

**Remarks Honoring the 2025 Stanley Cup Champion Florida Panthers**  
*January 15, 2026*

*The President.* Great job. What a team. What a great job. What a great job.

Please sit down. We'll have—spend a little time doing this, because I watched some of those games, and these guys know how to win, just like we knew how to win last week. We had a little victory. It was surgical, just like their victory. Right, Duffy?

It's an honor to welcome to the White House the two-time defending Stanley Cup champions, the Florida Panthers. Unbelievable team, unbelievable athletes, players.

These men are responsible for the greatest feats in Panthers franchise history and beyond that—I mean, beyond that. I mean, you compare them to some of the greatest hockey teams ever, including your first-ever Presidents' Trophy, three straight Final appearances, and the—one that you didn't make. What the hell happened to you? You should have won that game. *[Laughter]* But it was good to do the little comeback, right? Comebacks are wonderful, actually. But the three—*[laughter]*—that's pretty good. Right, Gary? And an incredible two-straight Stanley Cup victories.

And I just want to congratulate. They're unbelievable players. They have something different, because I watched some of the games, and it looked like it was going to be tough, and you pulled them out. You pulled them out for years.

Well, Vinnie's a winner. So you learn from the owner, I guess. And it's an honor to have Vinnie with us. Thank you very much. Going to speak in a couple of minutes. I always like to hear him speak, because you never know what the hell is going to come out of his mouth. *[Laughter]* Where is he? You never know with Vinnie. But, boy, you've done a job here, huh? You and your people.

*Owner Vincent J. Viola.* Thank you.

*The President.* Your reps have been amazing.

So we're grateful to be joined this afternoon by team owner, Vinnie Viola. And as you know, our general manager, Bill Zito, is fantastic. One of the greatest NHL head coaches of all time, Coach Paul Maurice. Where is Paul? Where is Paul?

*Head Coach Paul Maurice.* Right here, Mr. President.

*The President.* Boy, I'll tell you, I hope they're taking good care of you. Good care. That's a hell of a coach. Great coach.

We're also pleased to be joined by NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman. Great job. I remember a long time ago when you got that job, and I said, "They picked the right guy." You know that. And you've really shown it.

As well as Attorney General Pam Bondi, wherever Pam is. Pam. Hi, Pam. She's doing great. She's—special person. And Secretaries Doug Burgum, Sean Duffy, and Chris Wright, who I hear has a birthday today. Is it your birthday? What are you, about 32? *[Laughter]* He looks so young. And you're doing great.

You know, Doug Burgum said he's the greatest oilman in the world. I wanted Doug for the job. He said, "No, there's one man better." He would only say one man. That's not—you know, because he's a very unusual guy. *[Laughter]* But he said "Chris Wright." *[Laughter]* And we are

now drilling more oil than anytime, any country ever in history. Right? And oil prices in many states are down to \$1.99 a gallon. That's like a major tax cut. Right, Kathryn? That's like a major tax cut.

So what we did is, we gave Doug the—which he probably liked better because he likes real estate. He's the biggest real estate person in history. He has the Department of the Interior. So he drills and he owns the land, and the combination has been lethal. Right? *[Laughter]* And they've been great, and I appreciate it too.

We're also here with FBI Director Kash Patel, who's a person that loves sports. Right, Kash? You love the sports, and we love you.

And Representatives Randy Fine—Randy, you did a great job the other day. You did a great job the other day. You know what I'm talking about. You got up there, let them have it.

Jimmy Patronis. Jimmy. Thank you, Jimmy.

*Representative Jimmy Patronis.* Yes, sir.

*The President.* Good job.

John Rutherford. John? Thank you. Thank you, John. And Michael Haridopolos. Thank you, Michael. Thank you very much.

So, after a shortened offseason and a regular season plagued by injuries, the Florida Panthers entered the 2025 playoffs with extraordinary pressure to defend the title, but they also had an amazing aura about them. It was called the "aura of winning." *[Laughter]* There is something nice about it. And that's what they did.

But not only did you live up to the sky-high expectations, you gave us perhaps the most dominant playoff run in NHL history. The Panthers scored 94 goals in the playoffs, more than any team in a generation. You won a record 10 times on the road. It was—nobody has ever done that one before. You led the Finals for over 255 minutes, the most of any team in NHL history. And you denied Canada the Stanley Cup for the 32d straight year by—I don't know, what a—what do you think about that? What do you think about that, Matthew?

We have a little competition with Canada. *[Laughter]* No, they're great people, though. They're great people. We're doing much better than Canada, but that's okay. Right? *[Laughter]* We want them to do well, and they're going to do well.

But 32d straight year by defeating the Edmonton Oilers for the second year in a row. And they have a couple of really great players on that team. And they have a certain—a superstar—still a superstar, right?

How is he feeling about his game? You can't lose. You've got to win, right? You're going to explain it? Huh?

But, boy, I'll tell you, that was some game.

On offense, no one was better than the man the Edmonton Journal named "Public Enemy Number One," star forward Sam Bennett. Where is Sam Bennett?

*Forward Sam Bennett.* Right here.

*[At this point, the President shook hands with Mr. Bennett.]*

*The President.* He's got a very powerful hand. *[Laughter]* I said, "He's a strong guy." *[Laughter]*

Sam scored 15 playoff goals and earned the coveted Conn Smythe Trophy, making him the first skater in Panthers history to be named tournament MVP. That's a fantastic going, Sam.

And perhaps the greatest single-game performance goes to Sam Reinhart. Where is Sam Reinhart? Where is Sam Reinhart? Who became the first player in 103 years to score four goals in a Stanley Cup-clinching win. And that's—four goals. So they say "hat trick," but what do they call four goals? They don't do it, because nobody ever does it, right? *[Laughter]* How many people—I've never heard of four goals in one game. I hear of a hat trick, but—so, did they have a nickname for that one?

I don't know. Just it—you know what it's called? Four goals. *[Laughter]* That's all you—you don't need a nickname.

On the defensive side, legendary goalie—oh, he's great—Sergei Bobrovsky, also known as "Bob." Well, that's a nice concept—that's a good concept. That was a good idea. *[Laughter]* Notched three shutouts in each of the first three series, including a key game—number four—shutout against Toronto in the second round. He played phenomenal, phenomenal hockey.

Longtime Panther blueliner Aaron Ekblad led the fellow—his fellow defensemen with a career-high 13-point score, 19 playoff games. And that's close to another record.

And team captain Aleksander Barkov, known as "Barky," was named the best defensive forward in the league for the third time and the second straight year. That's great. Where's Barky? Where are those two guys?

*Center and team captain Aleksander Barkov.* Right here.

*The President.* Where is the other—*[inaudible]*?

Good-looking people. Young, beautiful people. I hate them. *[Laughter]* You hate standing here with all this—this power behind you.

But I got power too. It's called the United States military. I don't care. *[Laughter]* At 37 years old, Brad Marchand recorded 10 assists and 10 goals in the playoffs, including the clutch double-overtime winner in game two of the Finals.

And no skater had more ice time in the playoffs than Seth Jones, who was the workhorse on both sides of the puck. As we know, Seth will be representing America in the Milan Winter Olympics next month, alongside fellow Florida Panther, Matthew Tkachuk, who is fantastic.

I remember his father was very good. I don't know. I said, "Did you top his father?" He said, "Well, my father had 500-and-some-odd goals." How many did you say? How many?

*Left wing Matthew Tkachuk.* Something like that. Yes, I'm not——

*The President.* Lot of goals.

*Mr. Tkachuk.* I ain't close.

*The President.* I said—well, he says he ain't close—but you will be, and your father would want you to be. Because I know your father. He would want you to be. It's fantastic.

You don't see that too often, where you have a father who's great and a son who's great. You don't see it very often, but this is a case where you do.

And say hello to your father for me, Matthew. Okay?

But he throws a big punch. I can see that. Is he a pretty tough cookie? Is he tough? They say he throws the big punch. How many people can take him in a fight? *[Laughter]*

*Mr. Tkachuk.* Most of them. Most of them.

*The President.* They're only a couple of hits. He says, "Most of them." I don't know about that.

Also joining them on the—on Team U.S.A. staff will be Bill Zito and Panthers equipment manager Teddy Richards. That's great. That's great. Congratulations. Congratulations.

And we're counting on you to bring home the gold. You know, I got the Olympics, and we got it brought to a very special place. We have the big Olympics coming up very soon, and we have the World Cup coming, and we have the 250th year coming.

So, you know, when I got rigged—when you had a rigged election, I was really angry about it. Then I realized, if I win the next time, I pick up the Olympics, the World Cup, and the 250. [Laughter] And I said, "You know what?" Pam, I said, "This is a good thing." It's better than it would have been, actually. So it's pretty good. Amazing the way things can work out, right?

But I just wanted to say a very special congratulations, and I'm going to bring them down to the Oval Office. We did last time. And sometimes, if I really like a team, I bring them to the Oval Office, and we do some fun. We give them a little special—we give them a coin, a very special coin, the best coin there is. And we have a little fun. But we're going to march on down.

We're going to pass the Presidential Wall of Fame. So I had a choice: "Walk of Fame" or "Wall of Fame." And you know what I decided, right? I said "walk," because I think of the walk of shame. [Laughter] And I said this was an interesting—this was an interesting situation. So, I said—that was the one reason I didn't want to do that, because I said people are going to think about that. But I said, "I'll do it anyway."

But we have the Presidential Walk of Fame, and you'll get to see it. It's been quite an attraction for the White House.

But I just want to congratulate everybody. These are special people. Very, very hard to win, especially in—at the top level of sports, and this is the top, top level. And it's an honor to have these guys with us.

You know, it's—I want my people to win. We have such incredible people, so many here: congressmen, senators, and Cabinet members. And they've really produced. They're producing like—we're having a year the likes of which really, so far, by no—there's no comparison to any other first year for an administration.

We have the—tremendous crime numbers just came out. Did you see? The lowest crime ever recorded. Now, you wouldn't see that when you see what's going on. But when you see what's going on in Minnesota, we're taking out the worst—some of the worst criminals in the world are being taken out of our country. Murderers, drug dealers—some of the worst in the world. We have the lowest crime. We have the best crime numbers we've ever had.

And we have something else that's very special. We have \$18 trillion—this is—Vinnie would understand this better than maybe anybody in the room—\$18 trillion worth of investment in the United States, which is bigger than any number. Bigger than any number.

And we have—again, we have today, for the 49th time of—in 11 months—here a little more than 11 months—for the 48th day, we have the highest stock market in history. So that's pretty good. That makes you feel good, because I know you have a couple of stocks. [Laughter] Makes everybody feel good, because 401(k)s are the highest point they've ever been.

Everybody is happy. And we're doing a job, and they're doing a job.

So I'd like to ask Vinnie to say a few words and then Matthew to say a few words, and then we'll figure it out. I heard they have a little surprise. Ooh, that looks nice. I hope it's the stick and not just the shirt. [Laughter] That stick looks beautiful. That looks beautiful. Maybe I get both.

Who the hell knows? I'm President. I'll just take them. *[Laughter]* But then we do have that little surprise.

And I want to thank you all very much for being here. Very special.

Vinnie, please. Go ahead.

*Mr. Viola.* Mr. President, it really humbles me to be in your presence. And the kindness you've showed me, my organization from—from a very long time ago, it's not lost on us. But the privilege to be at the White House with you, while you're president, is extra special.

I'm going to make it pretty clear that we are honored to be here, and we're honored to be here with you as the president.

*The President.* Thank you, Vinnie. Thank you.

*Mr. Viola.* You talked about the Olympians. I think we're right up there having the most Olympian—Olympic players as much as any other team in the NHL. There are 10 Olympians behind me from, I think, four or five countries. It's a great testimony to a wonderful sport that really is a global sport.

I speak on behalf of every Florida Panther fan all over the world: We're not going to stop. *[Laughter]*

*The President.* That's right.

*Mr. Viola.* We're not going to stop.

*The President.* I agree.

*Mr. Viola.* Thank you, Mr. President.

*The President.* Thank you, Vinnie.

*Mr. Viola.* Matthew would like to say a few words, and the players are super excited about the gifts that they've selected for you. I get—I think I'm more excited, actually.

*The President.* Good. Good.

*Mr. Viola.* So thank you very much, and God bless you.

*Mr. Tkachuk.* Well, I mean, the two Cups was pretty good, but that walk with you might have trumped it all there. *[Laughter]* That was pretty amazing.

No, I just want to say on behalf of the whole organization and mainly the players: We are so honored to be here. Being an American—I know I said it last year—but, I mean, nothing beats this. I'm so proud to be an American and so proud to be here with you and everybody else.

So—but like I said last year, winning, it takes a toll. You pay a price for it. And each one of these members behind me—like, it really does take a village to make it happen, and each person played a very, very important part in it.

And coming down to Florida, thanks to Vinnie Viola and—and Bill Zito, has really changed my life. And I cannot believe that 3 years later, we have two Stanley Cups. And like Vinnie said, we are not stopping now. We hope to be here next year. So that's the plan.

And you know, representing you and the millions back here next month in the Olympics will be one of the highlights of my life as well. So thank you.

*The President.* Thank you very much. Thank you, Matt. Good job.

*Mr. Tkachuk.* We do have a few gifts to give you. So I'd like to call down Captain Sasha Barkov and then Seth Jones. And I think you're going to like the one that Seth gets you the most.

*[The President was presented with two Stanley Cup Championship rings.]*

*Defenseman Seth Jones.* We have the rings from last year's Final.

*The President.* Ooh.

*Mr. Jones.* And then this year's Final as well for you.

*The President.* Wow.

*Mr. Jones.* Hoping they're big enough for you.

*The President.* I think my fingers are much too big for this one. *[Laughter]*

These are beautiful. Wow.

Yes, thank you.

*Mr. Tkachuk.* It's pretty heavy.

*[The President was presented with a gold hockey stick.]*

*The President.* Whoa. *[Laughter]* You're right. You wouldn't want to play with this.

*Mr. Tkachuk.* It'd be good for slashing.

*The President.* This is fantastic. Thank you very much.

*Mr. Barkov.* And one more jersey for you.

*The President.* Be good for slashing. Did you hear him? "Good for slashing." That's nice. *[Laughter]* That's nice.

*[The President was presented with a team jersey.]*

Come on, Vinnie.

*[The President posed for a photograph with the gifts and team representatives.]*

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, everybody. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:22 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Kathryn Burgum, wife of Secretary of the Interior Douglas J. Burgum; Sam Reinhart, center, Brad Marchand, left wing, and Seth Jones, defenseman, National Hockey League's Florida Panthers; Connor McDavid, center, Edmonton Oilers; and former National Hockey League left winger Keith Tkachuk. The transcript was released by the Office of Communications on January 16.

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Minneapolis; National Hockey League; Secretary of Energy; Secretary of the Interior; Secretary of Transportation; Undocumented immigrants, deportation of criminals.

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