

Remarks on the Construction of the White House Ballroom and an Exchange With Reporters

May 19, 2026

The President. Hi, everybody.

Q. Good morning.

The President. So, a lot of people have been asking to see. We've done a lot of work. We've spent hundreds of millions of dollars already on the ballroom, and it's coming out, I think, incredibly.

I—we have some renderings down there by—of the finished product. It's all knit together. At the top of the ballroom is a—what they call a "drone gallery." And we have tremendous amounts of military able to be on the top. It will be the highest point. It will be actually higher than this building across. And we'll have sites all over Washington, so that's important.

But it will be something very special. So, if you look up at the top, you'll see some interesting things, and I'll show that to you in a second.

[At this point, the President referred to a display poster.]

You want to grab that, please? I'll show that to you in a second. The—this is the facade of the building. There will never be another building like this built, that I can tell—I've built a lot of great things, but there will never be anything like this built.

And what we have is the roof is dead flat, with absolutely nothing but strength on it. It's very strong steel. It's drone-proof, and it's meant for our military to be able to stay on it. You get a view of Washington. Also, for the drone-building capacity, some of that takes place right down here. You can see the very large piping and the other things that—it's a very complex building.

It's all knit together. The roof goes with the ground floor. The ground floor goes with the roof. The roof also goes down into the basement. Everything is connected, intertwined: elevators, heating, air conditioning. It's one building. That's why we're trying to explain that. This is one, well-knit building. One doesn't—one thing doesn't work without the other.

Very importantly, though, in terms of the beauty, probably the closest thing to this would be the U.S. Supreme Court—the facade of the U.S. Supreme Court.

[The President referred to display posters.]

So here's a couple of things you can look at.

How are you?

Q. All right.

The President. All right.

There will never be another thing like this, I don't believe, built from a cost standpoint. This is all my money and donors' money. This is tax-free. So everyone's talking about: "They're going to give money. They're going to give money." The money they're going to give is really for the security of that and the whole White House premises. And I guess you probably need that nowadays.

We've done the fencing on the outside of the White House. It's all titanium. You see the black fencing. That's been just done recently, and it was approved originally by me, and it's been completed and it's very powerful. Very powerful. A tractor—a bulldozer cannot knock it over. It goes down deep. And it's titanium, which is the strongest of all of the metals. Much stronger than steel, as an example.

The ballroom is all—it's going to be a tremendous thing. As an example, what happened a couple of weeks ago at the White House Correspondents' Dinner could not happen here. One thing that we have is we don't have people living above it. We don't want that. That's no good. They have a thousand units above it, with the elevator coming right down next to where the convention or whatever it may be is.

So this is a room that's been wanted for 150 years by Presidents. We have no room to have an event. The only way you can have an event is if you build a tent on the lawn, and the tents would not do the job. And, by the way, if it rains here, because this is built on a wetland, the lawn is impossible to deal with. The water goes over everybody's shoes. It literally goes over the shoes. So—and they've had a lot of catastrophes with the tent.

So we have this, and if you take a look at this section, this is the different facade. So, this is a Greek, more or less. It comes out of Greece. This is the ultimate facade for Greece. This faces the Treasury building. This faces—this is a different facade. That's Rome, and that faces the Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial, et cetera. So you have two facades.

Primarily, you have two entrances. You have here; you have here. But the primary entrance is through the White House—directly through the White House. And it's really something. I think you can see the complexity. All of these columns go directly up to the roof, and the roof is a barrier. It's a shield because it's made out of—the sidewalls are steel—impenetrable steel and also impenetrable glass.

The glass is approximately 4 inches thick. And yet, it's amazing, you can see through it as though it didn't exist. It's amazing. And it can stop just about anything. Just about anything.

On the other side of the glass, we have steel and concrete so that—the glass is very powerful. What's holding the glass is equally as powerful, and that's here. You can see they're just about ready to go up to the top. All of these columns, they go directly right to the roof of the building. And, again, we call it a "drone port." It's set up for unlimited numbers of drones.

Purposely, we don't have any air conditioning equipment up there, because we don't want anything coming down through the pipes. If anybody gets—normally, you'd have a lot of air conditioning equipment on the roof. We built it all inside the building—inside the case of the building, because we don't want to have anything having to do with air or air quality or any problems playing with the air.

So you'll notice it's a dead-flat roof with no equipment on it. All of the equipment is inside of the building, and that's for safety reasons. Normally, you'd do it—a lot less expensive, you'd do it a different way.

So all of this was paid for by myself. And because I keep hearing, like—I'm not—we are making a gift of this. This is a gift. This is not going to be paid for by the taxpayer. We have a judge that thinks it's a terrible thing, that we're making a gift—he said: "It's terrible that we're making a gift. It should be paid for by the taxpayer."

That's one I've never heard before. But I'm sure, maybe—I don't know, maybe he doesn't understand. This is a gift to the United States of America. And more than a gift, it's going to be one of the most beautiful buildings that's ever been built in the country or in Washington, DC.

So here's the other facade. You see over here. And, again, this is taken—these great classical old buildings—they're taken out of different parts of the world from very glamorous times. This is Rome. They like the flat roof. Greece likes the—they call it the triangles. And you see that. This is a porch that looks out over the city.

Also, it's developed in such a way that we can have military there, but the entire roof is developed for military. They're very high. They're higher than just about anything else. They have a 360-degree vision of Washington, DC. They have a massive drone capacity. Not only is it drone-proof—if a drone hits it, it bounces off. It won't have any impact. But it's also meant as a drone port, so it protects all of Washington, the roof of the building. Okay?

Now, does anybody have any questions?

Q. Mr. President——

Design Features of White House Ballroom Project

The President. If you want, you can take—if—I think you can bring your cameras up, but you might want to take a look at the complexity.

These are all different rooms down here. They're building a hospital. They're building—it's a military hospital. They're building a—all sorts of research facilities, also meeting rooms and rooms that go hand in hand for the military, using the ballroom. And the ballroom is really a shield and protecting all of the things that are built here.

This goes—as you see, it's already up to the ground. This goes down very deep. You get a better view right over here. This is down—that's because we've already done these floors. But these are already down two floors. That's down—it's down about six stories deep. That's big stuff. Normally, when you build a ballroom, you build it flat. You just build a ballroom. It would have been built. The complexity of this—

And, again, it's all knit together. Between the drone proofing, the missile proofing, we have—and the drone capacity upstairs. We can have all sorts of military up with—I hate to use the word "snipers," but we have great sniper capacity. It's built for our snipers, not the enemy snipers. Our snipers. And because of the height, we get a very clear view of everything all over Washington.

Yes, please.

Funding for White House Ballroom Construction

Q. Mr. President, you mentioned that this is being paid for out of pocket——

The President. Yes.

Q. ——but why is Congress in talks—explain, sort of, the difference in what Congress is doing with the billion dollars.

The President. Well, they're not. Congress is approving—yes, Congress is approving money for security. It may go—some of it may go here for additional security. I don't know. But Congress is approving money.

But this building—I mean, I put up the money to build this building, along with a lot of great patriots. People have put up a lot of money to build the building, and we have a building that is going to be—I think it's going to be, potentially, the most beautiful building in all of Washington.

And with that is great military capacity. We're building it in conjunction with the United States military and the Secret Service.

Design Features of White House Ballroom Construction

Q. [Inaudible].

Q. If Congress doesn't approve that money, can the project still be completed?

The President. Well, they have a budget in Secret Service and the military to do some of the work that you see right here. So the answer is: I think they want to enhance what you see. It's very powerful.

And you see what's happening. It's very powerful concrete. It's 9,000-pound concrete. That—if you know anything about contract—that's very—very strong. That's very strong concrete. But they probably want to enhance the area. They're going to spend money. This is a very sacred piece of land. This is the White House, and they want to do things.

But all of—everything that you see and the money that's being put up to build the ballroom—and, again, the ballroom—it's necessary for the ballroom to be built with what you see over here. It's all knit in: the air conditioning, the heating, the drone capacity, the shield—you know, the ballroom becomes a shield for everything that you see right here. Without that, they couldn't have this. They couldn't build the lower floors without that shield over the top of it. It's a shield that will totally protect what's downstairs.

They have a lot of things going on downstairs. And some of it, you see. This goes down six stories. You see three stories, because it's already been built. This will be—very shortly, this will be in the form of a—this—the roof goes along these lines.

Basically, it goes outside—you see where the wood is. You're going outside of that line, and then it goes straight up. And it's all protection. And everything's together. You can't build one without the other.

And what we have is, we have the safest building ever built, in my opinion. You can have—and, you know, the other thing is when—we're right on budget. We're right on plan. The only budget change would be that we doubled the size. At the request of the military, we doubled the size. But we're right on budget, right on plan.

And originally, we were going to build a much smaller room, and it wouldn't have done the job. It just wouldn't have done the job. You have too many events. Like, if we have President Xi coming here, we have no place to put him.

We had the King and the Queen the other day, and we had a thousand people wanted, and we had a—we ended up having a hundred people sitting in a very small room. So, they've been after this for a long time.

But maybe more important is the safety element. This is a shield that protects everything that's inside, everything that's on top. And you know, obviously, the White House was built in 1792. You know, it's awfully hard to—it's awfully hard to do that kind of a capacity that we did here.

So this will give future Presidents—but you have to understand: When this is finished, my term ends shortly after that. This is really for other Presidents. This is not for me. This is my gift to the United States of America. I'm going to be able to use it very little. Because when it's finished, we're talking about 6 or 7 months. But we're—it will be used for hopefully hundreds of years for other Presidents. And there will never be anything like this built again. There'll never be a room built like—with the safety.

As an example, if we had the White House Correspondents' Dinner here, it would have been no problem.

[Several reporters began asking questions at once.]

Timeline of White House Ballroom Construction

Q. Sir, you said that this will be—when it opens, you'll have about 6, 7 months. Have you thought to that—around that time—have you thought about the first event you would like to host at this?

The President. I have. I have.

Q. What is it, sir? Have you—

The President. I better not tell you about that, Daniel [Daniel Baldwin, One America News Network]. But yes, we have—everybody wants to be here for the first event. So, we're talking about heads of nation. So we have some very special places that it could happen for them.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

You know, we have—we had—literally, if the King and Queen were—you know, if we had had this finished, we would have had a, you know, event that would have been 10 times the size. I mean, we literally, we're in a little room in the White House.

Presidents—now, we're not even talking about safety. Presidents have been asking for this for—literally from the time the White House has been built. But it—on record, for 150 years, they've said, "What about a big room?"

And you all know—you probably attended—they have some where they use tents. If it rains, it's a disaster.

The President's Wishes for the United States/Democratic Party

Q. Mr. President, you've mentioned that this is going to be a gift to America—

The President. Yes.

Q. —for future Presidents and the country. What's your hope for America?

The President. We will have to have a safe country. We have to have a great country. We have to make sure that Iran doesn't get a nuclear weapon. All of the things that you see me fighting for so hard. And it's always tough.

You know, we're negotiating with Iran, and then you have the Democrats—I call them the "Dumocrats"—putting in a bill that "Trump should immediately stop."

You know how it is to negotiate with a country where you're beating them badly, they come to the table, they're begging to make a deal—because they're begging to make a deal. I hope we don't have to do the work, but we may have to give them another big hit. We may have to give them another big hit. I'm not sure yet. You'll know very soon.

But how do you feel when you're negotiating, you're winning every point, and they say: "But in Washington, they want to stop you from negotiating? They want to stop you." And it's only political. It's the "Dumocrats." They're dumb. It's a new name. It's a very accurate name.

So I'm in the middle of a negotiation. I'm saying: "You cannot have a nuclear weapon." And it comes over the wire that the "Dumocrats" want to stop Trump from further negotiations.

They want to stop Trump from, if he has to, giving them another slap. They want to have a nuclear weapon to blow up the Middle East and to blow up, frankly, the world. It's not going to happen.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Nice to see you, by the way. Good job.

U.S. Military Operations in Iran

Q. How close were you to striking Iran? You said——

The President. I was——

Q. ——you were going to attack. Did you have planes in the air?

The President. I was an hour away.

[*Several reporters spoke at once.*]

We were all set to go. You're talking about yesterday?

Q. Yes.

The President. We were going to be striking very—it would have been happening right now.

Q. Were plans in—planes in the air, ready to go?

The President. Yes, it was all done. The boats, the ships are all loaded. They're loaded to the brim. And we were all set to start.

Iran/U.S. Diplomatic Engagement

Q. And what specifically did Gulf nations tell you that convinced you to hold off?

The President. They said that they feel they've had, for the first time in almost 47 years—you know, Iran's been the bully of the Middle East for 47 years. I mean, literally the bully of the Middle East. And they're nasty. Very nasty. Very dangerous.

They wanted a nuclear weapon. Had I not terminated Barack Hussein Obama's Iran nuclear deal—had I not terminated it—

[*Some display posters fell over.*]

See, that's the wind. That can't happen with the real structure. [*Laughter*]

Q. Mr. President, on Cuba——

Q. Mr. President——

Cuba

Q. On Cuba. What do you want see from Cuba's Government before you would take the option of military action off the——

The President. You're talking about Cuba?

Q. ——off the table?

The President. Well, we're going to see. Look, Cuba's calling us. They need help. Look, Cuba is a failed nation. Cuba needs help, and we'll do that.

[*The President addressed a White House aide.*]

Just hold them, darling. It's like an exercise game for her. Just give that to me. I'll hold it. I'll hold it. Okay?

It's so beautiful. See, I look so thin. They'll say, "Oh, he's gotten so thin," because I'm holding this. You don't have to look at my waist. You can look at this. You saw enough of my waist along with President Xi in China. [*Laughter*]

Q. Are you confident that you can reach a diplomatic deal with the current——

The President. With Cuba?

Q. ——the Cuban Government?

The President. I think so. Yes, I think so. We are—I am very prone toward the Cuban Americans. They've been incredible people. Many of them have lost family members. They've been very badly hurt themselves. They've been imprisoned. They've come to this country, and they've been very successful.

The Cuban American people in Miami, I mean, they are amazing people. Most of them are in Miami, in Florida, but mostly in Miami. I'm very, very prone to helping them. I mean, that's—they've been—I think I got 97 percent of that vote. I want to help them.

Now, they have family members in Cuba. They've been treated very, very badly. They've been treated extremely badly. And we're going to get that solved. That's not going to be hard for us to solve.

Q. But you can do that without changing the regime there, you believe? The current government will work with you?

The President. Well, I don't know about changing the regime. I can do that whether you change a regime or not. You know, it's been a rough regime. They've killed a lot of people. But it's a country that really needs help. It has nothing. They can't turn on the lights. They can't eat. We don't want to see that.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Iran/U.S. Diplomatic Engagement

Q. How much notice will the Gulf nations have—how much notice did the Gulf nations have that you were going to do these strikes before they asked you to pause?

The President. They called me over the last 2 days to say they've made a lot of progress in the—because we have them negotiating with us. And primarily Saudi Arabia; Qatar; U.A.E.; Kuwait, little bit; and Bahrain; and some of the others, and we have them negotiating with them.

We're all working together. It's like a team. And Israel, of course—and Israel's been a great partner. And so we are negotiating together. I got a call from numerous of these people. They know the people in Iran.

Don't forget, when you talk about regime change, I think it's the ultimate regime change because the first level and the second level are no longer with us. They're someplace, but they're no longer with us. So we have real regime change.

But I got a call yesterday: "Sir, could you wait? We think we're close to a deal." And that's okay. Now, I've heard it before with these people, and they change their mind. I made deals with them: No nuclear. We immediately get the nuclear dust. And they said: "You're the only one can get it," because the bombers did such an unbelievable job that the mountain literally collapsed on top of it. They said us and they thought China would be the only two countries that could even get it. But I think it's important to get it maybe psychologically more than anything else.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Q. How long did the Gulf nations know—how long did they know that you were planning these attacks, the Gulf nations?

The President. They knew I was getting ready to attack. I didn't tell them.

Q. Are you——

The President. I never tell anybody when.

Iran/U.S. Diplomatic Engagement

Q. You're in constant contact with the Gulf nations?

The President. I never tell anybody when, but they knew that we were very close. I would say we were—I was an hour away from making the decision to go today. And we would probably not be talking about a beautiful ballroom today. We'd be talking about that.

And no, I—we were—I had made the decision. So they called up. They had heard I made the decision. They said: "Sir, could you give us a couple of more days? Because we think they're being reasonable."

Q. How long are you willing to wait for Iran to come to the table and make a deal?

The President. Well, I mean, I'm saying 2 or 3 days—maybe Friday, Saturday, Sunday, something. Maybe early next week. A limited period of time——

Q. I have a question about——

The President. ——because we can't let them have a nuclear weapon.

If they had a nuclear weapon, they would start with Israel. They would blow it up, and they would blow it up fast. But they'd blow it up.

And I'll tell you what, they'd go after Saudi Arabia. They'd go after Kuwait. They'd go after U.A.E. They'd go after Qatar. They'd go after—I think they'd go after the entire Middle East, and it would be a whole different negotiation. It would not be—it would be—it would be nuclear holocaust. And there's no question in my mind that they'd use it. There's no question.

And I deal with these people. They're extremely radicalized. These are not people, like, when I deal with you. [*Laughter*] You're a very nice guy. These are people that are seriously radicalized. They would use it. The only question: Would it be the first minute, the first hour, or the first day?

U.S. Military Operations in Iran

Q. You've agreed to pause a few times. Does there come a point soon where you're no longer going to be able to pause?

The President. Well, I'm not doing this politically. I'm doing—look, everyone tells me it's unpopular, but I think it's very popular.

When you—when they hear that it's having to do with nuclear weapons—weapons that could take out Los Angeles; could take out major cities very quick—when they hear that—you know, when they're explained—I'll tell you what, when we explain it to people—I don't really have enough time to explain to people. I'm too busy getting it done. When they understand, I think it's a very—I think it's, frankly, very popular.

But whether it's popular or not popular, I have to do it, because I'm not going to let the world be blown up on my watch. It's not going to happen.

Representative Thomas H. Massie/Democratic Party

Q. Mr. President, today is the primary with Thomas Massie and your endorsed candidate.

The President. Yes.

Q. Do you think your candidate can beat him?

The President. Well——

Q. And what are you seeing?

The President. Yes. Thomas Massie is a terrible Congressman. He's been a terrible Congressman from day one.

Dealing with him is just a horrible—I don't think he's a Republican. I think he's actually—I think he's actually a "Dumocrat." He's not a libertarian. You know, sometimes they say he's a—he's really a "Dumocrat."

He votes against us all the time. He voted against the border wall. He voted against men playing in women's sports. He voted against transgender for everybody, the mutilization of your children. He voted against—again, open borders.

We have the best border we've ever had right now. Nobody's coming in. I mean, a report just came out: In the last 11 months, literally nobody has been allowed into our country illegally. We're taking people legally. They go through a process, but nobody's come into our country.

But we've taken out hundreds of thousands of people. We had 10,000—it was—10,800—11,888 murderers. Many of these murderers—allowed into our country from prisons; they were in prisons—many of these people killed more than one. More than 50 percent killed more than one person.

This was gross malfeasance. This was on behalf of the Biden administration—I don't know Biden, because I don't think he knew he was alive. But she—Kamala was the border czar. She never called—not one time—she never called the Border Patrol. She never called ICE. She never called law enforcement. She never went to the border. Think of it.

She would—I used to call every single day. And that's recently. Now I call less. We have nobody coming through. We have—we had caravans coming through with tens of thousands of people pouring into our country. We had no idea who they were.

We would have been—I'll tell you what, that would—our country would have been destroyed. If they won this election, our country would have been—we have now the hottest country anywhere in the world. If they had won the election, our country would have been destroyed. Our country was a dead country 2 years ago, and now we have, really, the hottest country in the world.

And this is the ballroom, and it's going to be something incredible. You see the quality of it. And they go right—those columns go right into the roof. And on top of the roof, we're going to have the greatest drone empire that you've ever seen, and it's going to protect Washington.

Thank you all very much.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

We have a little breakfast for you.

Q. Really?

The President. Yes.

Q. Thank you.

The President. Where is the breakfast? I'd have it. Where is it?

Q. Mr. President——

Q. Can I ask you on the ballroom?

Q. That's so kind of you. Thank you.

The President. Oh, it's right over there.

Q. Can I ask you one more on the ballroom?

Q. Rededicate 250——

The President. We have a little bit of a breakfast here. I figured I'd be nice to you for a change.

Rededicate 250 Prayer and Praise Event/The Importance of Religion

Q. We just celebrated Rededicate 250. It was thousands of people gathered there——

The President. It was great.

Q. ——this past Sunday.

The President. Yes.

Q. You spoke via video——

The President. I did.

Q. ——as well as members of your Cabinet.

The President. Scripture. Scripture.

Q. Talk to me about that and why you wanted to see that happen. And are you pleased with the turnout?

The President. Well, I think that it was great. Thousands of people showed up, and it was a beautiful everything. Beautiful day.

I did—it's Scripture. You think it's easy to read Scripture? It's not easy to read Scripture. That's a whole different ballgame. That's not like reading a speech, "We will build the wall." This is a whole different deal. But I did it proudly, and I guess it was broadcast. We had tremendous crowds.

I think religion is very important for our country. I think having—this country was built largely on religion. If you look, it was built so—and when you have strong religion, you have less crime. It's just a fact. You know, whatever it may be.

It's like: "Gee, I want to go to Heaven, so I'm not going to do this or that." Who knows? But we have a country that was based on religion, and I'm very proud of that. And if you look and you see all of the polling—I mean, polling is so fake, but on this it's not fake. Religion is really going up in the last year. And during the time—I mean, really during the time I first got elected in 2016, it's a much different thing. I'm very proud of that.

Religion is a good thing. Christianity, it's a great thing for our country. I mean, our—so many of our—the things that we—we've done, the successes that we've had have been based on Christianity and religion. So I'm very proud of that.

Religion is taking off like our country has taken off. Our country is hotter now than it's ever been. And I'll tell you, religion is making a tremendous comeback. You look at churches today, they're full. You go back 2, 3 years, nobody was going. So we're very happy with it.

Q. What are your concerns about the hate crimes that we see happening to Christians——

The President. Yes.

Q. —Jews, as well as Islam?

The President. Yes. No, I'm always concerned. I see things happening.

Look, from the beginning of mankind, you've had that: you've had the good, and you have the bad. I'd like to get rid of the bad, but somehow that's going to be there. But the good has been many times what it was—really, many times what it was.

Funding for the White House Ballroom Project

Q. On the ballroom. On the ballroom, if Congress does not go for this \$1 billion for your security funding, would you be willing or would you be willing to go to your donors to ask for that money?

The President. Well, this is money for the whole premises, including the East Wing. This is the East Wing section. But the ballroom is, as you see, it's going up. It's ahead of schedule. It's larger because we—they wanted more military capacity. They wanted more drone capacity. They needed a larger roof and, frankly, we needed a larger facility. And so, we're doing that.

And we've done this in strict coordination with the military and with the Secret Service, and they've been great to work with. The money that they're talking about is the surrounding areas and maybe enhancing some security aspects of the building.

Q. But so—if the Congress——

The President. But the building, as you see, it's a very active site. And a lot of people are amazed.

And, by the way, that floor goes down three floors, just so you understand. You're seeing the—almost the top floor. That floor goes down three floors, and there are many things in there having to do with security. And many of those things are going to be taken from there and put onto the roof of the building. And that has to do with drone and missile capacity.

Controversy Surrounding the White House Ballroom Project/The President's Interest in Beautification and Renovation Projects

Q. A lot of Presidents have done renovations to the White House, to all these things. Why do you think people are so mad about your renovations though?

The President. Because I'm doing it.

Q. The Meridian Hill Park, you've got the water——

The President. Yes.

Q. —flowing again. All of it. And they just seem to hate you for it.

The President. Yes. Well, it's a sad thing actually. You know, it—you just—that's very nice. I appreciate the question.

First, I said: "Oh, this is going to be a negative question." Then I heard it. She's really saying: "Why do they hate you for fixing the water fountains?" So, you know, we have—we have 40——

Q. You're the President of construction workers—[laughter].

The President. I know. I want—because I want to see Washington be beautiful. To me, it's very important.

But as an example, you mentioned the water fountain. We didn't have one water fountain in—I think we have 40. We didn't have one in Washington that worked, and soon they'll all be working. Many of them work right now.

And the—I think one of the best things Obama—President Obama, President Biden spent much more than a hundred million dollars on the reflecting lake between the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument. They spent much more. They spent—some people say \$200 million. You know what they got out of it? A closed lake. It never opened. And when it did, it shut right away. It leaked. It was a disaster.

I'm doing a job on the reflecting lake for a fraction of what they paid. Now, I've upgraded it very—I got so into it, I've upgraded it like you wouldn't believe. I'm doing all the walkways outside. I—you know, I'm doing the—I'm doing it properly, but it's a much bigger job. But you see it's happening now. It's going to be beautiful. It's going to be waterproof. It's going to be reflecting again.

I took over a dirty, filthy thing that wasn't open, and it was disgusting. And friends of mine would come to the Lincoln or the Washington, and they'd say, "Sir, it's disgusting." I said, "What's disgusting?" "The reflecting lake."

So, I drove down. I looked with Secretary Burgum, who's fantastic—of Interior. He's fantastic. And we got together, and we have—it's under construction right now. I want to get it open before July 4, which we'll easily be able to do. It will be open before that, but easily be able to do with the July 4 being a very special day.

And it is going to be beautiful. Beautiful blue color—dark blue color. It's very reflective. I put a thing out yesterday showing the reflection. We did a little test. We wanted to see it. It's unbelievable.

Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool Resurfacing and Renovation Work

Q. Yes. How did it—did it look——

The President. It's like a mirror.

Q. Did it look good? Did it work?

The President. Well, it's like a mirror. It's beautiful.

Q. And I saw there was guys out there——

The President. Yes.

Q. ——almost like—are they hand-painting it?

The President. They're——

Q. Is that how they're doing it?

The President. Yes, well, they're fixing the stone outside, and they're sandblasting the stone. We're doing a much bigger job than we wanted to do.

But think of it. Obama and Biden spent over a hundred million dollars. And you know what they got? Nothing. They opened it up, and it leaked like a sieve. And they closed it, and it stayed closed. They've been working on it for years. I've been working on this for a couple of months. When it's finished, it's going to be incredible.

But we have other fountains—beautiful fountains. They haven't worked in 30 years. They're just sitting there rotting. And most of them are now open. And right across the street, I made a donation, and I'm building Lafayette Park——

Q. Are you really?

The President. —and it's going to be beautiful.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Q. How much was the donation? How much was the donation?

The President. I like her.

Q. How much was the donation? How much was the donation to Lafayette?

The President. About \$10 million.

Q. Wow.

The President. So——

Q. Are you happy with "American Flag Blue"?

The President. Well, I put up the American flag.

Q. No, the "American Flag Blue." Are you happy with the color?

The President. I think so. I mean, I'll let you know. I wanted a lighter color blue. The person that really knows this stuff said, "No, dark is much better." It—you don't see the leaves, and you don't—you know, things will get in there.

Q. Plus, it's got to reflect.

The President. But most importantly, the dark reflects much better.

Q. Yes.

Republican Party/Primary Elections

Q. Mr. President, why does the establishment media keep claiming so desperately that MAGA's divided?

The President. Well, I think it's the strongest it's ever been. You know, you take a look at what happened in Louisiana 2 nights ago with a certain Senator that was very disloyal to me and to the Republican Party. He got—he's not even allowed to run for office.

We have another big race. This guy Massie is terrible. Let's see what happens. It's not easy beating incumbents, but we have a great guy running against Massie. Massie's a terrible—I think the worst Congressman the Republican Party's ever had. That will be tonight. That will be good television. And we'll see what happens there. But I think MAGA's never been more together, actually.

And I'm going to be making an endorsement today in Texas. I'm going to be putting out an endorsement in a little while in Texas, the great State. You know, I won Texas all six times, meaning primaries and the race. And I got the highest vote in the history of Texas. And I love Texas. But I'm going to be making an endorsement at about 12:30, 1 o'clock today for the big race—the Senate race in Texas. And I hope you find it good.

So I do think I——

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

I mean, I appreciate the question because even CNN, they did a poll 2, 3 weeks ago; they said, "Trump is at 100 percent." That's Harry Enten. I like Harry Enten. You know, he's got a lot of energy. I like him.

But he did a poll. And he's a good pro. And he gives the good and the bad, but I think he's a—he's an honorable guy, because we got a lot of good. You know, he predicted I was going to do great with the Muslims in Michigan and win Michigan, and I did. I did good. And I won Michigan by a lot. He made a lot of good predictions.

But he did a poll 2 weeks ago that said "Trump is"—I mean, this is up; you can check—"100 percent popularity with MAGA." MAGA is most of the Republican Party. The RINOs are gone, to a large extent. A few of them are still left. So, hopefully, we get rid of one tonight in the form of Tom Massie, who's horrible. But no, it's been amazing.

But I'll be making a statement in a little while as to who I'm endorsing in Texas for the Senate. And there are those that say whoever I endorse is going to win. I don't know if that's true, but historically that's absolutely true. I just don't like to say it because I don't like to brag, huh? [Laughter]

Republican Party/Primary Elections/Texas

Q. What helped you—what helped you make up your mind? I mean, you——

The President. Well, I've had my mind made up for a long time, but I just think it's—I just think it's going to be—you know, I just think it's appropriate.

President Xi Jinping of China

Q. Mr. President, I have a question. There's reports that President Xi told you during your meeting that perhaps Russian President Vladimir Putin would come to regret invading Ukraine. Did he say that to you?

The President. No, he didn't. Nope. He never said that.

White House Ballroom Construction

Q. Mr. President, you mentioned that the ballroom was your gift to the country.

The President. It's a gift.

Q. You spent a——

The President. It's a gift from me and from incredible, successful companies and patriots. And they put up close to \$400 million. And you see the—you see what's happening, and it's beautiful.

And, again, it's ahead of schedule, unlike the Fed building. Think of it. This building at \$400 million, the Fed building at \$4 billion, and it's a tiny little project by comparison.

Q. And you spent a lot of time renovating the White House: the Rose Garden, the Colonnade——

The President. I do.

Q. ——the Palm Room doors.

The President. Putting up the American flag, those flagpoles.

Q. The American flags.

The President. On each side.

The President's Motivation for Renovation Projects

Q. Why was this so important to you to be part of your legacy when all is said and done?

The President. Well, this is the most important because, number one, security. And, number two, it was so needed just on a social basis for Presidents. And, again, I'll be here for a very short period of time. When this opens, I'll be here for a very short period of time. This is really being built for other Presidents. It's not being built for me.

And I'm a really good builder. The thing I do best in life is build. I'm a great builder. And I build beautiful product. This—there will never be anything like this. I always admired the facade of the Supreme Court. I said: "I wonder if that can be duplicated or bettered," even—not to say "bettered," but even better. And we've actually bettered it. What we're doing is something that will—you'll never see it again.

U.S. Military Operations in Iran/President Xi Jinping of China

Q. Mr. President, one more on Iran, if I may. When you were having your discussions with the regional partners, the regional leaders, did they express to you any concern about Iran's ability to still retaliate in the event of U.S. strikes?

The President. Sure. They have a little ability. Their missiles——

Q. What is that capacity?

The President. Their missiles are 82 percent gone, we estimate. Their capacity to build is very little right now, because we hit—you know, we hit all of their manufacturing areas. Same thing with drones: largely gone. But they still have a little capacity. Yes. Not much, but they have a little.

Their navy is completely gone. Their air force is completely gone. President Xi has promised me that he's not sending any weapons to Iran. That's a beautiful promise. I take him at his word. I appreciated it.

We had an amazing time in China. You know, look, we got along very well before this, but President Xi and I had a—really, an amazing time. I think he'd say the same thing. But he promised that he's not sending any weapons.

And you know, if you think about it, he gets 40 percent of his oil. He's not sending oil boats in, you know, tankers in with 20 destroyers alongside of them. No, he wants it—he does want it open, like me. I want it open, and we'll get it open. But Iran has used the Straits as a military weapon for 47 years. Really much more than that. And that's not their Strait. That's international waterways. That's not for them to do.

And, look, they've learned their lesson. If I left today, it would take them 25 years to rebuild, but we're not leaving. We're going to do it right so that in 5 years, 10 years, if you have a bad President who doesn't want to do what's right to do——

This should have been done by Obama. This should have been done by Biden. It should have been done by other Presidents long before me.

Q. Mr. President, you——

The President. And everybody agrees to that. They agree to it.

Gasoline Costs/Domestic Oil Production

Q. Mr. President, you pushed to suspend the Federal gas tax.

The President. Yes.

Q. Are there other initiatives that you're thinking of or pushing Congress on——

The President. Well, there may be. It's very temporary. Yes.

Q. —to try to lower costs?

The President. Yes. There may be. Anything to keep it down.

Look, as soon as this war is over, gas is going to—you know, I had gasoline down to \$1.85 in Iowa. I was in Iowa, and the stations had it at \$1.85. But I was down to, in many cases, less than \$2 a barrel—a gallon.

And then I said to myself: "This is great. We just hit a new high in the stock market. Everything's going good. I'm sorry, but we have to go down and take a little journey down to—we have to do something with Iran."

We cannot let them have a nuclear weapon. You want to see the world exploded? You want to see a problem? And this is peanuts. And I appreciate everybody putting up with it for a little while. It won't be much longer.

But you're going to have—and frankly, there is so much oil out there. One of the things that is happening is these big ships are coming up to Texas, Louisiana, and Alaska, and they're loading up.

But I don't even think about that. What I think about is, you can't let Iran have a nuclear weapon, and they won't have a nuclear weapon. And they fully understand it.

The President's Accomplishments in Office

Q. Mr. President, I once asked you: How do you heal the divide in America? And it's been some time ago. It was during your first term——

The President. Yes.

Q. —and you told me success will bring us back.

The President. Yes. Success.

Q. Based on that, why do you continue to do what you do, knowing that so many people are criticizing you and, at the same time, you get up every day to try to bring that success to America?

The President. Well, you know, you have some people disagree with, like, the Iran thing. I—to me, it's no question. To me, you have to have borders. You have to have walls. And you have to let people in legally, but you have to have borders. Some people think you don't have borders. You should let anybody—murderers, drug dealers—you should let them in.

So there is some—but I said to you once—I remember it—the greatest healer of our country—when we had—just before COVID, we were so successful. You know, we had the best economy we've ever had in my first term.

This term is going to blow it away, I think. And you see all the numbers. Even during the war, we have the highest stock market we've ever had. I thought the market would go down 25 percent, and I was okay with that to get rid of a nuclear potential holocaust. It would have been a nuclear holocaust. So, going down 25 percent is okay if you're going to get rid of a nuclear holocaust.

So most people agree with me. When I'm with people and they—let's say, "Oh gee, why do"—and I say: "Here's the problem. Is it okay for Iran"—and they are very volatile people. I'm being nice. "Is it okay for Iran to have a nuclear weapon?" Everybody says no. I said: "Then we have nothing further to discuss." You know? It's, like, one of those things.

And they will never have a nuclear weapon. Not going to happen. And probably that's going to be very soon. So, one way or the other, whether it's military or an agreement, they—that will start opening up very soon.

Texas Republican Senatorial Campaign

Q. Mr. President, why did you wait so long to endorse in the Texas primary? Just because now both of their names are going to be on the ballot.

The President. No. No, I waited—I've pretty much always known who I was going to endorse, but I just thought this was a good time. You know, the voting's starting, and I thought this was a good time. I'm going to be doing that very shortly.

Chicago, Illinois/Federal Law Enforcement Support in the District of Columbia

Q. Have you put any thought into potentially endorsing someone to run against J.B. Pritzker, like Darren Bailey or, you know——

The President. Well, I like Darren Bailey. J.B. Pritzker's a slob of a Governor.

You know, he could call me, and I'd send the National Guard in; Chicago would have no crime. Look at Washington, DC. We—did you see the crime stats are down to, like, nothing? People go to restaurants now. New restaurants. Restaurants were all being closed in Washington. Now they're building new restaurants. It's a hot city. We have a beautiful city. We have very little crime—almost no crime.

And we could have the same thing in Chicago. All he'd have to do is say: "President, I don't want to have any crime in Chicago. Can you help me?" Within 3 months, Chicago would be a different place.

Q. What about the mayor, Brandon?

The President. What can I say? He's so bad. He's so bad.

Q. Mr. President, politicians for years have talked about making health care more affordable.

The President. Right.

Prescription Drug Costs

Q. You have done that. And you made a major announcement yesterday with TrumpRx.

The President. That was a big announcement. Got no coverage.

Q. How big of a game changer——

The President. I reduce drug prices by 50, 60, 70, 80 percent, and it gets no coverage. I think it's maybe the—other than medical itself, like a cure, I think it's the biggest thing to happen in health care ever maybe.

I brought the prices—we paid the highest price in the world. Now we're paying—as of now, we're paying the lowest price in the world. Prices of drugs have gone down 70, 80, 90 percent.

For 28 years, they never went down. With—in my administration, I got it down one-eighth of 1 percent, and I thought it was great. The first time—the only time in 28 years that it went down. Now I got them down 50, 60, 70, and even 80 percent, and that has a huge impact on health care.

Listen, go have breakfast. Have a good time.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Have breakfast. Enjoy your site. You can shoot down there. But it is——

Q. Mr. President, I have——

The President. Those—the next time you come here, those columns will be standing even taller.

Design Features of the White House Ballroom Project

Q. How long did it take to design the underneath? Like, you said, kind of, the military was—like, what was the architecture——

The President. Yes, actually, the underneath part—it's a good question—is far more complex than the upper.

Q. Yes.

The President. Because what you don't see are the floors that are—beneath here. And they have very, very important rooms down there. Very—the most important. And this was the one opportunity for the military to do something at the White House.

You know, they came—normally, I'd build a ballroom on flat land. I wouldn't have any of this. I'd have a—it would have been built. I would—I'm very fast. I'm a very fast builder. We're way ahead of schedule here. But we went down six stories.

Q. It's unheard of.

The President. So it's actually far more complex than what's—the easy part is up. But, again, we have a drone-proof roof. We have all—it's all sealed. And all of this that you see is totally sealed. And we use it as a drone port. You can have unlimited drones up there. And drones are what's happening right now.

Thank you all very much.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Don't eat too much.

Q. [Laughter] What'd you—what'd you bring us? What—what are we served?

The President. Well, you're going to see. Where is it? Right over here.

[*The President stopped to view the ballroom construction site.*]

Ah. Yes, that's pretty good.

Don't eat too much.

Q. Sir, who's invited to the picnic tonight?

The President. Where's the food? Oh, it's over here. Enjoy it. We could put it right on top of the foundation, but I'm afraid somebody might fall in, right?

Q. Mr. President——

The President. Eat before it gets cold.

Lawrence, take good care of them, please. If he doesn't do a good job, I'll fire him. Okay? If Lawrence doesn't do good—but you'll like Lawrence.

Take good care of them, Lawrence.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:23 a.m. at the ballroom construction site at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Richard J. Leon, judge, U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia; King Charles III and Queen Camilla of the United Kingdom; former Vice President Kamala D. Harris; Kentucky Republican congressional candidate Edward G. Gallrein III; Sen. William M. Cassidy; Harry Enten, chief data analyst, CNN; Illinois Republican gubernatorial candidate Darren Bailey; and Mayor Brandon Johnson of Chicago, IL. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : White House Ballroom construction; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters, White House.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Bailey, Darren; Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Burgum, Douglas J.; Camilla, Queen; Cassidy, William M.; Charles III, King; Enten, Harry; Gallrein, Edward G., III; Harris, Kamala D.; Johnson, Brandon; Leon, Richard J.; Massie, Thomas H.; Obama, Barack; Pritzker, Jay R. "J.B."; Xi Jinping.

Subjects: 2026 midterm elections; Border security; China, President; Crime rates; Cuba, human rights issues; Cuba, political and economic stability; District of Columbia, beautification and renovation projects; District of Columbia, law enforcement improvement efforts; District of Columbia, Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool, renovation project; District of Columbia, security incident at White House Correspondents' Association dinner; Economic improvement; Gasoline costs; Illegal immigration; Illinois, crime in Chicago; Illinois, Governor; Iran, commercial transit through Strait of Hormuz; Iran, diplomatic engagement with U.S.; Iran, nuclear weapons development; Iran, U.S. military operations; News media, Presidential interviews; Prescription drug costs, reduction efforts; Secretary of the Interior; Stock market; U.S. Secret Service; United Kingdom, King; United Kingdom, Queen; White House Ballroom construction project.

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