

## **Newsmaker Transcript**

### **White House Daily Briefing**

Wednesday, February 1, 2017

SPICER:

Good afternoon, everybody. Thanks for coming. Last night the president was honored to announce Judge Neil Gorsuch as his nominee to serve as the next justice of the Supreme Court. It was an unbelievably phenomenal evening. Immediately after being announced, Judge Gorsuch was honored (ph) to meet with Maureen and Father Scalia.

As some of you have reported, his first call after coming back behind the podium was to Merrick Garland who had (ph) also note has already come out to say that Judge Gorsuch deserves a fair hearing. In less than 24 hours, Judge Gorsuch has already received a widespread praise from across the political spectrum as an inspired choice with sterling academic credentials, a brilliant legal mind, and a steadfast commitment to constitutional principles.

During his long career in public service, Judge Gorsuch has enjoyed bipartisan approval having previously been confirmed by voice vote to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 10th Circuit. In fact, 12 current Democratic senators including minority leader Chuck Schumer, Senator Diane Feinstein, Senator Leahy were all in office when he was first confirmed without opposition in 2006.

With as many as eight Democrats like Senators Blumenthal, Durbin, Haskell (ph) already supporting a full hearing and vote for Judge Gorsuch, there is no question that he is a widely respected jurist who deserves to have his nomination fairly decided upon by the United States Senate.

SPICER:

Now that Judge Gorsuch has been officially named, I hope you all will allow me to talk for a moment about how exceptionally qualified he is to succeed the late, great Antonin Scalia.

Judge Gorsuch academic record is impeccable and as he said last night, the president holds education in the highest regard. Judge Gorsuch graduated Phi Kappa Beta (sic) from Columbia, graduated Cum Laude from Harvard Law School and attended Oxford as a recipient of the prestigious (ph) Marshall Scholarship. Like Justice Scalia, the cornerstone of Judge Gorsuch judicial philosophy is fidelity to the text.

He believes that judges should not face -- their decisions solely on the -- on the law. He believes - - sorry I don't want to screw that one up -- that his decisions should be based solely on the law in the Constitution, not on their own policy, preferences or personal feelings. He will be a reliable

and principled voice on the bench preserving equal justice under the law regardless of background. And I would note, I think, I always -- I'm (ph) gonna (ph) copy of this.

But to my understanding, I think he would be the first justice that will serve with a -- with the -- someone her clerks for on the bench. So it will be a sort of a first when he is confirmed by the Senate. Now onto the issues of the day, today is February 1st which means we are kicking off Black History Month. The president has events planned throughout the month, starting today with a soliciting session that occurred earlier this morning with African-American leaders in the Roosevelt Room.

The meeting also included some of the administrations African- American appointees. Later today the president will issue a proclamation, the U.S. postal service kicked off the month by issuing the Dorothy Height Forever stamp, the 40th stamp in their black heritage series. Doctor Height led the National Council of Negro Women for four decades and was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Bill Clinton in 1994 and the Congressional Medal of Freedom by President George W. Bush in 2004 -- excuse me 1994 and 2004.

President Obama delivered her eulogy in 2010 and President Trump is now proud that the Post Office is honoring her incredible legacy as a civil rights icon. At events throughout this entire month we'll celebrate the contributions of courageous African-American leaders from Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglas to Martin Luther King Jr. and Clarence Thomas. African-American history is American history and this month is a great reminder of that.

Continue with today's schedule, the Vice President went to the Hill with Judge Gorsuch to meet with lawmakers for the first time since being named last night. On the Hill the vice president met with Majority Leader McConnell and the staffs spearheading George (sic) Gorsuch nomination will also meeting with Senator Cornyn, Grassley, Hatch and Gardner. With Judge Gorsuch on Capitol Hill, I think it's a good time to talk about the confirmation process.

Neither of the two Supreme Court Justices that President Obama nominated were subject to the 60 vote threshold of the Senate filibuster. They received bipartisan support because Republicans, despite some political and philosophical differences viewed them as mainstream and qualified. And Judge Gorsuch should receive the same fair treatment.

Also this morning the president met in the Roosevelt Room with representatives of outside groups to discuss Judge Gorsuch nomination including David O'Steen of the National Right to Life, Paula White of the New Destiny Christian Center, Wayne LaPierre of the National Rifle Association, Penny Nance of Concerned Women of (sic) American, Charmaine Yoest of American Values, Juanita Duggan of the National Federation of Independent Businesses, Tom Collamore of the United States Chamber of Commerce, Grover Norquist of Americans for Tax Reform, Leonard Leo of the Federalist Society, Marjorie Dannenfelser of the Susan B. Anthony List and Morton Blackwell of the Leadership Institute.

President Trump told the group that his decision on the Supreme Court is among the most important decisions you'll ever make as president. He praised Judge Gorsuch for his academic and professional achievements and his lifelong devotion to the law. The attendees thank the president

for making such an inspired choice and for delivering what was for many of them their number one issue in the campaign.

They committed vocally to supporting Judge Gorsuch throughout the confirmation process and expressed their desire for the Senate to move swiftly to give him a fair hearing and vote. The meeting closed with the president inviting the group in the Oval Office for which some of the attendants (ph) really enjoyed that honor. The president then had lunch with Secretary of State Designee Tillerson.

Mr. Tillerson's tenacity, broad experience and deep understanding of the GO Politics are going to make him an outstanding chief diplomat for the United States and the president is looking forward to the full vote of the Senate on his nomination. Later this evening the president will participate in a standing legislative affairs strategy meeting with his team who have been working closely with Congress to enact the president's agenda.

SPICER:

So far between the vice president and staff, we've had as many productive conversations with members of both parties and in both chambers on a variety of issues from trade to the president's nomination for his cabinet and now the Supreme Court.

Now, starting this week, our legislative affairs team will also conduct excessive outreach on behalf of Judge Gorsuch's nomination process. Clearly, this administration has made reaching out to Congress a top priority, but you know where I'm going with that. Democrats in the Senate continue to use every tool at their disposal to try to get away of the President's attempts to make the country -- to make America great again.

Just today, Senate Democrats again refused to even participate in committee votes for Senate designees Price and Mnuchin, who were moved out of the Finance Committee with zero Democrats present. Democrats also boycotted EPA administrator designee Pruitt's hearing. They're doing this -- they are doing their constituents and our country a disservice by resorting to these childish tactics. The President's cabinet nominees will be confirmed on the floor of the Senate, once Democrats actually allow them to get a fair vote.

In other cabinet news, Attorney General designee, Senator Jeff Sessions was voted out of committee today. We look forward to his full vote as the next Attorney General. Additionally, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson designee is expected to receive a vote by the full Senate this afternoon. And, finally, Veterans Administration Secretary-designee, Dr. David Shulkin, will go before the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs at 2:30 this afternoon.

A few more things before I open it up for questions. In terms of the schedule tomorrow, the President will attend the National Prayer Breakfast and have lunch with Harley-Davidson's -- Harley Davidson executives here at the White House. The President will also meet with Senator Hatch, Senator Wyden, Congressman Neal, and Congressman Brady. Further guidance on all of those meetings will be coming soon.

A few personnel announcements. Today the President sent the following nominations to the Senate: Rachel L. Brand of Iowa to be Associate Attorney General; Steven Andrew Engel of DC, to be Assistant Attorney General; and Rod J. Rosenstein of Maryland to be a Deputy Attorney General.

On another note, yesterday we talked about recent reporting concerning the President's Executive Order protecting the nation from foreign terrorist entry. I want to draw your attention to some polls that have come out on that subject. For all the hysteria around the implementation of this order, the American people as a whole are very supportive of the action that the President is taking.

A new Rasmussen Report poll finds that 57 percent, which is a clear majority, of likely U.S. voters, favor a temporary ban on refugees from Syria, Iraq, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen, until the government can do a better job of keeping these individuals out who pose a threat.

A Reuters poll found that 66 percent of American believe that the United States should limit the number of refugees into the country, and the safety of the American people and the security of American homeland are the President's top priorities. And most Americans agree with the steps that he's taking to keep our country safe.

Further today, the United Arab Emirates -- Arab Emirates Foreign Minister voiced his support for the President's decision to take our national security so seriously. The Foreign Minister also added that he believes the restrictions are not based on religion, but on the, quote, structural problems faced by these nations.

I know that there was a question on Monday regarding Iran's firing a (inaudible) missile, an attack on a Navy vessel. I'd like to introduce National Security Advisor General Michael Flynn to provide a quick update. General Flynn.

FLYNN:

Good afternoon, everyone. Recent Iranian actions involving a provocative ballistic missile launch and an attack against a Saudi naval vessel, conducted by Iran-supported Houthi militants underscore what should have been clear to the international community all along about Iran's destabilizing behavior across the entire Middle East.

The recent ballistic missile launch is also in defiance of U.N. Security Council Resolution 2231, which calls upon Iran not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons, including launches using such ballistic missile technology.

These are just the latest of a series of incidents in the past six months in which Houthi forces that Iran has trained and armed have struck Emirati and Saudi vessels, and threatened United States and allied vessels transiting the Red Sea. In these and other similar activities, Iran continues to threaten U.S. friends and allies in the region.

The Obama administration failed to respond adequately to Tehran's malign actions, including weapons transfers, support for terrorism, and other violations of international norms. The Trump administration condemns such actions by Iran that undermine security, prosperity, and stability throughout and beyond the Middle East, and place -- which places American lives at risk.

FLYNN:

President Trump has severely criticized the various agreements reached between Iran and the Obama administration, as well as the United Nations, as being weak and ineffective. Instead of being thankful to the United States and the agreements, Iran is now feeling emboldened. As of today, we are officially putting Iran on notice. Thank you.

SPICER:

Thanks, General. We are going to have a background briefing with NSA staff - NSC staff, rather, today at four o'clock here in the briefing room. Further details will be provided on that subject. So thank you, General, with that - as we start off, I mentioned yesterday, I'm pleased that we've expanded the briefing room at least virtually. And so, with that, as I begin to take your questions, I'm pleased to offer the first ever Skype seat question in the White House briefing room to Kim Kalunian from WPRI in Rhode Island.

Kim?

QUESTION:

Thank you, good afternoon. Can you hear me OK?

SPICER:

We can.

QUESTION:

Great. Just this week, the mayor of Providence, Rhode Island began calling our capitol city a sanctuary city. As we know, President Trump's executive order says the White House will begin publicizing a weekly list of these municipalities and pledges to withdraw federal grant money from them. What I'm wondering is, is how soon we can expect to see this list and how soon should cities like Providence expect to see their federal funding cut?

SPICER:

Thanks, Kim. I think the president's goal in ending sanctuary cities is pretty clear. We want to, as we mentioned with these other actions, keep America safe. The goal is to make sure on two fronts. One, we are doing everything we can to protect American citizens, institutions, and ending sanctuary cities is one of the ways in which we can continue to do that. Furthermore, the president's

been very clear through his executive order that federal funds paid for by hardworking taxpayers should not be used to help fund sanctuary cities.

As we continue to implement this executive order and fulfill the pledge that he made, we'll have further updates on how we intend - how that list will come out and when it will come out so I look forward to following up on that as well. With that, David Jackson.

QUESTION:

Dave is not here but I'll ask a question (ph).

SPICER:

Go for it.

(LAUGHTER)

QUESTION:

Maybe he's on Skype (ph).

(LAUGHTER)

QUESTION:

The president's daily briefing has been renamed the daily intelligence briefing. Can you tell me how that differs at all from the PDB? Is the president receiving the intelligence briefing in writing or orally and who is giving it to him (ph)?

SPICER:

He did receive an intelligence briefing today. Congressman - or Director Pompeo was here. General Flynn, his national security advisor (ph), his briefer. So he receives an intelligence briefing and the PDB every day.

QUESTION:

Is there any sense that we should get out of the renaming of it from the PDB?

SPICER:

I think it is a more comprehensive - again, I think - we went through this during the transition period, right? There is a difference between the raw intelligence and the analysis and I think he is constantly updated by his national security team and other intelligence officials but every single day he does receive the PDB. And then, I think on top of that he is receiving intelligence briefings from his team.

QUESTION:

But the oral briefing does not necessarily happen every day?

SPICER:

I can get back to you on that. He does get the PDB every day and on a regular - on a daily basis, meets with his intelligence team. Yes.

QUESTION:

Two quick questions on...

SPICER:

...We're not going to do this again.

QUESTION:

On Black History Month?

SPICER:

Yeah.

QUESTION:

Is President Obama being invited to any of the Black History Month celebrations?

SPICER:

I - not that I'm aware of. It's day one. We just started it off. We'll have to get back to you on further details. I think...

QUESTION:

...My second one if I may...

SPICER:

...I think we have a lot - there's a lot of activity as I mentioned that the president is going to do to celebrate and honor this month and this was just the first day of - of the month.

QUESTION:

Today he made the comment about Frederick Douglass being recognized more and more. Do you have any idea what specifically he was referring to?

SPICER:

Well, I think there's contribution - I think he wants to highlight the contributions that he has made and I think through a lot of the actions and statements that he's going to make, I think the contributions of Frederick Douglass will become more and more.

QUESTION:

Very quickly can you clarify what was meant by "we're putting Iran on notice?"

SPICER:

Well as I mentioned, I think General Flynn and the NSC staff will have a briefing at four o'clock. They can go forward on - I'm not going to get - I think we wanted to make very clear that we felt as though that - their actions were both provocative and - and a violation. And making sure that they understood that we weren't going to sit by and not act on those actions.

QUESTION:

Are you building a case...

SPICER:

...I'm just - I'm not going to go any further than that. No, I...

QUESTION:

...Let me ask you about - let me just ask you about the confirmation hearing.

SPICER:

OK.

QUESTION:

How does the president plan to get Chuck Schumer on board with his pick for the Supreme Court, Neil Gorsuch when he has referred to him as a clown and accused him of fake tears (ph)?

SPICER:

Well, I think those are two things. We're going to - you look at the support that's already come out. I think there's eight senators already that have talked about the need to have a vote and his

qualifications. And not just the Senate, but I mean you look at the widespread support that came out for Judge Gorsuch last night.

SPICER:

Across the spectrum, no matter your philosophical view of the court, I think his qualifications for the court, his academic background make him an unbelievably highly qualified person.

And so, it's not just Chuck Schumer. I think the rest of the Senate, as he Hego (ph) was up there. But I think the interesting thing that ...

QUESTION:

(Inaudible).

SPICER:

Hold on, hold on, hold on. I understand that. And I think Chuck Schumer has shown time and time again, through this confirmation process with the cabinet, that he's more interested in politics than actually moving the government along. And I think that's -- that is troubling. I would ask you -- that I think that the question needs to be asked of Chuck Schumer, why are stalling all of these nominees? Why are you insisting on new requirements that you didn't assume for Sotomayor or Kagan?

I mean there's a point at which they need to get asked, why are obstructing government at every step of the way? There's an element to which they need to be held accountable as well. They held certain standards in place for their nominees, both for the bench and for the cabinet. And the question is, are they going to live up to the same standards that they imposed on Republicans when they had nominees in a Democratic White House.

QUESTION:

Does that the President think by personally insulting Chuck Schumer, that's going to win ...

SPICER:

But again Christen (ph), I think that the goal is to get -- when -- when -- but again I would go back. Chuck Schumer is not innocent in this, there is a lot of comments that he's made and a lot of accusations that he's thrown out there and a lot of politics that he's played. At some point Chuck Schumer needs to be held accountable for his actions and his words, like ...

QUESTION:

(Inaudible) invokes a possibility on the Supreme Court, Sean. Possibility of going the route of the ...

SPICER:

That's right.

QUESTION:

.. the nuclear option. If it gets to that point, is the White House comfortable with that happening?

SPICER:

Like if the President made clear his goal today, which is number one he believes that Judge Gorsuch is unbelievably qualified and that he will get nominated -- not only confirmed but done so with a large bipartisan vote. As I said at the outset, Republicans looked at the qualifications of the two justices that got through in the Obama administration and while they may not have agreed with their judicial philosophy, definitely agreed that they were qualified on the merits to be confirmed and they did so. I think that we would ask that we be held to the same standard that the Democrats used when they had nominees up.

But I think the President made very clear that the decision is something that we would rather not have to go down, but also that it ultimately up to Senator McConnell and how he wants to operate this (ph).

QUESTION:

Thank you Sean. Just one question today.

SPICER:

Yeah.

QUESTION:

Leading up to Judge Gorsuch's announcement last night and him coming out after -- there were still rumors that Judge Hardeman was going to be nominated and he in fact drove to Washington ...

SPICER:

No, actually John (ph), he didn't. That was media -- that was misreporting. My understanding is that Judge Hardiman never left the commonwealth of Pennsylvania. So with all due respect, I can't be held accountable for -- you know, reports that falsely stated that he was here. He never was at the White House, my understand is he had a meeting in Eastern Pennsylvania with another Judge. But it was -- he -- and again I'm not -- I don't track where his whereabouts but my understanding is he never left the commonwealth of Pennsylvania yesterday. So it was -- you know we announced when we were going to make this announcement.

I think it was a phenomenal way to introduce Judge Gorsuch to the American people and to the American people and the United States Senate. We invited Democratic leaders -- Democratic members of the Senate Judiciary committee, unfortunately none of them showed up. But it was an opportunity for them and the American people to see an amazing choices the President made for the bench.

QUESTION:

Sean my question is ...

SPICER:

You said one John (ph).

QUESTION:

You didn't ask a question. My question is simply this, with the support that he received the people who called the President, would it be safe to say that Judge Hardiman will be on deck, if there is another vacancy soon. Say Justice Kennedy, retiring by the end of the ...

SPICER:

Well I think there's a lot of vacancies that we see at the appellate level, and throughout the government. He's an impressive impressive jurist. Obviously the four that really made that final list for the President, were unbelievably impressive, so I don't want to get in front of the President. Hopefully, you know, he continues to have the President's support and someone that the President was unbelievably impressed with. So we'll have to see what vacancy's come down the pipe.

QUESTION:

I know you love when we say we have two questions. I do have two quick questions about something you mentioned at the top.

SPICER:

Sure.

QUESTION:

First, you mentioned the three folks that are being nominated to the Department of Justice.

SPICER:

Right.

QUESTION:

Why are they being nominated now, before Senator Sessions is there, is it because there is a lack of people? Was he consulted? Or is it just because of the whole issue this week with the acting Attorney General?

SPICER:

It's just a -- I mean, it's the normal process of getting those -- I've mentioned at a few briefings that the Deputy's, the Unders, and the Actings are in the pipeline. We announced one the other day for Homeland. We've got the Commerce, as in (ph) previously announced. And so this is just a continuation of the process to fill ...

QUESTION:

(Inaudible) would then Senator Sessions, I mean, in speaking with him?

SPICER:

Of course he was, these are people he's clearly aware of supportive of, 100 percent.

QUESTION:

OK. And then the second question was, you mentioned tomorrow the meeting with the Harley Davidson executives, there's reporting that he was supposed to go to Milwaukee tomorrow, or he was supposed to. That was canceled because of the company. Can you talk about that, why ...?

SPICER:

I think -- Look, it was easier for the -- for the executives to come here, considering the week, and all of the activity that's been going on. And we figured the easiest thing to do was, again, no -- no decision had been made about, or announced as to what we were doing. We looked at different options, and ultimately, the easiest thing to do in accordance with the president's schedule was to invite them here to Washington to talk about some of the stuff that we've been doing.

QUESTION:

Are you worried about protesting?

SPICER:

We're not concerned. I think we're -- we're -- we're not concerned about that. We're concerned about -- we're concerned about American jobs, moving this economy forward, and we want -- We're excited to welcome them here to Washington to talk about the great work that they do, and the many thousands of people that they employ.

With that, let me go to the -- I'm going to -- We're going to be here a while, guys. We'll go to second Skype seat.

QUESTION:

Secretary Spicer, thank you so much for this rare opportunity. I appreciate it. I'm learning the ropes here.

SPICER:

Natalie (ph), you're coming back.

(CROSSTALK)

QUESTION:

I'd like to quickly ask two questions, if I may. The first one being, President Trump has been quick to take action on several issues he's addressed along the campaign trail, and with that in mind, he made a stop here in Cleveland, and he said that he would like to make cities like ours the economic envy of the world, a bold statement. So our viewers would love to know an example, a specific example as to how he plans to do this sooner than later.

SPICER:

That's a great question, Natalie (ph). I think it's not just Cleveland, but it's Detroit and so many of the other cities around the country. You've heard the president talk about the need to rebuild our inner cities.

We were really impressed with Cleveland this past July. We went there for the national convention -- the people of Cleveland, their desire, and the rebound that the city has taken. And I think that when you go to, whether it's a city like Cleveland, or Detroit, through different tax and regulatory measures, there's a way that we can continue to bring manufacturing back; we can continue to bring jobs back.

And whether it's, you know, Harley Davidson, or Carrier (ph), or Lockheed, or Boeing, or the GM, Fiat, Ford ... These companies, he continues to talk with about how they can bring jobs back, relocate -- That was, again, another one of the conversations that he had with the pharmaceutical companies yesterday. How can they bring jobs back? How can we ease regulations to do that?

So it's -- it's -- it's about making sure that we have an environment, Natalie (ph), that allows more cities to compete, to grow the manufacturing base, and to recognize the -- the things that we can do, tax-wise and regulatory-wise, to allow that to flourish. Yeah.

QUESTION:

Thank you. Steve Bannon can be heard on a recording saying Islam is a dark religion, not a religion of peace; a religion of submission. Does the president share his chief strategist's apparent beliefs on Islam?

SPICER:

No, I think the president's been very clear that his number one goal is not to target anyone's religion, but places and areas where we believe that there is an issue. That's what the executive order was all about the other day -- making sure that areas that we don't feel have the proper mechanisms in place to assure the security, that when they travel to the United States, that we're -- we know that they're coming here for peaceful purposes.

The president's number one goal has always been to focus on the safety of America, not the religion. He understands that it's not a religious problem. It's a radicalization problem; that there's a big difference between Islam, the religion, and radical Islamic terrorists that come here to seek to do us harm.

QUESTION:

But nothing about this comment that the president wants to distance himself from, or even elaborate on, or (inaudible)

(CROSSTALK)

SPICER:

I -- I \_\_ I just think I made it clear that there's a difference between the president's view. Yeah.

QUESTION:

Thanks. There have been multiple reports of people landing Saturday in the U.S. with valid visas who were denied entry and placed on flights back out of the country. So that's in violation of at least five of these federal judges orders that came down. Is the White House working to ensure that those people illegally deported can return to the U.S.? And are these court orders causing any second thinking about certain aspects of the order?

SPICER:

Well, I think we just -- We issued earlier today some -- an update from the council's office that clarifies section 3C and 3E, that legal permanent residents, LPRs, do not -- that the waver -- we no longer need a waver. Initially, as the program was -- was lifting off, the idea was that they would go through, be granted a waver, of which everyone was issued a waver coming in.

In the sake of efficiency, we have interpreted the guidance (ph) to all of these agencies to both the acting secretary of state, the acting attorney general, and the secretary of homeland security, that the guidance is -- the, all -- all individuals responsible for the administration and implementation

of this order, that that does not apply. They no longer need a waiver, because if they are a legal permanent resident, they won't need it anymore.

(CROSSTALK)

SPICER:

Yeah.

QUESTION:

On (inaudible)

SPICER:

Yeah.

QUESTION:

The president during his campaign said that he supported the reestablishing of the last piece of legislation which would separate the investment banks from the commercial banks. There's legislation on both the House and Senate side, it's in the Republican program.

Mr. Mnuchin inquired when he was on the Hill by Senator Cantwell, who's the author of one of the bills, was a little more ambiguous on this issue. I wish you could say something on this.

SPICER:

We've got to get a Treasury Secretary confirmed. I think when we set here and get asked question about policy and you go department after department. Whether its treasury, energy, EPA, HHS, HUD, education, the list goes on and on.

So you ask about where the President's agenda is, well the reason the President nominated these highly qualified people was to implement his agenda, and senate Democrats continue to hold that up. You are asking us about how we are going to move forward on an agenda, whether it's (inaudible) or so many other issues.

At the same time the Democrats are holding up the confirmation of these highly qualified people. Until that occurs it makes it a heck of a lot harder.

QUESTION:

A broad topic to take on, which is dissent within the administration. Specifically related to the President's lunch with Rex Tillerson today. More than a thousand employees at the state department have signed this dissent capon.

Is it the President's position that Rex Tillerson, when he is confirmed, should go through the formal process, meet with those people and have a dialog as previous secretary of state's have?

And is it the President's point of view that when there is dissent, it can be rooted in a philosophical disagreement that's not necessarily in defiance of his order and that there can be a dialog that can inform him differently about policies?

SPICER:

Every American has a right to speak their mind, that's one of the amazing beauties of this country. You have a right through our 1st Amendment, people have a right to speak out that's not hampered.

The point that I was making then, is that if you believe so deeply that the policy is offensive to you, you have to understand the way the government works to elect a president. That president gets to carry through their agenda that they set out with the American people during the campaign.

They have a right to express it. Secretary Tillerson, for those who have got to meet him, has a very open mind and a desire to meet with people and hear ideas, as does the President. As evidenced through what he's done through the transition and what he's done since he's become President.

He has met with groups, businesses, associations, Republicans, Democrats, Independents that have been supportive of him, that have not been supportive of him and I think that he's going to continue to do that. People have a right to speak their mind, but I think there's a difference between expressing dissent and concern and not implementing a lawful order as the acting attorney general did the other night.

I don't mean to keep coming back to this, but you're asking what we will do when Rex Tillerson becomes and part of the problem right now is that I can't fully answer your question because Democrats are holding up this nomination. So to presuppose what Rex Tillerson is going to do - -

It's ironic that we're being asked what these secretaries will do when they get into office and the Democrats won't let them, we all know that the votes are there for them.

I think for me to presuppose what secretary designee Tillerson's going to do prior to him actually getting sworn in, he probably will, I don't know. It would be irresponsible of me to answer a question about what he's going to do before he actually becomes sworn in.

QUESTION:

Senate Democrats have been describes as bitter over the manner in which Judge Merit Garland was nominated when he w s nominated for the Senate.

Do you feel that bitterness is well founded?

SPICER:

I don't know, I'm not a senate Democrat. I think they have a right to feel the way they do. I think we have explained our position, both last year when this was going on, we felt that this was up to the voters to make a decision on it.

I think I pointed out yesterday so many voters made up their minds based on who they believe the candidates would appoint. Mr. Trump, then candidate Trump, now President Trump, was very clear about the type of people he was going to put forth, first in a list of ten, then in a list of eleven additional ones.

SPICER:

So I think the American people knew clearly where he was going to go. He followed through on that campaign promise. I think when you look at the number of people who solely based their vote on that, it was pretty clear that was an important fact in the election.

I understand it, but I also think we had an election, it was a major issue in that election. Even when you look across the spectrum, Republican, Democrat, liberal, conservative, Judge Gorsuch has an unbelievable record and is being praised for that record because of that.

QUESTION:

Sean?

QUESTION:

I want to ask about Friday. There's been some reporting that there will be a meeting with President Trump and JPMorgan CEO and others. Can you tell us a little bit more about who else will be there?

And where things are at on financial reform? What message does the president have for bankers specifically on financial reform?

SPICER:

I think I'll have more -- yes?

QUESTION:

(OFF-MIKE) and tax reform. But it seems like financial reform has sort of fallen by the wayside...

SPICER:

Well, I wouldn't agree with that. I think that when you look at regulatory reform, tax reform and all of the steps that he's been taking to help the economy grow and to create jobs, that's right in that wheelhouse.

I'll have -- I hope to have further updates on the schedule for you tomorrow. But I (inaudible).

QUESTION:

Thank you, Sean. I have a question about foreign policy. But I wanted to follow up.

You said that LPRs no longer need a waiver. But you didn't answer a question about what about the people who were put on planes, people who were LPRs, but were put on planes back to where they came from. What happens to them?

SPICER:

Well again, I think then they go through the process...

QUESTION:

(OFF-MIKE)...

SPICER:

It depends if they're an LPR. If not, then they go through the application process. That's -- so if they are an LPR, a legal permanent resident, then they are waived. They can come right through.

QUESTION:

So they just come back again?

SPICER:

That's right. But I don't know how many cases that applies to. I know that if they're not a legal permanent resident then they have to go back. And that's part of this vetting process. There's a big difference.

QUESTION:

Sean?

QUESTION:

Wait. Wait. My question is about the fighting in Ukraine.

SPICER:

OK.

QUESTION:

And Russia and Russian-backed rebels are moving the lines forward. And I'm wondering if the president feels that Russia is testing him because this is coming so early in his administration before he got a chance to fully assemble his team. And what he plans to do about it.

SPICER:

The president's been kept aware of through his National Security Council and his national security team as a whole what's been going on in the Ukraine. And we'll have further updates as we go on.

QUESTION:

Sean?

SPICER:

Yes?

QUESTION:

In the campaign last January Donald Trump promised that on his first day in office he would get rid of gun-free zones in schools and on military bases. When can we expect action on that? And if so, can you share details of what we should expect?

SPICER:

Yes. I think you have seen that the president has been very active in terms of getting executive orders out and following up on the campaign pledges that he made to the American people. Last night being another example of that.

We're going to continue to move through this process. And I think we'll have further updates on where we are with respect to the rest of the EO process.

With that, I want to go to my third Skype seat, Lars Larson of the Lars Larson Show.

LARSON:

Commander Spicer, it's a pleasure. Thanks for your service to America. And thanks for the opportunity.

I've got a broad question. The federal government is the biggest landlord in America. It owns two-thirds of a billion acres of America. I don't think the founders ever envisioned it that way. Does President Trump want to start returning the people's land to the people?

And in the meantime, for a second question, since that's in fashion these days, can he tell the Forest Service to start logging our forest aggressively again to provide jobs for Americans, wealth for the Treasury, and not spend \$3.5 billion a year fighting forest fires?

SPICER:

Thanks, Lars.

I think the president's been very clear that as part of an overall comprehensive energy solution that we've got to utilize the resources that we have that the federal government owns, whether that's the forest or natural resources or minerals that exist above and below the ground. That we have too infrequently looked at our own resources and counted too much on foreign sources of energy.

So you know we're going to continue as Congressman Zinke goes through the process to head up the Interior Department, and Gov. Perry goes through his appointment -- his confirmation process. To get those individuals through.

But the working together in areas where they have overlap and also in areas where they will act individually to realize -- to look at those natural resources that we have, figure out how to best utilize them to benefit not just our energy. But also economic growth opportunities with that.

SPICER:

Daniel Halper?

QUESTION:

Aren't we worried about executive orders? You haven't really explained why the president's using the executive orders in the manner that he's doing so.

Why not take this extreme vetting to Congress and have a congressional bill? And why not -- I mean what is the velocity behind...

SPICER:

Well, I don't think it's a binary choice, Daniel. I don't think it's only do this. I think he has talked about, especially in the area of immigration, he's been very, very clear that this is a huge priority for him. And I think that he is going to continue to look at this from a holistic aspect.

In other words, visas, visa reform, the wall, our southern border, our northern border. All of these things -- you know vetting, there is a very, very comprehensive -- and those things which he can do through executive order and action he will. Those things that he can do through working with Congress legislatively he's going to continue to do as well.

(Inaudible) from Bloomberg.

QUESTION:

Right here, Sean.

SPICER:

Yes? Sean?

QUESTION:

The president's top trade adviser, Peter Navarro, told the Financial Times yesterday that he believes that the euro is grossly undervalued and Germany is benefiting from that, and that's why we have a huge trade deficit with -- with German and with Europe. Does the President agree with that, that the Euro is undervalued? And, if so, does he plan to do anything (inaudible)?

SPICER:

I think when it comes to currency valuation, I'm not going to (out) yet. I think we've got a Secretary Treasury that's in the confirmation process. And, once that happens, I think then Secretary Mnuchin will be able to address that as well. Yes?

QUESTION:

I'd like to ask you about Kelly Ayotte's role shepherding...

SPICER:

I was hoping you'd ask about the Patriots.

QUESTION:

Well, I would like to ask you...

SPICER:

(If) you get a second (inaudible).

QUESTION:

Well, OK, if I get a second (inaudible). Can you talk about Kelly Ayotte's role shepherding Justice Gorsuch around the Capital Hill?

SPICER:

Sure. Look, Senator Ayotte is someone who's respected on both sides of the aisle. She has a lot of great relationships. She's a former Attorney General. She understands the judicial process very

well. But she's also -- I mean this process is a -- is a relationship process by and far. You're going around introducing a judge, someone who has not generally been exposed to the legislative process, definitely not the congressional process. Is...

QUESTION:

To the extent her relationship with President Trump was strained during the campaign...

SPICER:

That's right. And I think that that goes and shows, as I've mentioned several times, both through the transition and early, the President's not holding some kind of test about what degree of support you had for him. He wants the best and brightest to continue to serve this country in whatever capacity they can.

I think Senator Ayotte very, very helpfully offered up her services. She's got a lot of relationships on both sides of the aisle. She's got a tremendous amount of experience in this field, and I think the President thought she was extremely qualified to do this, to help shepherd this unbelievably qualified justice through this process.

And so she, as well as the team that we've gathered of individuals on staff here, are going to help get Judge Gorsuch through the nomination process. And -- and I would say, just as a side note, that if you look at the amazing job that has been done by the team during the transition and now to get these amazing individuals through the process, despite all of the hype that continues to go about, this individual is going to face this problem or what's just the one person, each of them have really sailed through this process.

And, you know, story after story says Democrats tried to land a, you know, take them out and couldn't land a glove. They're unbelievably qualified, they're unbelievably prepared, and I think they -- that the same process that we follow with this is going to be followed with Judge Gorsuch, and I think we're going to have a very speedy...

QUESTION:

(inaudible) as an unbiased Rhode Island native, can you offer your Super Bowl pick? And President Trump has also shown quite an affinity for Tom Brady (inaudible).

SPICER:

Yes, I will. I -- I -- I think you know where I come down on that one. So I, yes.

QUESTION:

Senators Murkowski and Collins both say they're going to vote no on Betsy DeVos' nomination.

SPICER:

Yes.

QUESTION:

That leave zero votes to spare and Vice President Pence would have to cast the tie-breaking vote.

SPICER:

Yes.

QUESTION:

So my questions are, how confident are you that you have all of the Republican senators locked down? And what's the level of concern in the White House that her nomination is going to fail?

SPICER:

Zero. I have 100 percent confidence she will be the next Secretary of Education. She is unbelievably qualified, educator, and advocate for students, teachers, parents, who will be a... I think that the games that are being played with Betsy DeVos are sad. She is someone who has been a tireless advocate over the last couple of decades to really support reforms that benefit children. And they are going to be the real winners with her as Secretary of Education.

QUESTION:

In terms of both the two Republican Senators who are voting no on Betsy DeVos and the outcry we saw from Republicans on the Hill last week, (earlier) this week, about how you guys dealt with the travel ban, (inaudible) that there're more that the Trump administration and Trump himself should be doing to ensure that his party's on the same page with his (priorities)?

And, secondly, on the Yemen raid, can you give us more of an understanding of was there a discussion about the risks involved in this, was it a straightforward decision, and do you guys still view it to be a success, in spite of (inaudible).

SPICER:

Yes. So, first, I would just note that I've heard story after story in the last 40 days about how whether, you know, going back to the last question about these nominees and not getting through, Rex Tillerson was going to go down and so and so was going to... And every one of them, after they got to meet with senators of both sides of the party, have shown why the President chose them. Because they were unbelievably qualified, unbelievably ready to lead and enact an agenda of change in the area of responsibility they're taking over. And I think the same is going to be true for everyone else who's remaining.

QUESTION:

There are two members of your own party that (inaudible) vote.

SPICER:

So, the vote hasn't taken place. I think we've had some concerns in the past, and I think when these nominees have met with them and shared with them their thoughts throughout the process... And, again, you can go back, story after story, and again each one of these folks who I've heard isn't going to make it, is going to go over the finish line each time.

And I think that, you know, we hear it over and over again. And, yet, it's -- we succeed every time. And yet another roadblock is put up. Well, this person won't succeed and yet you look at each one of these people going through the process and it's worked beautifully every time and I think we're going to continue that path.

With respect to Yemen, I think, it's hard to ever say something was successful when you lose a life but you gotta understand that Chief Owens, he went back -- deployed 12 times because he loved this country and he believed in the mission. And knowing that we killed an estimate 14 AQAP (ph) members.

And that we gathered an unbelievable amount of intelligence that will prevent the potential deaths or attacks on American soil is something that I think most service members understand that that's why they joined the service. And so you never want to call something a success 100 percent when someone's hurt or killed.

And that was the case here but I think when you recognize that an individual like this loved this country so much and deployed over and over again because he knew that the mission that he was conducting was so important to our protection, our freedom, our safety. And I know that when the president spoke to Karen (ph), his wife, and talked about, you know, the three children that he left behind. She continued to be impress with -- to impress upon the president rather that while it was an unbelievably sad and emotional time for her and her family that he loved doing this.

And so you know, again, I don't think call anything 100 percent success, but what he did for this nation and what he got out of that mission, I think, I truly believe and I know the president believes is going to save American lives. With that, let me go to the last question on Skype and then we'll continue.

QUESTION:

Thank you for allowing me to be part of today's White House press briefing. Clearly any one paying attention will see that President Trump is aggressively acting on his campaign promise, this in itself gives hope to my state and particularly the region in which I grew up, Appalachia.

We have seen countless politicians make promises at both state and national levels. And not only forget us but to turn on it. So my question is, how soon or when will the rules restricting coal mining, coal burning and coal exports be reversed?

SPICER:

I talked about this a couple times so far, but I believe - or the president has very clearly stated that clean coal in particular is an issue that's so important to our energy independence as well as our job creation in this country. And so whether you're talking about Kentucky, or West Virginia, or Pennsylvania or so many other places in this country that rely on coal.

Bringing the production of clean coal back is good for our energy independence, it's good for our economy, it's good for job creation and it's something that he continues to talk about and I think once we have Secretary of Energy confirmed that we can continue to take steps to move forward with.

QUESTION:

Two questions for you. After the primetime announcement last night it seems (inaudible). Do you have a sense that this president will be more aggressive than his predecessors on seeking primetime airplay for his announcements? And two, top Democrats are asking the defense department to investigate Michael Flynn's possible violations to the Constitution, give a -- so (ph) you (ph) saw (ph) that story, do you have a response to that?

SPICER:

Yeah, I think on the airtime issue, that's something that we're not particularly suffering from when it comes to attention. And I think the president does a phenomenal job of getting attention and getting his message out. His use of social media in particular is something that when you look at the number of people, I think we did like something like 11 million people watching the address on Facebook Live last night.

Obviously if we have important issues to discuss with the nation or announcements to make, or nominations then we'll request time. I don't think that that's something that we spend a ton of time figuring out. I think we're doing pretty well on that front. And then I'm sorry, the second question?

QUESTION:

The request from Democrats to investigate Flynn for possible violation of the emoluments clause.

SPICER:

Yeah, so. General Flynn, I think probably countless if not hundreds of retired flag officers joins a speaking bureau and is given speeches at various places and I think you know that -- that is something that is kept in practice. And the Department of Defense is the appropriate place for them to review it but as I said when I think that when you look at so many countless retired flag officers, that's something that generally keeps a thing. (ph) Zeke. (ph)

QUESTION:

Hi Sean. General Flynn (inaudible) about your offers and (inaudible) praises about the Obama administration's (inaudible) of Iran (inaudible). Is that something we should be expecting to hear more from this administration whether it be on foreign policy or other issues (inaudible) previous administration on going forward.

SPICER:

I think in areas where there's going to be a sharp difference, in particular, national security, in contrasting the policies that this president is seeking to make the country safer, stronger, more prosperous. He's going to draw those distinctions in contrast out but in this particular area, I think the president - when it comes - came to the Iran nuclear deal was very, very adamant in his opposition to the deal and to its implications.

And so he's going to continue to make sure that the American people know that some of these deals and (ph) things that were left by the previous administration that he wants to make very clear what his position is and his opposition to them. And the action and the notice that he put Iran on today is something that is important because I think the American people voted on change. Again, this is another issue that he was very clear about. So with that, thank you guys. I'll see you tomorrow. Take care. Have a good day.