medalist Mike Eruzione. Thank you, sir.

[The President held up the signed bill.]

The President. So great. Right?

Mr. Eruzione. So great.

The President. Most of these people are too young to remember that. *[Laughter]* But the real sports fans know it.

Thank you very much. It's a great honor to have the media too.

We're delighted to be joined today by true legends of American sports history and heroes for the entire nation, the 1980 U.S. Olympic ice hockey team. This was one of the biggest moments that I've ever seen in sports. And I like sports.

These are the men who gave us one of the most storied athletic wins of all time. It's called the "Miracle on Ice," and I guess that's what it was.

We're with us today by players like Jim Craig, Steve Janaszak, Bill Baker, Dave Christian, Ken Morrow, Jack O'Callahan, Mike Ramsey, Neal Broten, Mike Eruzione, Rob McClanahan, Buzz Schneider, Dave Silk, Phil Verchota, and numerous others.

And what I'd love for you to do—you know, when you have all of these media people—it's a nice, slow afternoon. Nothing is too slow around here. *[Laughter]* I think we just did a very good job with Thailand and Cambodia. We had them stopped. And I've been saying I stopped eight wars, but they started shooting at each other 2 days ago. It wasn't good. And we got it, I think, straightened out today. So Thailand and Cambodia is in good shape.

So we get a lot done. Eight wars. Nobody has ever stopped eight wars. We have one more to go. The easiest one, I thought, would be a country that you're somewhat familiar with: Russia and Ukraine. But we're—a lot of progress is being made even there.

Could I ask you to just say your name, and if you have anything to say, you could say that also. And then we'll get on with reading some of the stats.

National Hockey League's St. Louis Blues defenseman Ryan Suter. Yes. My name is Ryan Suter. I'm here representing my dad, Bob, who passed away. It's a true honor for me to be a part of this, and I thank these guys for allowing me to be a part of their team. And thank you for having this and hosting us.

The President. Your father was some player.

Mr. Suter. I appreciate that.

The President. Incredible player. Do you—did you ever play ice hockey? *[Laughter]*

Mr. Suter. I did, yes. *[Laughter]*

The President. So let me ask you: How good was he compared to his father? Don't ask—don't answer.

Mr. Suter. I'm not answering. *[Laughter]*

Participant. Mr. President, Ryan just played 21 years in the NHL.

The President. Wow.

Participant. He played 1,500 games in the NHL.

The President. So pretty comparable though, right?

1980 Olympic gold medalist William "Buzz" Schneider. Oh, yes.

The President. Better? You think, better? *[Laughter]*

Mr. Schneider. Yes.

1980 Olympic gold medalist Jack O'Callahan. His dad was tougher.

Mr. Eruzione. Dad was tougher. You're right.

The President. Dad was tougher, but he's better?

Mr. Schneider. Tougher. Yes.

The President. But you've got good genetics. That's——

Mr. Suter. Exactly.

The President. You had a great career. How long did you play?

Mr. Suter. I played 21 years.

The President. Wow.

Mr. Suter. Yes.

The President. Well, you look pretty good for a guy who played 21 years. [*Laughter*] It's a rough business.

Congratulations.

Mr. Suter. Thank you.

The President. And great father.

Mr. Suter. Thank you very much.

The President. Great father.

Please.

Tarja Lewis, daughter of 1980 Olympic gold medalist Mark Pavelich. I'm Tarja Lewis, and I am here representing my dad, Mark Pavelich. He—I am so honored to be here. I just—I'm at a loss for words, to be honest. Like, I can't believe this is real.

And I want to say to you, President Trump: I know so many people from Duluth, Minnesota, that love you. And I just——

The President. Ah, thank you.

Ms. Lewis. Yes. Yes. You're—thank you for having us here.

The President. Thank you.

Ms. Lewis. So, yes.

The President. And you had a great father.

Ms. Lewis. Thank you so much.

The President. A great, great player.

Ms. Lewis. So amazing. Yes.

Mr. Eruzione. Yes, he was. Very good.

The President. Thank you very much. Right? He was serious.

Mr. Eruzione. Yes.

The President. Thank you very much.

Ms. Lewis. Thank you.

The President. Thank you for being here.

Please, go ahead.

1980 Olympic gold medalist Ken Morrow. I'm Ken Morrow.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Morrow. An honor to meet you, Mr. President.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Morrow. What a great win for our country. And if people don't remember, that's where the "U.S.A., U.S.A." chant started, in Lake Placid.

The President. That's right, yes.

Mr. Morrow. Yes.

The President. I tried to take credit for that. [Laughter] You had to bring that up, didn't you? Well, that's the end of that. That's—all right.

Thank you very much.

1980 Olympic gold medalist Jim Craig. Hi. I'm Jim Craig, and it's an honor to be here. I'm so proud of all my teammates and what we were able to accomplish for our country. And when you get a chance to represent your country, whether it's in the military or a sport, and you do something really special like our team did and then be recognized that many years later.

So, Mr. President, I want to thank you for your courage that you show the country every single day——

The President. Thank you.

Mr. Craig. ——and for making our country safe again.

The President. Thank you. Yes, we're doing that. I appreciate that very much.

I didn't know you were on that team.

Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Kashyap P. "Kash" Patel. Yes. Yes.

The President. Was Kash—[Laughter]—was Kash on the team?

Mr. Eruzione. He was a trainer. He was a trainer.

The President. Great. Great. Thank you for being here. He's doing a great job too. Thank you, Kash, very much.

Mr. Schneider. Buzz Schneider. Mr. President, thanks for having us here. Thanks, Congressman Stauber, for writing legislation with Elise Stefanik and Tom Emmer. It's a privilege to be here, and we accomplished a wonderful thing. And I will say that I've got 19 beautiful people I did it with it. It was awesome.

The President. Good. That's true.

Mr. Schneider. All good, solid people. Thank you.

The President. That's true.

Mr. Schneider. Thanks, again.

The President. That's true. They are. It's—you have to be solid, right? Thank you.

Mr. Schneider. Yes.

The President. Please.

1980 Olympic gold medalist Neal Broten. Hi. I'm Neil Broten from Minnesota. Thank you, Mr. Trump. It's an honor. You're celebrating us, and I can't believe I'm even here. [Laughter] This is incredible.

The President. It's an amazing office. It's——

Mr. Borten. Oh, it's unbelievable.

The President. Everybody that comes in here, they can't—the biggest people in the world. They come into this place, and they go, "Wow. It's the Oval Office." The most—it's the most important office anywhere in the world. Not even close.

Thank you very much.

Mike.

Mr. Eruzione. Mr. President, Mike Eruzione. On behalf of the team, we have a replica——

The President. Wow.

Mr. Eruzione. ——hat that we wore in the opening ceremonies in Lake Placid.

The President. Thank you.

Mr. Eruzione. We'd like you to have that.

The President. Wow.

Mr. Eruzione. And more importantly, I don't think words can explain how proud we are——

The President. Thank you.

Mr. Eruzione. ——for what you've done for our team.

The President. Thank you.

Mr. Eruzione. Thank you very much.

[*The President was presented with a cowboy hat.*]

The President. Let's see. What do I do with that strap?

[*The President put the hat on.*]

Participant. [*Laughter*] There you go!

Mr. Eruzione. Now we can take a picture.

The President. You've got to—you've got to take a picture. [*Laughter*]

You remember a certain Governor in Massachusetts, when they put that helmet on? That was not good. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Eruzione. Mike Dukakis.

The President. Michael Dukakis.

Mr. O'Callahan. Yes.

The President. They put that helmet on, that was the end of his political career. [*Laughter*]
Okay. Hey, that's fantastic.

Mr. Eruzione. The honor that you've bestowed upon our team is something that's incredible.

The President. Thank you very much.

Mr. Eruzione. Thank you.

The President. Well, I feel it.

Mr. Eruzione. Thank you.

Mr. O'Callahan. Mr. President, hello. I'm Jack O'Callaghan——

The President. Hey, Jack.

Mr. O'Callahan. ——from Charlestown, Mass.

The President. Thank you, Jack.

Mr. O'Callahan. And I grew up on the battlefield of where the Battle of Bunker Hill was fought. That's where it all started. And thank you so much for having us here. We're a bunch of proud Americans, and we're thrilled to be in your presence, sir.

The President. Thank you very much. I'm thrilled to be with you guys. Winners. Champions.

1980 Olympic gold medalist Dave Silk. Mr. President, my name is Dave Silk.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Silk. And like Jack said, I'm a proud American. Thank you for having us here, and thank you to all that put this on for us.

The President. Thank you.

Mr. Silk. I'm honored to be here.

The President. Thank you, fellas. That's really nice. Thank you.

1980 Olympic gold medalist Bill Baker. Mr. President.

The President. Thank you.

Mr. Baker. Bill Baker. I'm from Minnesota. I know that, right now, that doesn't ring very well with all of you guys. *[Laughter]* Hopefully, we can get that turned around and—

The President. Do we have Somalians in the—*[laughter]*—any Somalians on the team? I don't think so. Huh? Ilhan Omar.

Mr. Baker. The pride we felt in 1980 was——

The President. Yes.

Mr. Baker. ——incredible, and we are starting to feel that again, thanks to your leadership. Thank you very much.

The President. Well, you know, Minnesota is a great place, and this is a great leader right here——

Mr. Baker. Sure is.

The President. ——for Minnesota. He loves it. Not happy with what's going on up there, and I think you'll take care of that situation. We're all with you.

Representative Thomas E. Emmer, Jr. With your help. Thank you.

The President. No, no. You have my help. What's happening up there is—a disgrace. It's a disgrace.

Billions of dollars have been stolen—billions—sent back to Somalia. And Tom can solve that problem better than anybody. And you have the go-ahead, right?

Rep. Emmer. Yes, sir.

The President. Thank you very much. Thank you.

Rep. Emmer. Thank you.

The President. What do you think of this team?

Rep. Emmer. This is the team that set the whole tone for this country back in 1980.

The President. Yes.

Rep. Emmer. It was the beginning of the great comeback—which, by the way, Donald J. Trump was the next beginning of the great comeback. So it's perfect that it's both you and this great team from 1980.

The President. Thank you, Tom.

Rep. Emmer. Yes.

The President. You're doing a fantastic job. Really, a great leader. We appreciate you. And friend. And Jacquie is a—you have a great spouse.

Rep. Emmer. Remember, that's her favorite.

[*Rep. Emmer pointed at 1980 Olympic gold medalist Rob McClanahan.*]

The President. [*Laughter*] Oh, that's right. That's true. That's what I heard.

Rep. Emmer. Yes. Yes, yes.

The President. And Elise—everybody knows Elise. She's doing phenomenally well, a really tremendous Congresswoman. And she's running for a little position called Governor of New York——

Audience member. Woo!

The President. ——and she's got a hell of a shot at it. It's all I can see. I see polls that look very good. And we—could use you in New York. She's got a little competition and with a very good Republican, but she's a great Republican, so we'll see what happens. But Elise is respected by everybody, and we appreciate it. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you—[*inaudible*].

Representative Elise M. Stefanik. Thank you so much, Mr. President. And as the Representative for Lake Placid, this is so meaningful——

The President. Right.

Rep. Stefanik. ——to my constituents, and we are home of the Miracle on Ice. And it's wonderful to be here with these teammates who just stood so proudly for Team U.S.A.

The President. Thank you. Thank you, Elise.

Please.

Dan Brooks, son of 1980 U.S. Olympic hockey team head coach Herb Brooks. My name is Dan Brooks.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Brooks. I am the son of Coach Herb Brooks. It's an honor to be here, Mr. President.

My dad, he believed in the American hockey player. He believed in his country. He loved this team. He loved his country. I wish he was here, but it's an honor for me to represent him. So thank you for having me.

The President. Well, your father was a great guy. I knew him a little bit, and he was an amazing coach. What he did was just incredible.

Mr. Brooks. Yes, he was tough, but fair.

The President. He was tough? Was he tough on you? Yes. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Brooks. I lived with him for 20 years. [*Laughter*]

The President. But he—but good.

Mr. Brooks. Yes.

The President. I would say my father was tough too. My father was tough, but good.

Mr. Brooks. Yes.

The President. All right? They were good people. Thank you very much.

Mr. Brooks. I was an honor to be his son.

The President. Thank you very much.

Mr. Brooks. So thank you.

The President. Yes. He'd be very proud of you right now.

Mr. McClanahan. Rob McClanahan from Minnesota. I'm just echoing everybody else's words. It's an honor to be here, and it's an honor to be a teammate of this great team. We had—it's all about "we," and we were great teammates. And I'm truly honored.

The President. Yes. That was a perfect—really, a perfect case of it.

Mr. McClanahan. Yes.

The President. That team was a perfect case.

Please.

Michael Pavelich, brother of 1980 Olympic gold medalist Mark Pavelich. I'm honored to be here. I'm representing my brother, Mark, who died in 2024. I know he's looking down with a big smile on his face.

The President. He is. Great player.

Mr. Pavelich. He is. Yes. And I'm sure—I am honored, and I know he would be too.

The President. I know. Thank you very much.

Mr. Pavelich. Thank you.

1980 Olympic gold medalist Dave Christian. Mr. Trump, Dave Christian from Warroad, Minnesota, "Hockeytown, U.S.A." [*Laughter*]

The President. Is it still?

Mr. Christian. It is still.

The President. Is it?

Mr. Christian. It's—it still is. But it's a privilege and an honor to be here with the greatest teammates anyone could have.

Mr. McClanahan. Yes.

The President. Thank you very much.

Mr. Christian. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Great honor. Great job.

1980 Olympic gold medalist Mike Ramsey. Mr. President, Mike Ramsey. I'm also from Minnesota and Minneapolis. It's not Hockeytown, Minnesota. [*Laughter*] It's an honor to be here with my teammates and you. This is awesome.

The President. That's great.

Mr. Ramsey. Thank you.

The President. Great to have you. Thank you very much.

1980 Olympic gold medalist Steve Janaszak. Mr. President, Steve Janaszak. Also from Minnesota—White Bear Lake, Minnesota.

The President. Right.

Mr. Janaszak. It's not as big as it sounds. [*Laughter*] I backed up Jimmy Craig. And I want to thank all you guys for the job that you did. A pleasure to be a part of this team. Luckiest guy on this team. But I was——

The President. Yes. Well, Jimmy Craig was pretty good, right?

Mr. Janaszak. He—I know goaltending, and he did an awesome job.

The President. Yes. He was pretty good.

Mr. Janaszak. Yes.

The President. That's great. Thank you very much. A great honor.

Mr. Janaszak. Thank you, sir.

The President. Thank you.

1980 Olympic gold medalist Phil Verchota. Wow. I didn't know we had to talk. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Christian. What do you think, Phil?

Mr. Verchota. I'm speechless, of course. But I'm Phil Verchota, originally from Duluth, Minnesota. And certainly, like all the other gentlemen here, we're having a wonderful, wonderful day. And just seeing the history of Washington, DC, and, you know, the invitation and the award is beyond what I could imagine.

The President. Wow. It's an honor. And so many people from Minnesota. That's something, huh? Good hockey——

Representative Peter A. Stauber. There's a—[*inaudible*].

The President. Good hockey, blood, huh?

Rep. Emmer. Oh, yes.

The President. No, so many people. A lot of the team. Congratulations. And Minnesota is going to be back, right?

Rep. Emmer. It'd better be back.

The President. It will be back. Going to be back. You've got a little bad Governor up there and a couple of other little problems, but it's going to be back. And unbelievable people in Minnesota.

Forty-five years ago, this tremendous group of collegiate players and amateurs faced overwhelming odds against the Soviet Union in Lake Placid Winter Olympics. They said it was the greatest team ever put together, the Soviet team. They weren't saying that about you, but you were damn good. [*Laughter*] And they were saying that team was unbeatable.

The same month, the U.S.S.R.'s hockey team had crushed our squad. They did a—I guess an exhibition game of some kind, and it was not pretty: 10 to 3. And people were not even looking forward to this game, fellas. I hate to tell you. [*Laughter*] They liked it. That last 10 minutes were not fun.

The Soviets had not lost an Olympic game since 1968, and they were coming off a four-straight gold record—a gold medals: in '64, they won the gold—'68, '72, and '76. Other than that,

they weren't that good, right? [*Laughter*] They were great. And this was supposed to be the best team that they ever had.

So it wasn't looking too sharp for our great champions behind me. And as one American sportswriter put it at the time, the whole world expected the Soviets to win, quote, "unless the ice melts." So that wasn't a very good statement.

But then it began. Despite the long odds, the Team U.S.A. blazed through the group stage, meaning other countries—went through them pretty easily—advancing to a long-awaited rematch against the U.S.S.R. Three times we went down by a goal. For most of the game, they were down by a goal. Three times. And then remarkable players put America back on top where we always wanted to be.

Buzz Schneider, he scored the opening goal and a slap shot from 50 feet. That's a big slap shot. [*Laughter*] Where is Buzz? That's a hell of a——

Mr. McClanahan. He's right over there.

The President. That's a big——

Mr. Schneider. Yes.

The President. That's—how the hell did that happen? [*Laughter*] Was their goalie—I thought they had a good goalie.

Mr. Schneider. They did have a good goalie. The pass came across the ice; I caught him going the other way, and it——

The President. It just happened, right?

Mr. Schneider. Yes, that's how—[*inaudible*].

The President. Miracle, they call it.

[*The President looked up.*]

A miracle—thank you.

Mr. Schneider. Yes.

The President. That's a long one, right? That doesn't——

Mr. Schneider. Yes, that's a good one though.

The President. How often does a 50-foot shot go in? Not too much, right? Huh?

Mr. Schneider. I don't know. I don't know, but they do—[*inaudible*].

The President. That one. Well, you have a little extra power. You're strong. You were a strong guy. That ball was—that's something. That was—that puck was hit.

We have a puck here. Does this mean anything, or is this something you just gave me?

Mr. Eruzione. Kash Patel's——

Mr. O'Callahan. Kash Patel's signature.

Rep. Emmer. [*Inaudible*]

Director Patel. I gave the FBI hockey pucks to the team.

The President. Oh. Oh, well, that's good. Well, that's nice. Great. I'll put it here on top of a piece of gold. [*Laughter*]

In the second period, Jim Craig withstood a barrage of shots on goal and kept the dream alive. That's the guy, right? And then after a goal from team captain Mike Eruzione, who's a fantastic guy, and I know him from outside of hockey. We play golf. We were on a golf team together, and we happened to win, right?

Mr. Eruzione. Yes, we did, sir.

The President. We won.

Mr. Eruzione. Yes, we did.

The President. I liked my partner very much. *[Laughter]*

But he put us up 4 to 3 midway through the third, these fighters held on to the longest 10 minutes of their lives. They call it the longest, most horrendous, scariest 10 minutes. Is that true?

Mr. McClanahan. Absolutely.

The President. Because you couldn't believe that you were there, right?

And they're leading by one, and they got 10 minutes. And just please—did anybody pray? Were you praying? *[Laughter]* "Please, Lord, just"——

Mr. O'Callahan. Doing everything.

The President. I don't know. Did you have time to pray?

Mr. Eruzione. No, never. You just had——

The President. I don't think you had a lot of time.

Mr. Eruzione. You just had to go out and play.

The President. They're religious guys, but they didn't have a lot of time to pray. They were out on the ice. *[Laughter]*

But to win one of the greatest comebacks in sports history, really, it was amazing. The observers in the arena noted it was the first time in his life that he heard the chant, "U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!" which I don't like hearing, because I tell people that that had to do with Trump in 2016—*[laughter]*—slightly after—slightly after your big win. But no longer. That's the end of that, right? I can't use that one anymore. *[Laughter]* But I do remember them doing that exactly. For a long time, they were doing that.

This team united us, and they inspired us. The United States was, like, brought to a level that it—of sports that they've never seen, and they brought us Olympic glory that we celebrate to this day. Nobody thought it was possible. It really shows that, you know, anything is possible. Nobody thought that one was possible. But I want to congratulate you all.

And now I'd like to invite Mike to say a few words, and then Congressman Stauber, who introduced. And then we're going to speak from a couple of other people that, I have to tell you, our leader—I have to say that Emmer is a very special leader, and I want you to maybe wrap it up and say something on behalf of your great State in particular—the country, but your great State in particular. Okay?

Rep. Emmer. Thanks.

The President. So let's go, Mike. You can start it off.

Mr. Eruzione. Yes. Again, Mr. President, to reiterate what we've all talked about, this is an absolute incredible honor. I've said this before. When you put a U.S.A. jersey on, you're playing

for your country; you're not playing for your State, your town, or your city. And what an honor it was for us to put that jersey on and accomplish what we accomplished.

I've always said the gold medal is something that's incredible, but this is the frosting on the cake——

The President. Yes.

Mr. Eruzione. ——to receive an award like this, an honor like this. Maybe that's the——this is it, guys. I don't think there's anything else we can get. [*Laughter*]

The President. There's nothing else.

Mr. Eruzione. This is just incredible.

The President. There's nothing else you're going to get.

Mr. Eruzione. No. This is it. And thank you for making this happen.

The President. Great. Thank you, Mike. Appreciate it.

Rep. Emmer. Pete.

The President. Pete?

Rep. Stauber. Yes. Right here.

Mr. President, thank you for signing this piece of legislation. I first want to say, on behalf of Congress, I want to thank Elise Stefanik and Tom Emmer for being cosponsors of this piece of legislation.

I also want to thank my staff. Allie Esau, in my office, did a tremendous job getting this, you know, to be able to pass the House and the Senate. I want to thank my staff.

And, Mr. President, it was 45 years ago, Friday, February 22, 1980, that the game of hockey changed. There was a 5 p.m. game. It was tape delayed. Those of us that were hockey players back then, this was a game changer. We couldn't find that U.S.A. jersey anywhere. We—it was sold out wherever it was.

And so I'm very proud to have led this.

And I would be remiss if I didn't introduce my younger brother Robb, who was the——

The President. Oh.

Rep. Stauber. ——he was a gold medal coach for the 2018 Women's Olympic gold medal team in Pyeongchang. And Robbie is right over there.

The President. Good. Hi, Robb. Nice seeing you.

2018 Olympic Team U.S.A. women's ice hockey team head coach Robb Stauber. Yes, good to see you.

Rep. Stauber. So, Mr. President, I will just say that I'm in awe of these hockey heroes. And as we move forward, they changed the game of hockey. It was a powerful, dominant performance that this country needed. They beat the powerhouse Soviets. And as you know, you're continuing to do that today, and this was a great start of it.

And for me, I'm very just privileged and proud to stand with these Olympic heroes that literally changed a nation and gave us the strength that we needed at the time our Nation needed it. And to know these men here, they're humble, they're—the humility is—through the roof. And I

just want to thank you for signing this. This means a lot to me personally, but it means more to the team.

When I talked to them this afternoon, it was—this was a—as Mike just said, it's the cherry on top of what they did for this country. And thank you for signing it. And I appreciate it.

The President. Well, we love it. And he's—he was a really great hockey player, too.

So let me ask you a question. Was your brother in this category of hockey player, or slightly less?

Mr. Stauber. You want to answer that? [*Laughter*]

The President. See, he was smart.

Rep. Stauber. He was—better than I. He was better than me. Robbie was a goaltender in the National Hockey League as well. So——

The President. Wow, that's pretty good. Boy, that's——

Rep. Stauber. ——he was much—much better than me.

The President. That's a lot of good genetics in this whole thing. But you were a hell of a player, too.

Rep. Stauber. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you, Pete.

So——

Mr. Eruzione. We—have——

Rep. Emmer. Well——

Mr. Eruzione. Mr. President, we would like to do one more thing.

The President. Oh, sure.

Mr. Eruzione. Take a photo with our hats off.

The President. Okay. Let's go.

I'm going to put that down there.

Rep. Emmer. Mike. Mike.

Mr. Eruzione. Oh, fix my hair here.

Rep. Emmer. Straighten it out.

The President. Okay. Take a good one. Do you have Dan? Let's go, Dan. Get with it. Get with it, Dan. Oh, there we go.

[*Participants posed for photographs with the President.*]

Good photographer. You've got her a little off guard.

[*A White House aide gave instructions.*]

It's a good photo. Good idea.

So we're going to finish up with Tom Emmer, and he's been a—just a fantastic Congressman, leader, person from Minnesota. Loves that State. Boy, do you love that State.

Rep. Emmer. I do.

The President. And they love you equally as much.

Please.

Rep. Emmer. Thank you, Mr. President. First, I got to thank Pete Stauber. As he's talking about humility, Pete Stauber actually was in the White House as a national championship captain of a national championship hockey team back in the 1980s.

The President. That's not bad. Not bad. [*Laughter*]

Rep. Stauber. Thank you.

Rep. Emmer. This is a—this runs in the blood in Minnesota. This runs in our blood in Minnesota. But it's not about Minnesota, even though I will point out most the guys are from Minnesota. But that's not the point. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Baker. Minor details.

Rep. Stauber. It doesn't matter if it's Massachusetts, Minnesota, Michigan, Wisconsin. Wherever players came from back then, they were all Americans. That's what mattered. And they were an inspiration. And you know what it means to my State? It shows us that no matter how bad it gets—[*laughter*—there's always a way to succeed if you're willing to try it.

I think Mike Eruzione said it earlier. If you think you're going to lose, you're probably not going to win.

The President. Right.

Rep. Emmer. If you think you're going to compete and you're going to give it everything you've got—these men who are standing here and their colleagues who are not here, God bless them—those who couldn't be here and those who have departed, they reached the ultimate peak. And when they did it, as Pete pointed out, they lifted an entire country out of the ditch and set us off to an amazing several decades that followed.

And it's not much unlike the 47th President of the United States. So I think it's entirely appropriate that you're doing this for these men. You're really doing it for the country. And God bless you, because Minnesota, I think, is going to experience a comeback, because of you.

Mr. Baker. Yes.

The President. Oh, they're going to do it. Minnesota is going to come back.

No, I'm just so—I'm so impressed that so many of these champions come from Minnesota. It's amazing. It's a great place.

Thank you very much.

Rep. Emmer. We engineered them. [*Laughter*]

The President. Yes, I think that's true. [*Laughter*] I think it's true.

Mr. Eruzione. Well, the best players come from Massachusetts. [*Laughter*]

The President. I think it's—

Rep. Emmer. It starts again.

The President. Well, thank you very much.

Any questions for the—let's go to the players first if you could.

Winning 1980 Olympic Hickey Game Against the Soviet Team

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. First of all, it's a great honor to be in the room with all of you. I remember this game, and it made—it had a huge impact on me. You're heroes of mine, and it's really an honor to be in this room.

Mike Eruzione, I have to ask you a question: What did it mean—I realize it was the semifinal game, but what did it mean to you at the time to beat the Soviets—to beat the Soviet Union?

Mr. Eruzione. Well, at the time, it gave us an opportunity to play for a gold medal. You know, people always talk about the Soviet game and the Soviet game, and I know how important the Soviet game was from a political standpoint. We didn't know it at the time; we knew it after. But if we don't beat Finland, we're not having this conversation today. We're not here.

As great as the Soviet victory was, and it was an incredible victory, but if we lose to Finland, it would have been, "God, if we only could have beat Finland."

The President. What was the score? What was the score?

Mr. Eruzione. Four to two. We were losing 2 to 1 going into the third period. And——

The President. Oh, that would have been a downer. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Eruzione. So——

The President. Can you imagine? That would——

Mr. Eruzione. We're not having this conversation.

The President. That would not have been—that would——

Mr. Eruzione. You are not inviting us to the White House, we are not receiving this honor if we don't beat Finland. So I think it speaks volumes of the team and the team that I played on to come back after such a great victory. We were ready to play Finland on Sunday.

And I think, again, that's a tribute to the team and the type of players that we had. So, years later—45 years later, we realize how important that victory was against the Soviets, but I think a lot of us take great pride in knowing that we closed the deal by beating Finland.

The President. Well, if you didn't win—if you didn't win that final game——

Mr. Eruzione. We're not here.

The President. ——nobody would——

Mr. Eruzione. We wouldn't have played golf.

The President. You wouldn't be here. I would not have invited you. I——

Mr. Eruzione. We wouldn't have been partners. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Schneider. Gold medals.

The President. I would have said, "You've got to be kidding."

Mr. Eruzione. Yes, what happened to Finland?

Mr. O'Callahan. Mike would be driving Uber. [*Laughter*]

The President. That's very funny. A little truth to that. But you did win.

Ukraine/Russia/Name, Image, and Likeness Payment Arrangements in College Sports/University and College Budgets

Q. What's the lesson for Ukraine from this win, from 45 years ago, when you defeated Russian team against all odds? It's a question to——

The President. Well, it's a very similar situation, isn't it? Let's see what happens. We're working on seeing if we can make a deal right now. We're going to see. We'll soon know, I guess. We're going to—see a lot of death.

Last month, fellas, 25,000 soldiers were killed in Ukraine and Russia.

Mr. Eruzione. It doesn't make sense.

The President. Twenty-five thousand. Can you imagine this?

Mr. Eruzione. It's ridiculous. Maybe they could send our team over.

Q. For Mike Eruzione, if I could. You guys were a team of amateurs. What do you think about the NIL, the deals that are being made with players and their hopping around schools? What do you think about——

The President. That's a hot—that's a hot one.

Q. ——can I get your thoughts on that?

Mr. Eruzione. My thoughts are I don't like it. I don't like the NIL. I don't like the portal. But that's the state of college sports today, and we have no control over that. I don't like it, and a lot of people that I spoke to don't like it either. But we have no say in that.

The President. Well, I think we maybe do have a say. I think that it's a disaster for college sports. I think it's a disaster for the Olympics, because, you know, we're losing a lot of teams. The colleges are cutting a lot of their—they would call them sort of the lesser sports, and they're losing them like at numbers nobody can believe. And they were really training grounds, beautiful training grounds—hard-working, wonderful young people. They were training grounds for the Olympics.

And a lot of these sports that were training so well would win gold medals because of it. Those sports don't exist because they're putting all their money into football. And by the way, they're putting too much money into it—into football, because colleges don't make—even the most successful universities don't make that much money. And you can't pay a quarterback \$14 million to come out of high school. They don't even know if he's going to be a very good player. I mean, they've tried a couple of times, \$14- and \$12 million. And a couple of deals like that, and the most successful colleges are losing money.

And I think the NIL is a disaster for sports. It's horrible for the Olympics. And it's—I think it's actually horrible for the players. And you're losing all of these great sports. They're not college football.

Even basketball is being affected. Basketball is second, but even basketball is being affected. They're putting all of their money in.

And I know something about it; they will not be able to stop. You're going to have a college president, "I'm telling you, sir, if we give a guard \$7 million, we're going to win the national championship." And they'll give them seven, and they won't win it.

And even if they do win it, colleges cannot afford to be paying the kind of salaries that you're hearing about. And frankly, if you didn't have a very strong salary cap in sports—and even then, in professional sports—it would be—they'd all be out of business, every one.

You're going to have these colleges wipe themselves out. And something ought to be done, and I'm willing to put the Federal Government behind it. But if it's not done fast, you're going to

wipe out colleges. They're going to get wiped out, including ones that do well in football. They can't pay \$12 million, \$14 million, \$10 million, \$6 million for players. They won't be able to stop. There will always be that one player. "If they only have that player, they're going to win the national championship," and they'll have 100 colleges thinking the same thing.

Colleges cannot afford to play this game. And it's a very bad thing that's happening. Very—*[inaudible]*.

[Several reporters began asking questions at once.]

Venezuela/U.S. Airstrikes on Suspected Drug-Trafficking Vessels in the Caribbean Sea and Eastern Pacific/U.S. Drug Interdiction Efforts/Fentanyl/Border Security

Q. Mr. President, you talked about the Soviet Union. And I also want to ask about another country that you're targeting, which, of course, is Venezuela. Do you intend on seizing more oil assets from Venezuela and other tankers?

The President. Well, I wouldn't tell you that. I mean, it wouldn't—be very smart for me to tell you that. You know, we're supposed to be a little bit secretive. You're a very big-time reporter, and I don't think I want to tell a big-time reporter or a small-time reporter that.

But we are knocking out drugs at levels that nobody has ever seen before. We knocked out 96 percent of the drugs coming in by water, and nobody can figure out who the 4 percent. I wouldn't want to be the 4 percent either. *[Laughter]* But 96 percent of the drugs coming in by water. Every one of those boats you see get shot down, you just saved 25,000 American lives. But we knocked out 96 percent of the drugs coming in by water.

And now we're starting by land, and by land is a lot easier, and that's going to start happening.

And we're not going to have people destroying our youth, destroying our families. Forget about youth. Everybody. You ever see a family with the fentanyl or cocaine?

Colombia has at least three cocaine factories. That's a different country.

We're not happy about it. But we're stopping it, and we've stopped it now on water. You don't even find boats on water. You don't even see fishing boats on water.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

You want to go fishing in that area? *[Laughter]* Does anybody want to go fishing in that area?

Rep. Stefanik. No.

The President. I don't think so.

So I just want to say this: We have now a strong border. A year and a half ago, we had millions of people pouring through. Now we have nobody coming in through our border. And we have a strong country. We have a country that's respected again. We're going to keep it that way. And we're not going to let people kill 300,000 people a year with drugs.

Yes, please.

Q. Mr. President, can I also just ask you one more follow-up——

Representative Ilhan A. Omar/Somali Immigrants in Minnesota

Q. Thank you. With respect to some of the fraud that you've been pointing out and talking about in Minnesota specifically, there have been some reports resurfacing and circulating, even

by your own administration, alleging Ilhan Omar's marriage to her brother. And this would be a fraudulent situation if there, in fact, is found to be fraud. In a situation like that, would you like to see her denaturalized or others who have similarly committed fraud in Minnesota?

The President. Well, I think she's really bad for our country. All she does is complain, complain, complain. She comes out of a country where they have no government, they have no military, they have no police, they got no nothing. They don't have a country. And they run around killing each other. And then she comes over here; she tells the United States of America how it should be run.

We don't want to hear from her. I don't want to hear from her. I don't want to speak for Emmer, but I don't think Emmer particularly wants to hear. But don't say it, because I don't want to get you in trouble, okay?

Rep. Emmer. Yes, sir.

The President. Just be nice and easy. All right? I'll do it for you.

Rep. Emmer. Thank you.

The President. That part I'll do.

Mr. Baker. Mr. President, can I——

The President. But I just want to say that there's nothing worse than a person that comes in and does nothing but bitch and comes from a place where she shouldn't be telling us what to do. She shouldn't be telling us. And everybody agrees with me.

And what's happening in Minnesota with Somalia, where billions of dollars is being stolen—right?—like candy from a baby. We're not going to let that go on. And it's too great a State to have that happening.

And guys like Tom Emmer and others, Pete Stauber, guys like them, they're going to stop it, and they're going to be given the authority to stop it, because this country is not going to put up with it anymore.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Q. Mr. President, do you plan to withhold funding——

Venezuela/U.S. Counternarcotic Efforts

Q. Mr. President, on Venezuela, you've talked about land strikes happening soon. Is there anything at this point that can prevent that? And is the objective——

The President. Well, I don't want to say that.

Q. ——if you make that decision, to remove Maduro from power?

The President. But it's not only land strikes on Venezuela, it's land strikes on horrible people that are bringing in drugs and killing our people.

You know, if we were in a war and we lost 300,000 people in a year, because that's what the real number is—it's not 100. You know, you keep hearing 100. And it's a lot worse than that, because the families are devastated when they lose their child. If we were in a war and we lost 2- or 300,000, but I think it's more than 300,000—and that's a war that's, like, a war that would be unparalleled. There's—nobody has ever seen anything like that, and that's what's happening.

So it doesn't necessarily have to be in Venezuela. It's people that are bringing in drugs to our country are targets.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Health Insurance Reforms

Q. Mr. President, at the end of this year, those extended Obamacare subsidies expire. What's your message to those 24 million Americans who will see their insurance premiums go up end of the year?

The President. Well, don't make it sound so bad, because, you know, obviously you're a—you know, a sycophant for Democrats. You're obviously a provider of bad news for Republicans.

Let me just say something. The Republicans—I think I can speak for Tom and most of the people. I think what most Republicans want to see is what I want to see. And I leave it to them, and hopefully, they're going to put great legislation on this desk right here. We want to see all of the money that's been squandered and given to insurance company—because Obamacare is horrible health insurance; it's far too expensive and it always has been. But what it really is, is a way of making insurance companies rich. We want the money not to be paid at all to insurance companies.

You know, insurance companies have gone up 1,700 percent over a short—meaning the stock—1,700 percent over a short period of time. And they've taken in hundreds of billions and even trillions of dollars. And we want the money to go to the people. They'll go in the form of a insurance account, health care account, or any other form that we can create. We have a lot of different forms. We want to give the money to the people and let the people buy their own great health care.

Q. So just to——

The President. And they'll save a lot of money, and it will be great.

Now, the problem we have is that the Republicans are not at all controlled by the insurance companies. But you know who is? The Democrats. The Democrats have received hundreds of millions of dollars. They're totally controlled by the insurance companies, so we might not get too many of their votes. But I actually think we'd get some Democrat votes.

So I don't know how you feel about it, Tom, but everybody wants to see this happen. Everybody. You know, I put it out, and all of a sudden, we've taken over, in a positive way—the Republicans have taken over health care in a positive way. I want to see the billions of dollars go to the people, not to the insurance companies. And I want to see the people go out and buy themselves great health care.

Much better health care at very little cost. That's what I want. And it's so simple.

Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act

Q. Mr. President, thank you. A follow-up on that. Many congressional Republicans have said they won't vote for an Obamacare extension deal if it includes funding for abortion. Would you assure those Republicans that you will not propose——

The President. Well, we're going to look into it. We're going to look into a lot of things. That's one of many factors. But what we do want to see is we want to see the money go to the people, not to the insurance companies.

Yes, please.

Q. On the Federal Reserve, Mr. President.

Q. How would this free economic——

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

The President. No, no. Wait, wait, wait. You have to be nice and easy. Nice and easy. She's very aggressive.

Okay. Please.

Ukraine/Russia

Q. Thanks, Mr. President. Can you tell us how this free economic zone would work in the Donbas and land that the Russians took by force?

The President. Well, I don't want to do that now. It's a very complex situation. But it—would work, and a lot of people want to see it work. And we're going to—all I want to do is I want to stop the death of 25,000 people a month.

Go ahead.

Department of Justice Files Concerning Deceased Convicted Sex Offender Jeffrey Epstein

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. There were new Epstein photos released today showing you and also Bill Clinton, Steve Bannon. What were your reaction to those new photos that were released today?

The President. Well, I haven't seen them. But, I mean, everybody knew this man. He was all over Palm Beach. He has photos with everybody. I mean, almost—there are hundreds and hundreds of people that have photos with him. So that's no big deal. I know nothing about it.

Interest Rates/Federal Reserve System

Q. How big a role do you want to personally play in the decision by the Fed on interest rates?

The President. Well, you know, I've made a lot of money. I've been very successful. And I think my role should be at least that of recommending. They don't have to follow what I say, but we're going to be choosing a new Fed person in the pretty near future.

But they went out—you know, they went out with 71 different people—all economists and Trump; I was 71—and of the 71 people, I got it right. And one other person, I think, from the Wharton School of Finance, my alma mater, got it right. There were two people that got it right out of seventy—but I was one of them.

So I think I certainly should have a role in talking to whoever the head of the Fed is, or the Fed. I don't think it—you know, in the old days, that used to happen. Nowadays, it's sort of—they think it shouldn't happen. But I've done great. I've made a lot of money. I've been very successful. I think my voice should be heard. But I'm going—I'm not going to make the decision based on that. I'll be making a decision over the next few weeks.

Thank you all very much. Thank you. Thank you very much.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Army-Navy Football Game

Q. Army-Navy is tomorrow, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you. Thank you.

Q. Army-Navy tomorrow?

The President. Yes.

Q. Are you excited for the game?

The President. Army-Navy game tomorrow.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:27 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to County Executive Bruce Blakeman of Nassau County, NY, in his capacity as a New York Republican gubernatorial candidate; Gov. Timothy J. Walz of Minnesota; Vladislav Tretyak, goalie, 1980 Soviet Olympic hockey team; and Chief White House Photographer Daniel Torok. A reporter referred to President Nicolas Maduro Moros of Venezuela; former President William J. Clinton; and former White House Chief Strategist and War Room podcast host Stephen K. Bannon. H.R. 452, approved December 12, was assigned Public Law No. 119–53. The transcript was released by the Office of Communications on December 15.

Categories: Bill Signings and Vetoes : Miracle on Ice Congressional Gold Medal Act, signing remarks; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters, White House.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Baker, Bill; Blakeman, Bruce; Brooks, Dan; Broten, Neal; Christian, Dave; Craig, Jim; Dukakis, Michael; Emmer, Jacqueline; Emmer, Thomas E., Jr.; Eruzione, Mike; Janaszak, Steve; Lewis, Tarja; McClanahan, Rob; Morrow, Ken; O'Callahan, Jack; Omar, Ilhan A.; Patel, Kashyap P. "Kash"; Pavelich, Michael; Ramsey, Mike; Scharf, William O.; Schneider, William "Buzz"; Silk, Dave; Stauber, Peter A.; Stauber, Robb; Stefanik, Elise M.; Suter, Ryan; Tretyak, Vladislav; Verchota, Phil; Walz, Timothy J.

Subjects: 1980 U.S. Olympic ice hockey team; Border security; Cambodia, relations with Thailand; Colombia, drug production and trafficking; Department of Justice files concerning deceased convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein; Federal Bureau of Investigation; Federal Reserve System; Football; Health insurance exchanges; Hockey; Illegal drugs, interdiction efforts; Interest rates; Minnesota, Governor; Minnesota, Somali immigrants; Miracle on Ice Congressional Gold Medal Act; Name, image, and likeness (NIL) payment arrangements in college sports; Opioid epidemic, efforts to combat; Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act; Russia, conflict in Ukraine; Suspected drug-trafficking vessels, U.S. airstrikes in Caribbean Sea and Eastern Pacific; Thailand, relations with Cambodia; Ukraine, Russian invasion and airstrikes; Venezuela, drug trafficking; Venezuela, oil supply and refining; White House Staff Secretary.

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