

Remarks on Signing a Proclamation on National Angel Family Day
February 23, 2026

The President. Thank you very much. It's a big day. A very important day for me. It should be important for everybody, including the media, but they don't really cover it fairly. I will tell you that. Shocking.

Please sit down. Thank you.

We're gathered here today for a truly solemn occasion. Throughout this hall, I am joined by heartbroken Americans who have lost parents, siblings, children, grandchildren, and treasured loved ones to the scourge of illegal immigration let in by the past administration—millions and millions of people from jails, millions and millions of people from countries that we don't want to know about—drug dealers, murderers. Eleven thousand eight hundred and eighty-eight murderers were allowed into our country by the Biden administration.

These are the angel families that we love, that for decades, our Government betrayed and our media totally ignored. And I've seen it. When I first got involved with the "Angel" families, I had a meeting. It was so sad, and they got up and spoke, and the media literally just turned off the cameras. They didn't want to hear them. It was the most—that was my first glimpse as to what was happening. These are sick people that cover stories like that—or they don't cover them, which is worse.

Everyone in this room not only suffered an infinite loss, they were the victims of politicians who put the comfort of foreign criminals before the safety of American citizens and American patriots. Their stories were censored and suppressed like maybe almost never before so that the politicians could open our borders and allow our Nation to be invaded. If we didn't win the election, our Nation would, right now, be destroyed. But under the Trump administration, their suffering is forgotten no longer.

In just a few moments, I officially sign a proclamation that I've been waiting to sign for a long time, including my first administration. There were so many different legal roadblocks, it was incredible. But we got it done, and I'm doing it today. February 22 is going to be National Angel Family Day. Very important. So many incredible family members and friends, parents and children.

On February 22, 2 years ago, a brilliant 22-year-old nursing student named Laken Hope Riley went out for a run on a college campus in Georgia. Laken was viciously attacked, brutally beaten, and murdered by an illegal alien gang member who the last administration heartlessly released into our country. No problems. Let him in.

They let in everybody. They didn't check anybody. They let in everybody.

Among the first bills I signed into law after taking office last year was the Laken Riley Act—I'm so proud of it—to ensure illegal alien criminals are rapidly removed from the United States of America, if that's okay with the media.

That bill has already been really playing a big role in the life of our country. It's resulted in over 21,000 illegal alien arrests. Twenty-one thousand.

We're joined this morning by Laken's parents, who I have gotten to know. These are incredible people, and I want to ask Laken's mother, Allyson, to please come forward and say a few words. Please. Hi, Allyson. Hi, sweetheart.

"Angel" mother Allyson Phillips. Well, this is unexpected, but I think that a lot of people feel like—that President Trump is maybe different than the version I've gotten to know, and I just can't thank you enough. You have said from the beginning—literally, the day after this happened—that you would not forget about Laken. You weren't President at that time, and you have not forgotten.

You have fought a fight that most people would not want to have to fight. Most people wouldn't. They would just say it's just easier not to do this. And President Trump has—you are doing a thankless job that most people just wouldn't do, and I just can't thank you enough. There are just not enough words to say, because if you've lived the nightmare that we have lived, you understand the importance of the job that he's doing in securing our Nation and fighting for our families, because this could be any family. This happened to my family. This could be any one of your families.

And Laken was the most responsible, hard-working, kind, selfless, beautiful Christian. And she wasn't somebody that put herself in bad positions. She didn't make bad choices. She was just a good girl, and she just wanted to go for a run that morning after she'd gotten up at 4 o'clock the morning before to decorate her roommate's door for her birthday. And she did everything for everyone else; she expected nothing in return. She just wanted to be a good friend and a good sister and a good daughter and a hard-working nurse—she was working so hard for.

And I'm beyond blessed and thankful that you're honoring not just Laken, because she's one in a ton of people that have suffered at the hands of illegal immigrants. She's not the only one. And so thank you for honoring all of them, not just Laken.

And we're just beyond grateful. Thank you.

The President. Thank you so much, darling.

Ms. Phillips. Thank you. Thank you so much.

The President. Thank you very much. It's amazing, Allyson, you have to go through this. Doesn't get that much easier, does it?

Ms. Phillips. No.

The President. Right? Even with time. It's been a while now, and it doesn't get that much easier. But I want to thank you for your incredible courage.

We're all courageous, in a sense. Everybody in this room is courageous, and we're willing to tell the story, and that—I don't know why the news doesn't want to hear it. The Democrats don't want to hear it. The radical left, they don't want to hear it. What's not to hear? We want to stop murderers and criminals from coming into our country.

I watched the mayor of Minneapolis. I watched these people saying, "We want to protect murderers." I don't get—it's something sick. They're sick. Can't have a country like that.

So we appreciate the bravery of everybody in this room, actually.

And Kristi, I want to thank you, and I want to thank Tom, in particular, for—we have a border that's a hundred percent closed now. A hundred percent.

So Laken's story is even more tragic because her death was completely preventable. This—it shouldn't have happened. Guy should never have been here. Not only should her killer not have been released into our country in the first place, but he was released a second time after being arrested in New York City.

Here today is a great gentleman: the police officer who arrested that illegal alien only to watch him be set free to kill. I mean, he was arrested, and they let him go free. They knew he was

trouble, big trouble. Many of them are like that. They release them knowing it's going to kill again. But they released him and set him free to kill Laken.

So I'd like to have Ethan Curreri come up, please. He's a great, highly respected police officer. And you can explain what happened. Come on up. Thank you, Ethan. Thank you.

Palm Beach County, FL, police officer Ethan Curreri. Mr. President, it's an honor to be here today, and it's an honor to be speaking with you guys.

My name is Ethan Curreri. I'm a police officer in Palm Beach County, Florida, and a former New York City police officer. While serving the New York City Police Department, I personally arrested José Ibarra for endangering the welfare of a child.

A few months later, I saw his face again in the news after he viciously murdered Laken Riley. I did my job. I put him in custody. The system failed: no detainer, no accountability, no deportation, and an innocent American life was taken.

If you enter our country illegally, there will be consequences under this administration. The American citizens must always come first. To Laken Riley's family, your loss should have never happened. We owe it to you and every American family to enforce our laws, secure our border, and protect innocent lives.

Mr. President, thank you so much for having me here today, and thank you for all you've done for our country. Thank you.

The President. Thank you. That's a great job.

Thank you very much. I notice, you left New York to come to Florida. [*Laughter*] That's—it's—in a way, it's too bad, right?

Ofc. Curreri. Yes.

The President. But you couldn't take it anymore. You—he would have—they don't let you do your job.

But thank you very much, Ethan. It's—great, highly respected person. Have to do a little checking before I introduce people, otherwise I get in trouble. Sometimes I introduce people, and they say, "Sir, did you know this or that?" But you checked out very, very well. [*Laughter*] Wow.

Stories like Laken's are one more reason why my administration will do everything in our power to end the scourge of sanctuary cities once and for all. They protect criminals.

Why does—why do people fight? They protect criminals with a vengeance. They—they fight for these criminals. Like, murderers—they're protecting murderers. They fight for them so hard. I can't—there's something wrong with them.

We're joined today by so many "Angel" families who are grieving a terrible loss. They've gone through hell.

Steve Ronnebeck was the father of 21-year-old Grant Ronnebeck, beautiful—a beautiful guy who was shot and murdered by an illegal alien while he was working behind the counter of a convenience store in Arizona. He was working behind a counter.

Steve, would you please come forward. We'll talk about your boy.

Thank you very much.

"Angel" father Steve Ronnebeck. Thank you, Mr. President. Good to see you.

You know, I spent some time with President Trump in his first election. President Trump talked about Grant even before he was elected 2016. And finally, we had hope. We had hope that—that it was going to end.

I was just talking to Secretary Noem that we all sat around a table one day, during one of our visits to Washington, and, again, the word "preventable" came up. All these deaths at the hands of illegal immigrants are preventable. They could have been stopped. We could have done so much more.

And unfortunately, at the hands of a election that we questioned, somebody took their foot off the brakes and put their foot on the accelerator to let these people into our country. And it wasn't just regular people. It was criminals. It was murderers, killers, rapists.

And now—now, today—we are finally going to see that somebody is going to remember all of our loved ones. They're going to remember the names, and they're going to remember what we've all been through.

Thank you, Mr. President, very much.

The President. And think of it—I'm not talking politics; I'm just talking life—if that election—if it wasn't rigged—it was a rigged election by millions and millions of votes. A guy that never left his basement—it was all run by crooked people. COVID was a little bit of a shield. We had a lot of things going on, but it was rigged by millions of votes. We did great in that election. If that election wasn't rigged, every single one of the people in this room right now would not be here. You'd be home with your son, daughter, family.

We had a strong border. You know, we solved it twice, Tom. We solved it. In 2016 the border was bad. Nothing like it was this time. It was, like, beautiful compared to this time. This was legendary—in the history of—of the world, there's never been a border like this where millions of people poured in. At least 25 million people. And many of them were the wrong people. Many.

You know, when countries fill up the caravans, they don't fill them up with their finest. I wouldn't. And I would do exactly what they did if the United States would be willing to take all of our criminals and people—or people that don't work. But they are smart people.

I got to know most of those leaders. I know them. I said, "What are you doing?" They said, "Look, it was a totally open border." They saved hundreds of millions of dollars, and they gave it to us, and we've done a great job. Tom Homan, Kristi Noem, our people, they've been incredible, the job they've done.

And they take nothing but abuse. But you know, they're, sort of, pretty hardened to that, I think, because they know they're doing the right thing.

It just amazes me that there's not more support out there. It's just—we actually have a silent support. I think it's silent. I think that's—well, that's how I won.

I got probably 85 million votes. They say 78 million, 79 million. And they cheated in this election too. It was just too big to rig. Too big to rig. But they cheated like hell.

They can't win on policy. Men in women's sports.

We have a new one though: voter ID. I think that's as crazy as—they won't approve voter ID. They won't approve proof of citizenship. They won't approve no mail-in ballots, even though they know it's crooked as hell, where the ballots are sent to, in many cases, Democrats. Republicans don't get theirs, and they're calling frantically to get their ballot. A Democrat will get three, four, five, six, and even seven ballots. And then we're supposed to win. That's what they're good at. They're professional cheaters.

But we wouldn't be here right now. I'm just thinking as we're—as we're going through it, because we've suffered through it together. I suffer for the country.

I mean, it's the—the people I've gotten to know, the mothers and fathers—mostly mothers and fathers; husbands, in some cases; wives, in some cases—but mostly mothers and fathers, what they have to go through.

Also with us is Marie Vega, the mother of Javier Vega, Jr., a retired U.S. marine and Border Patrol agent—so respected—who was murdered in front of his family by two illegal aliens—bad ones, really bad ones; people—you could look at them and you could say "trouble"—trying to steal his family's trucks. They wanted—he wanted to take everything the family had but the trucks, in particular.

Marie, please come forward. Thank you, darling. Thank you.

"Angel" mother Marie Vega. Thank you. President Trump, on behalf of my family and I, thank you for hosting this beautiful remembrance in honor of our loved ones who were killed by illegal aliens.

As you said, August the 3d, 2014, my husband, Javier; my son, marine and Border Patrol agent Javier "Harvey" Vega; his wife; two of his sons; and a friend and I were fishing in Santa Monica, Texas. Within minutes of settling in, we were ambushed by two illegal aliens with many priors. Without warning, they jumped out of their stolen vehicle with guns that were not supposed to be in their possession in an attempt to steal two four-wheel-drive vehicles.

While trying to defend us, Harvey was shot in the chest and killed. My husband Javier Sr. was shot in the back. Remember, you all, children were there fishing with their friends. And they just kept shooting. You could hear the bullets just whizzing past you.

Javier Sr. returned fire with his weapon, and I grabbed the AR that Harvey had attempted to defend us with, and I returned fire as well. Had we not fired back, they would have killed everyone there, including the children, so that there wouldn't be any witnesses.

They killed an amazing man, a loving and honorable dad and husband.

Thank God we have you in office. Without you, America and the world would not know the consequences of open borders. Thank you for restoring law and order. Thank you for acknowledging us, the angel families.

Every day I think of you and the heavy weight of a nation that you carry with you. I can't imagine what it must be like to wake up every morning, work so diligently, amid attacks and resistance from the left, to deal with the craziness, the fraud, and the swamp. But you get it done day in and day out, all while finding solutions to making America great again. You absolutely amaze me.

Please know that we see it, and we, the masses, your constituents, are behind you 100 percent.

When you were elected the first time for the first term as President, I remember saying to my boss, "This is exactly what this country needed: a businessman." You did an outstanding job then, and although you were cheated out of the second term—by the way, you won that election as well, and we know it—[laughter]—I knew the third term was going to be epic. And here we are: MAGA.

Before I end this, I have to share a sweet story with you about my daddy. He absolutely hated the way people treated you and attacked you. On your third run for office. He said to me, "Mijita"—which means "my little daughter" in Spanish—"can you check to see if I'm up to date

and still registered to vote? We need to make sure President Trump gets into office." I said, "Of course, Daddy." And I did, and I checked, and he was registered to vote.

We lost a great man April the 3d of 2025, and that would be my daddy.

Again, thank you for everything. Thank you for backing Border Patrol and ICE and backing these families. Thank you so much.

The President. Thank you. Thank you, darling. Thank you.

Ms. Vega. I love you.

The President. So beautiful. You know, I was thinking, as you were saying that running again for a third time after having gone through what we went through the second time—which was so horrible. So much cheating, so much deception and viciousness, and you could see what they were going to do.

And I'm here now, and it's a much more powerful term than my second term would be and much more powerful.

And one of the reasons is, everybody sees how bad they were. And I had to go through—and I still do—fake stories, fake polls. You know, I had polls for the election that showed I was going to get swamped, and I won in a landslide. They were fake polls, because polls are tough.

You know, when you get a fake poll—I get them today. I saw one today that I'm at 40 percent. Forty percent. I'm not at 40 percent. I'm at much higher than that. I mean, I'd love to run against anybody. The real polls say you kill everybody. It wouldn't even be close.

But you go through the fake polls, you go through the fake stories. And I said, you know, it was good, because this is really a much more powerful term than I would have had if I had run because it was just one of those things. There would be nothing to compare it to, and now they compare it to Biden and that horrible, horrible administration.

And I mean it. It is more powerful. Our military is much more powerful. We rebuilt it mostly in the first term. Then they gave away a chunk of it, and as much as it was, it's very small, relatively, Tom.

But we gave it to the Taliban. Just walked out. We could have taken it with us. They said, "Oh, I think it's cheaper to leave the planes." Just put a little jet fuel in it and fly it to a neighbor or fly it right home. "Sir, I think it's cheaper. I think we'll save money by leaving \$150 million jet on the runway." These people are crazy.

But I said—and I've said to a lot of people—it's much better what happened. But not for you people, it's not. And then I go back and say, "But I wish it didn't," because every one of your loved ones would be alive today. Everyone in this room. I think every—maybe there's one where they could have sneaked through during our term, but I don't think so. We had a very tough border. We had a—you know, we solved it in 2016, and we had a very strong border.

I would say nothing is as strong as what we have now, but we had a very strong border. We had a good border. We had a sane border. It was sane. And I say I like this much better. Much more respect.

You know, the—you read about all these crazy shooters, but they only go after consequential Presidents. They don't go after nonconsequential Presidents, you know. If you take a look, Abraham Lincoln, there's some big—some big one. John Kennedy, in a certain way, was very consequential. He represented something very important. He was there for a thousand days, as you know—the book, "A Thousand Days." But he was consequential. There was a glamour. There was a—something good for our country, right? But they're consequential.

And I was told that. I saw that—the other day, they said they only go after consequential. So maybe I want to be a little bit less consequential. Can we hold it back a little bit please, Tom? [Laughter] Can we just, like, nice and easy? Can this be a normal President for a little while? Because we had the greatest first term, I think, of any President in history. A lot of people have said that. Even radical-left people have said that.

And so it's, you know—but the one problem is that—and every time I say it, I go back to the one thing. I said, "But we wouldn't have had 25 million people allowed to come into our country totally unchecked, totally unvetted." And those are the people that destroyed your lives. They destroyed your lives. They wouldn't be there.

So I always say, I like it better, but there's one thing I don't like better, and that's what they did. Because I think that's the single biggest problem.

You know, he gave us inflation—highest inflation we've ever had. I solved that. It's—we're—right now, inflation is at a low, very low number. How about gasoline? I was in Iowa, \$1.85 a gallon. You know, I solved that. I did a great job with that.

Prices are coming way down, and I'll get them down further. But you know, crime—no matter. By the way, if I came up with a cure for cancer, they would say, "He should have done it years ago." [Laughter] There is not a thing I can do where these people are going to give me credit, and that's okay because we won in a landslide. So the people understand. The people understand.

But the one thing that I regret about the election and the process—because it's a much bigger, more important—you look at what we're doing throughout the world, we're respected like we've never been before.

But the one thing that I can't do anything about is that he allowed 25 million people—many of these murderers, drug lords, criminals, people from mental institutions. They emptied their mental institutions—Tom, is that right?—all over the world. Not just in South America. They emptied their jails, many of them from all over the world. Why? Why would we do this?

And they walk in, nobody even asked for, like: "Do you have an identification? Do you have an ID?" It's so crazy.

You know, the mayor of New York, and—and he's a very nice person. I met him, but he's—his ideology is not too good. But we're having a massive snowstorm right now, and I've heard that he's asked people to come out and help shovel the snow. Okay. So you get a shovel and you start shoveling, right? What the hell? You're not going to help too much, but you can help. And—

[At this point, the President addressed "Angel" mother Patricia Morin.]

Hello, darling. How are you?

No, a—right behind you. Look. My friend, right?

Ms. Morin. Me?

The President. Are you okay? Yes, you. [Laughter] Are you okay? Are you okay?

Ms. Morin. I'm doing very well. I just——

The President. Good.

Ms. Morin. ——want to give you a hug when this is all done. [Inaudible]

The President. Good. Are your eyes okay?

Ms. Morin. Wednesday. They——

The President. I gave her money to get her eyes fixed. A lot of money to get her eyes fixed.

Ms. Morin. [Inaudible]

The President. That doctor ripped me off, but that's okay. [Laughter]

And when do you go?

Ms. Morin. Wednesday, I go for surgery. It was postponed because they said the grief caused me to have two heart attacks.

The President. Well, you get them done. It's a pretty——

Ms. Morin. It's——

The President. It's an operation, but it's a hundred percent. You know, it's great.

Ms. Morin. It's Wednesday.

The President. Good. Are you going to—you'll have twenty-twenty vision. You know, she's almost blind. Cataracts. She's almost blind. And with one operation that will take a very short period of time—hope you have a good doctor.

Ms. Morin. I hope so too. [Laughter]

The President. He's an expensive doctor. Top of the line, right? But you know what? You're going to have twenty-twenty vision, because I noticed you're wearing glasses. I saw you yesterday on television wearing glasses, and I said, "Wow."

Ms. Morin. [Inaudible]

The President. But anyway——

Ms. Morin. Thank you.

The President. But you know, speaking of your family, it would be a lot different right now except for the election.

So I always say it's too bad that happened. And if I had it to do again, it's—despite the tremendous job we're doing now, I wish it could have been the other way because we wouldn't even be having this meeting right now. There'd be nobody.

I wouldn't have gotten to know you, but it's gotten to know you under very bad circumstances, right? The worst circumstances. So one of those things.

But the thing I can't understand is why the press isn't more supportive. They're so dishonest. The stories, the polls—they polled you. They say, "Oh, the 'Angel' moms"—I think the angel moms are the finest people I've met.

I mean, the "Angel" moms and families and dads, but these are unbelievable people. What's to be—why are they so angry with "Angel" moms? They had their child killed. Stories that are so horrible. I'm not going to mention—couple of people are in the room—what they did with the child after they murdered the child. It's not even—and these people are actually on the side of the criminal. I don't get it, Tom. Someday you're going to explain it to me, but I don't think you can either. [Laughter] It's crazy.

Laura Wilkerson is another American mom whose 18-year-old son Joshua—Joshua was horribly beaten, tortured, and murdered by an illegal alien who went totally crazy and—just went to school.

And I'd like to ask Laura to come up and say a few words about Joshua. Please. Hi.

Another one of my friends. One of my original friends, right?

"Angel" mother Laura Wilkerson. Thank you.

Thank you so much for having me today. My name is Laura Wilkerson, and I want to thank everybody for their help in gathering us here: the American Border Story and the White House and all of your helpers. *[Laughter]* I thank you for that.

I met a man about 11 years ago who was running for office. And he sat with us a couple of days, and he watched as the tears rolled down my face as I told him the story of how our youngest son, Joshua, was brutally beaten, tortured, strangled to death, and his body set on fire.

The man next to me was President Trump. He never, ever looked away from my pain. He looked me straight in the eye, and he said, "I will never forget the story of your sweet son, and I will never give up fighting for the American family."

I looked at him, and I believed him. And here we are these years later, and you can tell all of the work he's done. He's never missed a day of fighting for the American family.

I don't know if I've ever met a man who is more interested in this country and running this country and getting it back in shape, and I'm so grateful for what he does every single day.

I can't even pretend to understand the spiritual battles that swirl around the office of the Presidency and the man who owns that office. I would ask that God breathe a fresh breath of air through this administration so that he can calm that—those spiritual battles and allow our President to continue to do the hard work.

Jesus works on my family every day, still healing us today. And I am just so incredibly grateful for the man who is in office who never quits. He is sidelined so many times, but we know the man—Jesus—who can take care of that, and we pray today in his name that he will sweep through this country and make it right again.

Thank you so much for having me.

The President. Thank you.

Ms. Wilkerson. Thank you.

The President. That was beautiful.

Ms. Wilkerson. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

The President. Well, I just want to thank you. That's amazing. The words are so beautiful. So beautiful.

I get introduced often, and I'm getting introduced by people—many cases, they hate me—*[laughter]*—and they don't give me nice introductions like that.

But all we're doing is the right thing. It's sort of simple, right? It's sort of simple. And—but not simple for you.

And that's when I was running, actually. That was before I won. You know, I didn't know if I was going to win or not. I was running against 17 politicians.

You knew. *[Laughter]*

Ms. Wilkerson. I knew.

The President. That's nice.

But no, I never forgot that.

Jody Jones is a loving brother whose cherished sibling Rocky was killed by an illegal alien monster—monster; real monster—who went on a deranged crime spree after being released from prison as part of a California sanctuary city policy.

Jody, please come up. Thank you.

"Angel" brother Jody Jones. Mr. President, thank you, sir.

The President. Thank you very much.

Mr. Jones. Thank you.

The President. Appreciate it.

Mr. Jones. Well, I have this speech, but I'm not going to give it. What I'm going to tell you is from my heart.

I want to thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, first of all, before I do anything.

I want to thank the American Border Story, and I absolutely want to thank President Donald J. Trump. Thank you, sir, for putting America first and putting these angel families first and letting everybody know their stories, because we matter. Thank you, sir.

My brother Rocky Jones was murdered by a criminal illegal alien. He was simply at the wrong place at the wrong time.

This man was arrested, released, and, within 24 hours, he went on a shooting spree in central California. Unfortunately, my brother was in the wrong place at the wrong time. This man shot my brother eight times at point-blank range.

I pray that no other family has to go through that. Unfortunately, they will.

And just know—President Trump, I want you to know: No matter what the fake media says about you, the American people love you and we will support you all the time, because we love you.

I'm sick and tired of—of hearing these Democratic politicians stand up on these podiums and say how sorry they are for seeing these criminal illegal aliens being ripped apart from their families. What about us? What about the American family? What about us? We mean something too, and this man right here understands it.

I was listening to Grandma Cook, and she said "thank you" to President Trump. And I love that lady. I don't even know her. I just heard her. She—just—I've got the fire inside of me. I'm like, "Wow, that's an American. I love America."

I want you guys to understand this: Americans are not racist. We're not xenophobic because we want a safe America and we want to put Americans first. This man is not racist because he wants to put Americans first. Are you kidding me? I know you guys hear it all the time, but we are not.

And I'm going to tell you something. I love America. I love Donald Trump. I love my family. And by gosh, I love America.

Thank you very much, Donald Trump. President Trump, you are the man. [*Laughter*]

The President. Thank you. Thank you.

Mr. Jones. You are the man.

I want to say this. I'm going to end here, and I want to say this: I love my country. God bless you. God bless Donald Trump. And God bless America.

The President. Thank you.

Mr. Jones. Thank you.

The President. Thank you very much. That's incredible.

I want to now introduce somebody that I got to know pretty well. We just had a little discussion. Wonderful mothers. Patty Morin, who lost her beautiful daughter Rachel. And Tammy Nobles, who lost her daughter Kayla. Your daughters would be unbelievably proud—and they are, as they look down. I'm sure they're looking down. And they'd be very proud of you, and they're thanking you right now for your courage. You've gone through a lot. Know you.

And I just have to recognize some of the families. I mean, the families that are here this morning, I've—I know many of them, not all of them. And you know, it grows at a pretty strong level—nothing like it was in the past.

You remember when, during the campaign, Biden would say—and then, I guess, Kamala. It's the same thing—same ideology, same level of intelligence, I think.

But she would say and he would say: "No, no, it's wonderful to have the people come into our country. These are fine people. These are nice people, and they don't commit crime." And I called Tom Homan, and I said: "What's the story on that? Because I think they're really violent." And Tom would say: "These are the most violent people in the world. They're coming in. These make our"—I remember you said, "These make our criminals look like choirboys." And you know what? You were right. You were right.

But I want to thank those two people, because they—what they went through. And I want to recognize all of the families here this morning who have lost loved ones. A lot of families. Thousands are not here, and they're feeling just the way you do—sad—and continue to fight.

You know, they say time helps, but I've seen some people, and the time isn't—not helping that much. Time—they say it heals all wounds, but it's not—do you feel better now or the same? You know, you've got to feel a little bit better. You've got to let it—but it's not like the phrase. Wonderful phrase, "time heals," like everything's going to—

Mr. Jones. We feel good that you're here now.

The President. Excuse me?

Mr. Jones. We feel good that you're here now.

The President. Yes. Yes, I know. We'll continue to fight, though, and we'll stop this horrible situation. And we have stopped a lot of it. A big thing.

You know, you saw that murders are down for the most in 125 years. That's before my—my father was born in 1905. Five years before my father was born. My father was great. But—so, in 1900, 125 years, the murder's the lowest rate. You know why? Because I closed the borders, and we got a lot of people out. It's not just closing. We got a lot of people out. Washington, DC, is now a safe place.

We don't want to close the borders with them in here. *[Laughter]* We got a lot of them out, and we got many of the worst ones out. Go for them first.

But I want to conclude by reading part of a letter I received earlier this year from two heartbroken grandparents who will never again see their 8-year-old granddaughter after an illegal alien ran her over with his truck purposely. They wrote to me, "We are hurting so badly, and now know that the hurting in our family will never go away." It never, ever will go away. "We're not seeking notoriety. We don't care about press coverage, but we do want our girl to be remembered.

We want people to actually know how preventable this murder was. And lastly, we want the American Government to be accountable to its citizens."

True. They should be accountable for what they did. That's my administration and, I will tell you, fighting—and we're fighting so hard. All of them—everybody, together, is fighting.

We're putting American citizens first, we're defending American lives, and we're fighting for every "Angel" family. "Angel" families are beautiful families. They're beautiful families.

That was my first—early on, when we first met, that was my first—I didn't know about "Angel" families. You know? I never did this before. *[Laughter]* Right? I was building buildings and things. But I said, "I can't believe it." My first meeting, they were so angry at the press, at—a mom who lost her daughter so violently, right? You might have been there. The first meeting, I said, "This is strange. What's going on?" It was anger from the fake news.

But the "Angel" families—I realized very early on; I never changed. I could see how you've changed, though. You know, you have to go through this stuff. But never changed: I thought they were among the greatest people I've ever met.

I've met the heads of countries. A lot of them aren't so nice, but you know, they do have some power. *[Laughter]* And we've done very well with all of those people.

But among the finest people I've ever met are the people in this room and people—many people outside of this room. I know many, many more than just in the room.

But we restored our border, and that's now totally secure, and our country is at the safest level it's been in many, many years. How could anyone possibly say we want open borders, knowing—especially—let's say you did that because you—you're foolish or stupid or something. And you did it, but after a couple of weeks, you're going to know that the people coming here—

If you're running a country, you want to send your bad people out. That was the way I looked at—I didn't know anything about it. I ran for office, but I have a lot of sense. And I said, "Well, open border's no good, because if I'm running the country"—nearby or far away. I had no idea how far away. They came from the Congo in Africa. They came from all over, not just South America. Congo let vast numbers—hundreds and hundreds, probably thousands—of people out of jail. They brought them through Mexico, and they dropped them into our country.

But you would say that common sense—well—and I said it right from almost the first day. I said, "How can you have an open border? All the countries are going to be dropping their prisoners into us," and that's exactly what happened—and mental patients and others.

So we have a country that's now doing well. We have the greatest economy we've ever had. We have the most activity we've ever had. I'm making a speech tomorrow night, and you'll be hearing me say that. I mean, it's going to be a long speech, because I have—we have so much to talk about.

But Americans like Laken and Grant and Javier and Joshua, Rocky, Rachel, Kayla—these are great people, and we're never going to forget them. I'll never forget them.

I don't know how long I'll be around. Got a lot of people gunning for me, don't I, huh? *[Laughter]*

But I will not forget them. I'm never going to forget them. And I just think you're among the most brave people. I meet a lot of brave people. I meet warriors. I give out congressional Medals of Honor where people recommend, like these two in front of me—are so wonderful, but they recommend—and I meet the greatest people, but this is a group of people that, for whatever reason, I just feel, maybe, the warmest about.

So at least you have one friend, and we don't understand why you don't have many. And maybe you will. I don't know.

So I'm going to go sign the proclamation, and then we're going to sit in the audience—I'm going to sit with you—for the reading of the victims' names, and I'll then depart to a song sung—by—sung by our incredible, talented military. "Amazing Grace."

Okay? Sound good?

Now, we could have some of the families come up—some of the people come up. You know who you are. And come on, you can stand around me.

I don't use an autopen, so you can watch me actually sign it. [*Laughter*]

Okay. We'll do this the right way. Do you have—I want to give coins to the family, okay? Could I—

Ms. Vega. I have one for you, and they couldn't bring anything inside.

The President. They—I know. Secret Service—well, you'll get it to me. [*Laughter*]

"Angel" mother Tammy Nobles. Say hi to Trump, Emma.

"Angel" sister Emma Nobles. Hi, Trump.

The President. Hi. Hi, sweetheart.

Emma Nobles. My name is Emma.

The President. Oh. Hi, Emma.

Tammy Nobles. Kayla's sister.

Emma Nobles. [*Inaudible*—Kayla.

The President. Very good. Beautiful.

Emma Nobles. Yes.

The President. Okay. You ready, Emma? We're going to sign this, okay?

Emma Nobles. Okay.

[*The President signed the proclamation.*]

Okay, that's a good one.

Participants. Thank you.

The President. Here.

[*The President handed Ms. Morin a signing pen.*]

Good?

Participant. Yes. Perfect.

The President. Thank you very much.

Participants. Thank you.

The President. Thank you very much. You take care of yourself.

[*The President handed Tammy Nobles the proclamation.*]

You can hold that.

Tammy Nobles. Oh, I can hold it? [*Laughter*]

The President. At least for a little while before—[*laughter*]——

Tammy Nobles. I'm not taking it.

The President. Thank you.

So let's do this candle lighting, and it's very beautiful. Please.

[*The President greeted participants.*]

Military Aide. We will now light a candle in honor of the victims, in—in solidarity with their families.

Following the lighting of the candle, the names of the victims will be read aloud so that their memory may be honored.

[*A candle was lit on stage.*]

Air Force Aide to the President Major Kaitlyn J. Tinkham, USAF. Katie Abraham.

Chad Aistrup.

Austen Babcock.

Megan Elizabeth Eda Bos.

Jesse Byrd.

Liam Cantu.

Michael Clayton.

Gail Clayton.

Sander Cohen.

Pierce Corcoran.

Ronald da Silva.

Jackson Davis.

Christopher James De Leon.

Joseph DiTomasso.

Marshall Doeve.

Brady English.

Shayley Estes.

Lacy Marie Ferguson.

Mora Gerety.

Tristin Gray.

Kayla Hamilton.

Aaron "Joshua" Hampton.

Brady Heiling.

Suzan Hein.

Hallie Helgeson.
Kyler Hohlbein.
Gregory Homola.
Gabriel Kelechi Isiguzo, Jr.
Rocky Paul Jones.
Shane Jones.
Stephanie Kaufman.
Hailey King.
Amy Kortlang.
Ryan White.
Brian Maass.
Robert Maupin.
Lizbeth Medina.
Brandon Mendoza.
Brandon Michael.
Dominick Montoya.
Jonathan Moody, Jr.
Ruben Morfin.
Rachel Morin.
Chrishia Odette.
Nicholay Osokin.
Rocco Pittro.
Laken Riley.
Grant Ronnebeck.
Mathew Russell.
Kala Santiago.
Dennielle "Nikki" Schermock.
Fred Schlosser.
Tierra Stansberry.
Kate Steinle.
Joseph Storie.
Timmy Tarnowski.
Brian Terry.
Anya Varfolomeev.
Javier Vega, Jr.

Joshua Aaron Wilkerson.

Carlos Wolff.

Joseph Zang, Jr.

[*A military choir sang "Amazing Grace."*]

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:25 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to José Ibarra, who was convicted in the murder of Laken H. Riley, an Augusta University nursing student killed on the University of Georgia campus in Athens, GA, on February 22, 2024; Jason Riley, father of Ms. Riley; Mayor Jacob L. Frey of Minneapolis; White House Border Czar Thomas D. Homan; Gustavo Tijerina Sandoval and Ismael Hernandez Vallejo, who were convicted in the killing of off-duty U.S. Border Patrol agent Javier "Harvey" Vega in southeastern Texas on August 3, 2014; Paola Andrea Brown, wife of Javier Vega, Jr., who was killed by, an undocumented immigrant from Mexico, near Santa Monica, TX, on August 3, 2014; Mayor Zohran K. Mamdani of New York; Patricia Morin, whose daughter Rachel was killed along the Ma and Pa Trail in Bel Air, MD, on August 6, 2023; Hermilo Moralez, who was convicted in the killing of Joshua Wilkerson in Pearland, TX, on November 16, 2010; Tammy Nobles, whose daughter Kayla M. Hamilton, was killed in Aberdeen, MD, on July 27, 2022; former Vice President Kamala D. Harris; and Elvin Elgardo Ramos-Caballero, who was charged in the killing of Mora Gerety in Boise, ID, on November 11, 2025. Ms. Vega referred to Paola Andrea Brown, wife of Javier Vega, Jr. The transcript was released by the Office of Communications on February 24.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : National Angel Family Day, signing the proclamation.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Curreri, Ethan; Frey, Jacob L.; Harris, Kamala D.; Hernandez Vallejo, Ismael; Homan, Thomas D.; Ibarra, José; Jones, Jody; Mamdani, Zohran K.; Moralez, Hermilo; Morin, Patricia; Nobles, Emma; Nobles, Tammy; Noem, Kristi L.; Phillips, Allyson; Ramos-Caballero, Elvin Elgardo; Riley, Jason; Ronnebeck, Steve; Tijerina Sandoval, Gustavo; Tinkham, Kaitlyn J.; Vega, Marie; Wilkerson, Laura.

Subjects: 2024 Presidential election; Afghanistan, withdrawal of U.S. military forces; Border security; COVID-19 pandemic; Crime rates; Election security and integrity, strengthening efforts; Gasoline costs; Illegal immigration; Inflation; National Angel Family Day; Secretary of Homeland Security; U.S. Border Patrol; White House Border Czar.

DCPD Number: DCPD202600133.