

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2026

Remarks on Signing an Executive Order Establishing the Great American Recovery Initiative

January 29, 2026

The President. Thank you very much, everybody. Been a little busy day, right? We had a good, and now we're having a good evening, and we're going to a premiere in a little while. But there's nothing more important than what we're doing right now, in my opinion.

Today I'm signing a historic Executive order to combat the scourge of addiction and substance abuse. Big deal in this country and every—probably in every country. We're calling it the Great American Recovery Initiative.

I'm grateful to be joined by cochairs of this sweeping new effort, Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., and Senior Adviser to the White House Great American Recovery Initiative Kathryn Burgum. Thank you both very much. Thank you, Kathryn.

Senior Adviser to the White House Great American Recovery Initiative Kathryn Burgum. Thank you, sir. Thank you, sir.

The President. Thank you. Where's Bobby? Bobby? Hello, Bobby. Come here. Give me your hand. I love Bobby.

He's doing a great job, Kathryn, right? Do we think so? Who's doing a better job? Him or your husband? [*Laughter*]

Maybe the husband, huh? He's doing a good job.

Senior Adviser Burgum. I'm just getting started, sir.

The President. They're both doing very well, and now you're going to do better than both of them.

Thanks as well to Attorney General Pam Bondi; Secretary Doug Burgum; Secretary Scott Turner; Secretary Doug Collins; Special Envoy Steve Witkoff, who's got some pretty good news; Chief of Staff Susie Wiles; FDA Commissioner Dr. Marty Makary; NIH Director Dr. Jay Bhattacharya.

Ooh, I've gotten good at that, Jay.

National Institutes of Health Director Jay Bhattacharya. You are, sir.

The President. Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and—Medicare and Medicaid Services, Dr. Mehmet Oz, who's doing a fantastic job. And Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy Sara Carter.

I also want to introduce a great friend of mine who happened to be here, and he's very much committed to this. He knows how important it is for our country. He's built a tremendous American company. It's called WeatherTech. I guess you've seen the ads. I've seen the ads. I think they're great ads. But more importantly, it's a great product. David MacNeil. David, congratulations on what you've done. It's incredible.

WeatherTech Founder and Chief Executive Officer David MacNeil. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you. Really great.

And the president of WeatherTech, Ryan Granger. Ryan, congratulations.

WeatherTech President Ryan Ganger. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. What a great job. They built an American company, and it's a thriving company too. So—and with a great product.

Mr. McNeil. It's great to be here in America.

The President. You know, when I was in the private sector, I'd always buy the floor mats, but now that I'm the—now that I'm President, I no longer have to buy floor mats. [*Laughter*] But you made a great floor mat, and you still do, and lots of other things.

Mr. McNeil. Thank you.

The President. Many of those with me today have personally known the heartache of a loved one taken by drug or alcohol addiction—I do—just like millions of American families.

Every year, we lose an estimated 300,000 people to drug and alcohol abuse. And the real number is probably much, much higher than that. Thankfully, drug overdose deaths plummeted by 21 percent in the last year. We're working very hard on it.

We've closed the southern border, seized over 47 million fentanyl pills and 10,000 pounds of fentanyl powder. That's a record. And I have formally designated doctor—and I'll tell you what: We have a group of doctors, some of them behind me, who have just been incredible, and they've really wanted this—designated the drug cartels as foreign terrorist organizations. And for some reason, they didn't want to do that until we came along, but they are indeed foreign terrorist organizations.

With our action in the Gulf of America—that sounds so nice when I hear the "Gulf of America"—drugs entering our country by sea are down 97 percent. So, when you see the boats being hit, those boats kill, on average, 25,000 people a boat. So that's 25,000, I would assume, mostly American lives. But lives are being saved.

Now we're taking a bold action to help Americans struggling with all forms of addiction so they can get the help and the support that they need to free themselves from the horrible burden of dependency.

The Great American Recovery Initiative will bring together federal, state, local, and private sector resources to support addiction recovery, treatment, and prevention. And it will help mobilize the full resources and authority of the Federal Government to help stop this tremendous plague.

And I'd now like to invite Secretary Kennedy to start, and then Kathryn Burgum. And then I'll sign the order, which I've just signed. And wanted to make sure the signature was good. Took my time.

And we—let me just see. Pretty good. Not—eh, pretty good.

Secretary of the Interior Douglas J. Burgum. Yes.

The President. Let's give it a 10. Okay, Kathryn? [*Laughter*] For Kathryn.

But I'd like Bobby to say a few words and Kathryn. Thank you very much, everybody.

Please.

Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. Mr. President, thank you for your leadership, for signing an Executive order that tells the truth about one of the greatest challenges that our country faces.

Addiction is not a moral failure. It is a disease. It's chronic. It's treatable. And for too long, our nation has responded with fragmentation, with stigmatization, and silence, instead of science, compassion, and coordination.

Today President Trump changes that. With the Great American Recovery Initiative, we finally bring the full strength of the Federal Government together across health care, law enforcement, housing, labor, faith communities, and the private sector to save lives, restore families, and rebuild communities that addiction has hollowed out.

[At this point, Secretary Kennedy continued his remarks, concluding as follows.]

This Executive order builds on that record and it accelerates it. Recovery is not a side issue; it's an economic issue, a workforce issue, a family issue, a national security issue. When Americans recover, communities grow stronger. When families heal, children thrive. And when we confront addiction with courage instead of complacency, we reclaim the promise of our country.

This initiative is about life, it's about responsibility, and it's about building a great American recovery together. With this Executive order and with major announcements that I will announce next week, we are taking decisive action to make America healthy again.

Thank you.

The President. Thank you, Bobby. And great job. And you're doing a fantastic job. He's doing a fantastic job.

And I saw his wife yesterday, and she confirmed that he's doing a fantastic job. So, she's on your side. We know that. And she's great.

And, Oz, thank you for being here. We appreciate it.

Kathryn, please, go ahead.

Senior Adviser Burgum. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you.

Senior Adviser Burgum. Thank you so much. Your leadership today, relative to this announcement about the Great American Recovery, is a gift to all Americans who are suffering from the brain disease of addiction.

And I also want to thank First Lady Melania Trump for her leadership during the—your first campaign—your first administration—

The President. Yes.

Senior Adviser Burgum. —and now the work she's doing championing youth and children, especially related to foster care, where early trauma and instability are often consequences of the disease of addiction.

Addictions touch this administration in real and profound ways. President Trump, you've openly spoke about your brother Fred, whose struggle with addiction shaped your life and your understanding of this disease.

And Susie Wiles carries the lived experience of her father, the late, great Pat Summerall, whose recovery journey became a source of hope for millions. Vice President Vance has shared his story of his mother's battle and recovery. And as Secretary Kennedy just said, he brings his own lived experience: proof that recovery is not theoretical; it is possible.

These stories matter because they are not isolated. They reflect the reality of the over 190 million Americans—that's half our Nation—who are impacted in some way by the disease of addiction. And I am one of them.

I started drinking in high school, and I was a blackout drinker from the start. For 20 years, I struggled, relapsing constantly, constantly starting over, constantly trying to stay sober and failing. I reached a point where I truly did not believe there was one single reason for me to keep living, and I was suicidal at the end of my drinking.

One day, I was out walking alone. I didn't have faith, I wasn't religious, but something in me said I should ask for help. And to—and out loud to no one, because it was just me, I said, "I don't know if anyone is there, but I need help." And that was the day I became sober.

Fifteen years later, I found myself somehow standing in front of people as First Lady of North Dakota, thanks to him, and—but I was asking people to share their stories openly about addiction so we could eliminate the shame and stigma, so more people would reach out for help and more lives could be saved.

And today I'm standing here in this incredibly beautiful Oval Office. And if not for the grace of God, I would not be alive today with over 23 years in recovery.

The President. That's great. That's beautiful.

Senior Adviser Burgum. Thank you.

And that's why I'm here, and my message is simple: Never give up hope for recovery.

Mr. President, I also want to thank you for allowing me to stand here with you today. I was in this building in 2017 when the administration announced the national response to the opioid crisis.

And nearly a decade later, the crisis remains, and in many ways, it has grown worse—not because we lacked compassion, not because we lack effort, but because we never fully aligned our system with the truth. Addiction is not a moral failure. It is not a character flaw. And it's not simply a behavioral issue. Addiction is a lifelong, chronic, relapsing medical disease as real as diabetes, cancer, and heart disease.

And when we fail to treat it as such, we don't treat the disease, and we pay mightily for the consequences: emergency rooms, jails, foster care, overdose deaths, and broken families.

The Great American Recovery changes that. This initiative represents a fundamental shift from reaction to prevention, from fragmentation to coordination, from stigma to science, from short-term fixes to long-term recovery. And for the first time, we're aligning federal leadership across Health, Justice, Labor, Housing, Veterans, Social Services, the Faith Office, and Education around one single shared truth: When addiction is treated early and correctly, people recover—recover and families heal.

Addiction is a generational disease. It's—and if we don't treat it properly, it repeats from parent to child, from community to community. And when we treat it like a lifelong condition, that—the condition that it is, we stop that cycle. We save lives. We restore families. We rebuild communities. We return people to dignity, purpose, and productivity.

Mr. President, thank you for seeing this moment clearly. With your leadership and the Great American Recovery Initiative, we're establishing a new framework and a new national response to the disease of addiction, including treatment and care that parallels other chronic diseases. With this framework and treatment, recovery is not the exception; it is the expectation.

Thank you.

The President. Thank you, darling.

[*The President addressed Secretary Burgum.*]

You got so lucky. [*Laughter*]

You know, I saw them riding horses in a video, and I said, "Who is that?" I was talking about her, not him. [*Laughter*] And then they explained it. I said, "I'm going to hire him," because anybody who has somebody like you to be with, it's an amazing tribute. And it's a great couple. Amazing couple. And she's very much a part of his big success. He's—he was a fantastic success, as you know, having been one of the most successful businesspeople.

And I saw him campaigning. A great Governor. Two-term Governor. He was a—did a fantastic job—North Dakota. And he's done a great job. And I'll tell you what: Kathryn is a very big part of it. I see it. It's just really one of the fantastic couples.

So I appreciate it. What a beautiful job you've just done.

Senior Adviser Burgum. Thank you, sir.

The President. And I'm going to give this to you, and you can figure out what you're going to do with Bobby. You know? [*Inaudible*] [*Laughter*]

But let's—let's have a good picture of the two of them and everyone else.

And I'd like to ask Steve Witkoff, also, to say a couple of words when we're finished, because he is a very special person who I knew very well. An incredible person. So, if you don't mind, Steve, I'll ask you to do that in just a second. All right?

U.S. Special Envoy for Peace Missions Steven C. Witkoff. Okay.

The President. Please, Bobby.

[*The President, Secretary Burgum, and Senior Adviser Burgum posed for a photograph with the Executive order.*]

Okay. Thank you very much. Here, Kathryn.

Senior Adviser Burgum. Thank you, sir.

The President. Thank you very much. Thank you, dear.

Senior Adviser Burgum. Thank you.

The President. Great job. Boy.

Senior Adviser Burgum. Thank you so much.

The President. Steve, please.

Special Envoy Witkoff. The President is doing the same thing to me now that he did to me in 2017. Do you remember, Kathryn?

Senior Adviser Burgum. Yes, we were sitting next to each other. Yes. [*Laughter*]

Special Envoy Witkoff. So I want to tell the story about this. So I came to the opioid conference, and the president did not know I was coming, because I was invited by the First Lady. And he leaned over, saw me in the aisle, and he looked at me and he said, "Steve," and then he realized why I was there, because I had lost my son Andrew. And the President was an incredible friend when I lost him.

He—I lived in his building, at 502 Park Avenue, and I remember when him and the First Lady came, and I talked about this all the time.

And so he took my hand and he said to me, "Come on up to the stage and tell the world about your boy Andrew." And of course, that was, you know, something that was really meaningful to me, but—and I got through it. And I talk about it all the time. I talked about it on the campaign trail and so forth. He is a very special man.

And he's begun and led the fight against opioid addiction and alcoholism. And, Kathryn, I feel like we sort of bonded from that—from that day.

Senior Adviser Burgum. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Special Envoy Witkoff. And it's just my blessing to work for you, sir.

The President. There's a special guy.

He's done a fantastic job.

He and a group of people—Jared helped, and others helped, and Steve. Peace in the Middle East. And we're there.

Special Envoy Witkoff. Yes.

The President. A couple of little flames, but they're very little by comparison, and they'll go out quickly. They're already going out.

And he's now trying very hard to settle up with Russia and Ukraine, and I think a lot of progress is being made there. And I told that Russia is not doing any shooting for a period of time during this——

Special Envoy Witkoff. Because of you.

The President. ——horrendously cold weather.

Special Envoy Witkoff. Because of you.

The President. Well. So we asked President Putin if they could stop the shooting for a week. They're hitting—they're being hit with, proportionately, the kind of cold that we're being hit. It's much colder in Ukraine to start off with, but it's really cold now. And he agreed to do that. We appreciated that very much.

It's a nasty war. It's a nasty, nasty war.

Would anybody else have anything to say? I can say that I am extremely late, but that's okay. Don't worry about me. *[Laughter]* Would anyone else have anything to say? Doug, you're doing a fantastic job, and we appreciate it.

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Douglas A. Collins. Appreciate it.

The President. Marty.

Commissioner of Food and Drugs Martin A. Makary. Thank you.

The President. You are really something special. Everyone is talking about you. Every time—if I don't mention Marty, Bobby always mentions him. *[Laughter]* So—*[inaudible]*.

So we have—we have a great team. Jay, great. Marty, great. Do you guys want to say something?

Commissioner Makary. Thank you. Thank you.

Well, historically, with addiction, the entire society has always been reactionary, and that's been the story of health care. But at the FDA, we are looking into incredible, cutting-edge

therapeutics, and we are being proactive, giving them vouchers, when we see something that's promising, to get an approval as quick as weeks in an era of a 10- to 12-year approval time.

And the ultimate therapeutic is community, houses of worship, addressing loneliness. And so, that's part of the MAHA agenda, thanks to Bobby. So thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you very much. Great job. Thank you.

Jay.

Director Bhattacharya. Mr. President, in 2018, you launched the HEAL Initiative—Helping to End Addiction Long-Term—at the NIH. It's paid fruit. It's yielded fruit. It—there have—the ingenuity of small business has developed products that can deal with pain without opioids. The naloxone, which saves lives——

The President. Right.

Director Bhattacharya. ——that was the fruit of NIH. And for the kinds of investments that your administration, that you made, starting from twenty—from the first Trump term to now, will continue to pay dividends.

The kind of research that the NIH is doing is—will help turn the tide, make people's lives so much better, restore families. All of the addiction that—that we've seen, the 80,000 deaths we saw, the huge spike in addiction deaths, you know, during the first Biden term is going to be a thing of the past.

And I'm so proud to be a part of this.

The President. And, fellas, some great things happening, right?

Commissioner Makary. Yes.

The President. Marty, there's great—really great things happening, I hear, and some pretty big announcements over a short period of time, right?

Commissioner Makary. Yes. Moving drugs over the counter so you don't need a prescription.

The President. Yeah. Right.

Commissioner Makary. Naloxone, which treats opioid, is one of those drugs. And we're being proactive with synthetic 7-OH, a new opioid that's showing up, and we're working with the DOJ on addressing that, because chemists are coming up with new opioids faster than the government has been able to keep up. We're going proactive on these new chemicals.

The President. That's great. No, I hear fantastic things.

Thank you all very much. We really appreciate it a lot. Thank you, Oz.

Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Mehmet Oz. Thank you, sir.

The President. Doing a fantastic job.

Administrator Oz. Thank you.

The President. Thank you all very much. Appreciate it.

Thank you. Please. Thank you very much. Thank you very much.

Q. Mr. President——

Q. Mr. President, can you respond to the new FOX poll that says people think ICE's tactics are too aggressive?

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:29 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to actor Cherly Hines, wife of Secretary Kennedy; and President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia. He also referred to his son-in-law Jared C. Kushner. Senior Adviser Burgum referred to Beverly Aikins, mother of Vice President James D. "J.D." Vance. The transcript was released by the Office of Communications on January 30.

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