

Newsmaker Transcript

President Trump Holds Media Availability After Meeting With Congressional Leaders

Friday, January 4, 2019

LIST OF SPEAKERS

TRUMP:

Thank you very much. We had a very, very productive meeting and I think we've come a long way. I'll discuss that in a second but first I imagine you've all seen the incredible job growth 312,000 jobs which took everybody by surprise, estimates range from 160,000 to 180,000 and this really took people by surprise. This is a great number.

I think it has a lot to do with the factories and what the companies that are moving back into the United States who have left and now they are coming back to us instead of being in other countries. I can't tell you what that does to other countries but I'm the President of this country. So 312,000 jobs was a tremendous number and obviously having a big impact on the stock market today.

And I do want people to remember that we've had a tremendous success despite the fact that I am in the midst of negotiating incredible trade deals for our country that should have been negotiated many years ago by both parties, to be honest, many years ago. We are doing very well in our negotiation with China. We pretty much concluded our negotiation with Canada, with Mexico. We have done the deal and signed the deal with South Korea which a lot of people said was not going to happen, would be impossible it's a good deal. It was a horrible deal, it's a good deal.

I think a lot of this has to do with the fact though that already companies are moving back into our country that have left our country in some cases, in some cases they are moving back because they want to be here but, in many cases, these are automobile companies that have left and gone to other countries and now they are coming back to the United States. So it's nice to see.

One of the things that so beautiful to watch is 3.2 percent wage growth, that hasn't happened in so long for our country. That's an incredible thing. That means people are actually getting more money, taking home more money and that's something that's really nice to see. A lot of you have been following me when we were on a thing called the campaign; that was an exciting campaign. A great campaign.

And I used to talk about wages going down, not going up but going down for years, 19 years. And now they just went up 3.2 percent and yet there's no inflation because other things are going down like the price of your gasoline at the tank it's at--low and that doesn't happen by luck. I work hard on that. That's like a tax cut for people. So a lot of good things are happening. Labor participation rate increased to 63.1, that's incredible number also. So I just wanted to bring that out.

The economy is very good and remember from the time of my election the stock market has gone up very close to 30 percent and that's with all of the things that are happening and there are a lot of things happening. We have a massive trade negotiation going on with China, President Xi is very much involved, so am I. We are dealing at the highest levels and we are doing very well. We are doing very well. In the meantime we've taken in billions and billions of dollars in tariffs from China and from others.

Our steel industry has come roaring back and that makes me very happy. I think we will have to build a steel wall as opposed to a concrete wall because we have steel companies again. There's something awfully nice about that sound.

So we had a productive meeting today with Speaker Pelosi and Senator Schumer. I thought it was really a very, very good meeting. We are all on the same path in terms of wanting to get government open. We are going to be meeting--I have designated a group and we are going to be meeting over the weekend, that group, to determine what we are going to do about the border.

Really, I want to thank a lot of the border patrol people and ICE people who came up yesterday. They had a tremendous impact on I think a lot of Democrats frankly but a lot of people because they were able to lay out exactly what the problem is and one of the problems described to me as an example, your ports of entry.

We are going to agree with Chuck and Nancy and Steny and Dick Durbin was there. We are going to agree that and we want to make the ports bigger, more powerful, able to handle more traffic, have very, very powerful drug equipment there. So they make very good stuff now. We don't have it because of budgets and other reasons but we are going to make our ports of entry very powerful, very strong. We are going to have the best drug finding equipment anywhere in the world. They make it much better today than they made it even two years ago.

And I explained to them the problem though as we could have a wonderful port of entry but you have 2000 miles of border between the United States and Mexico and if you take a look and you see like we do through certain technology including cameras in airplanes not just drones, you will see vast numbers of vehicles driving through the desert and entering where you don't have a very powerful fence or a wall.

That happened this week where a wonderful young police officer--I spoke to his wife yesterday, where he was shot, viciously shot, for simply stopping a person that came over the border illegally. Got shot, killed and took the most beautiful picture just hours before, a Christmas picture. We don't want that happening.

But I was explained to and I explained to people because it's really common sense, so you have ports of entry and we have great security at the ports of entry and then you may have fencing or walls up and down, left and right, east and west but they stop because we don't have proper border security. These people have vehicles and they drive to the right. They're not going through where we have great border patrol officers and ICE officers and military now. I tell you the military has done a fantastic job. They don't stop.

They go right to the easiest part and the weakest part sometimes out in desert but you have miles and miles and miles of unprotected area and you can see where they drive over. You even have people walking that trek. That's a very dangerous trek and they bring children or even worse they use children. You know children are the biggest beneficiaries of what we want to do.

Children are hurt more than anybody else. These coyotes, what they do with children all because we have open borders because they think they can get away with it. They don't come in through the port where we have a lot of protection. They come in through empty areas, vast spaces, empty areas. Just like this terrible person came in when he shot Officer Sing(SP). They come in through these vast open areas.

You don't even have a sign saying Mexico U.S. There is no sign designating you have just entered the United States. It's just open space and I explained that to the meeting today with Nancy Pelosi, Chuck Schumer and a lot of other people at the meeting. And I said one of the things that happens there is human traffickers. Maybe that's the worst of all.

Where you will have traffickers having three and four women with tape on their mouths and tied up, sitting in the back of a van or a car and they will drive that van or the car not through a port of entry where we have very talented people that look for every little morsel of drugs or even people or whatever they are looking for, they're not going to go there. They get off the road and they drive out into the desert and they come in, they make a left turn usually it's left not a right most of them come out because in San Diego and in areas of California we just finished brand-new walls, beautiful walls, steel walls and they wanted them badly.

They were asking us that's why we did it there. I said let's not do it in California, California always complains through their great governors. They are always complaining. I said let's not do it. Let the governor ask us but we did it anyway because they really needed it. They were having tremendous problem. So we built a brand-new wall in San Diego and it's working really well. You should go and look at it. It's amazing. It's incredible how well it works.

But these coyotes and these human traffickers, they make a right turn before they get to the port of entry, they go as far as the wall is or as far as the barricade is and then they make a left. Welcome to the United States. And what they do with usually the women, sometimes children that they are trafficking with and in you don't want to know about.

So the only way you're going to stop that is by having a solid steel structure or concrete structure, whether it's a wall or some form of very powerful steel. Now the steel is actually more expensive than the concrete but I think we are probably talking about steel because I really feel the other side feels better about it and I can understand what they are saying. It is more expensive.

We mentioned the price that we want \$5.6 billion, very strongly, because numbers are throwing around, 1.6, 2.1, 2.5, this is national security we're talking about. We're not talking about games. We're talking about national security. This should have been done by all of the presidents that preceded me and they all know it. Some of them have told me that we should have done it.

So we're not playing games. We have to do it. And just remember, human traffickers, remember drugs, the drugs are pouring into this country. They don't go through the ports of entry. When they do, they sometimes get caught. When we finish, and the Democrats do want this, they want ports of entry strengthened and I want to do that too. In fact, we have it down. It's about \$400 million and we can have the best equipment in the world.

Now what they'll do, if we have the protection and we have strong ports of entry with this incredible drug finding equipment, I don't know what they're going to do because they're not coming in through past the steel gates or the steel walls or the concrete walls, depending on what's happening, because we are meeting this weekend. We have a group, I've set up a group, they are going to tell us who their group of experts and probably people in the Senate and congressmen and women are going to come and we have three. I said, "Give us three." Then I said, "You know what, send over nine or six or three or two doesn't matter. Send over whoever you want," but it's common sense.

So now when they make that turn, they make it and now all of a sudden they can't go any further and they have to go back. And that's going to stop the caravans for two reasons. Number one, they're not going to be able to go through but when they realize they can't get through, what's going to happen? They're not going to form and they're not going to try and come up. And they can apply for asylum and they can, most importantly, they can apply for citizenship because the companies that I told you that created these great job numbers, they're incredible job numbers beyond anybody's expectations, I don't think there was one Wall Street genius, of which I know many of them, but they're not geniuses, there's not one that predicted anywhere close to these job numbers. I thought they were going to be good, but there wasn't one that I saw.

So now we have everything so beautifully handled. We need to have, however, we need border security. And all of this security, if we do what, I think, what the Democrats want, all of the border things that we'll be building will be done right here in the good old USA by steel companies that were practically out of business when I came into office as president and now they are thriving. You call up the heads of US Steel and I could name 10 companies, you look at what's going on in the steel industry, it's almost a miracle. We need steel for defense, we need still for a lot of things. Steel and aluminum. But those industries were in deep trouble. The steel industry was almost dead and now it's a very vibrant, vibrant industry.

So what I'm going to do is ask first of all Mike Pence, Vice President, to say couple words because Mike is--we put together a team of people that will work over the weekend and they'll be negotiating on the border, on the look, on different things having to do with border security including at the ports of entry and I think they're going to be very successful because I found the Democrats really want to do something. So we are at 5.6, if you look at it, \$5.6 billion, but we are able to also in addition to that because what we want to do has to be done properly and we are negotiating very tough prices, very, very tough because you heard much higher numbers.

Those higher numbers were very much a misnomer. You heard 20 and 25 billion in DACA. What happened is when a judge incredibly, because it was an incredibly, I will say, wrong decision, in fact President Obama when he signed the DACA with the Executive Order made a statement to the effect this isn't going to work. And some judge from the Ninth Circuit, here we go again, upheld

it and was upheld by the Ninth Circuit Appellate and now it's going before the United States Supreme Court and hopefully that will be properly adjudicated because if it is talks will begin on larger immigration matters having to do with DACA, having to do with other things. So that is taking place.

We may add a few things on to our discussions over the weekend but I'm going to ask Mike Pence and then I'll have Leader McCarthy say a few words and we'll take a couple of questions. But we're very proud of the jobs of the job numbers. That was incredible. And I think I'll be even more proud if we could have great border security for the first time in, really, the history of our country. The southern border is a dangerous, horrible disaster. We've done a great job, but you can't really do the kind of job we have to do unless you have a major powerful barrier and that's what we're going to have to have. So first, we start with Mike Pence. Okay, Mike.

PENCE:

Thank you, Mr. President. We are nearly two weeks into a government shutdown, but our nation is also in the midst of a crisis on our southern border. And today when President Trump convened for the second time this week, republican and democrat leaders from the congress to address both issues. And we are truly grateful for the candid and constructive dialogue that took place today here at the White House with Speaker Pelosi and leader Schumer, with--with our Republican Senate leadership as well, and we look forward to continued dialogue over the course of this weekend.

Make no mistake about it, we are in the midst of a crisis at our southern border. Every day nearly 2,000 people are apprehended or stopped attempting to come into our country that have no lawful claim to be here. Last year alone, 17,000 individuals with previous criminal records were apprehended attempting to come across our southern border. Every day all across this country, in a single week, 300 Americans lose their lives to the scourge of heroin addiction. 90 percent of the heroin in this country flows through our southern border.

And the human trafficking that the president just described so compellingly, last month alone, 20,000 minors were brought alone across our border, were interdicted by more patrol personnel. You heard the president's passion today here at the podium and we all, leader McCarthy and all of the leaders gathered in the situation room today heard the president's passion for the better part of two hours. Not just to trust the government shutdown, but to address border security in this crisis at our southern border.

And today President Trump provided the kind of leadership that the American people expect in such a moment. He made it clear that we are committed to achieving border security as we resolve this budget impasse. He made it clear that we are going to build a wall on our southern border. As I said, the conversations were constructive and substantive and at the close of the meeting the president directed me and Jerad Kushner and Secretary Nielsen to meet with top level staff of Democrat and Republican leadership in the House and Senate over the course of this weekend and see if we could build on the common ground that we identified in the discussions today.

Our aim will be to find a solution not just simply to end the government shutdown, to provide funding to end the crisis at our southern border, to achieve real border security, and to build a wall on our southern border. And Mr. President, I promise--I promise you as you promised the Republican and Democrat leadership today that we will work earnestly over the weekend, we will work in good faith that the American people deserve nothing less and we--we enter this weekend at these discussions hopeful. Again, not simply that we will end a budget shut down, but that we will make, finally, meaningful progress on securing our southern border to prevent the flow of narcotics, human trafficking, illegal immigration that has so beset our country now for more than a generation. And with the president's leadership and direction, we'll hope to accomplish just that.

TRUMP:

Thank you, Mike. Thank you very much. Kevin.

MCCARTHY:

I came down for the second time this week basing on the meeting that we had earlier in the week, I didn't expect the meeting to last very long. It was two hours. This was much more productive than we've had in any other time. I think there's places that we can find common ground. The president was very strong what he needs to have happen here. We need border security. We want the government to open.

But I found in our discussion sometimes we are tough, but there is areas that we can find agreement on. That's when the president interjected that he actually thought what would be best that he would designate three individuals, with the vice president being the lead, to work through the weekend, build on this progress, and that each leader would also send. The president is very kind to the speaker. I think you said she could bring twice as many, right? If need be.

TRUMP:

Five times as many.

MCCARTHY:

I know Mitch McConnell, Leader McConnell is sending down, I'm sending members down, staffers that can work throughout the weekend. I know the president said he will call us back next week, invite us back as well. We want to solve this problem. There is a great need to do it and we can get it done. It just has to have the will. But I see the will from this administration, I will promise you this. I will work with anybody who wants to move America forward, secure our border, and put this government back open and I making that pledge here and I hope every other leader will make that pledge as well. And if that means were staying in the room to get it done, we will send a really get this job done. And there was progress today I look forward to solving it.

TRUMP:

Thank you. Steve? Steve, please.

SCALISE:

Thank you Mr. President. And I thought we had a very important and productive meeting today. And what this has always been about is securing the border and keeping America safe. I want to thank the president for the commitment that he's made for over two years now to achieve what many presidents promised. And we've seen the promises but it was never followed through with actual law that gets this job done.

Secretary Nielsen has gone over the numbers and the numbers are alarming. You know, one of the numbers that jumps out is last year, 2017 actually, over 37 known or suspected terrorists tried to enter into this country. These are serious numbers. When you see the human trafficking, in 2017 our ICE agents saved over 900 kids. One year alone saved over 900 kids from site sexual assault and human trafficking, things that are happening at the southern border because there's no wall, there's no physical barrier, there's no way to actually control ports of entry. If somebody wants to seek asylum, there's a way to do that. There are legal ways to come to this country and legal immigration has made this country great. We, by the way, America, let in over a million people every single year.

By far, the most generous nation in the world, and yet we have laws that need to be followed to keep Americans safe and to protect the integrity of the system where right now there are millions of people who are waiting in line to come to America to seek the American dream like Officer Singh did when he sought his chance at the American dream. That dream was taken. It was taken because we don't have a secure border. We can't let this continue as we work to open the government, let's always keep the focus on what this is about. It's about securing this country.

The Secretary of Homeland security has made it clear what it's going to take to secure our border. President Trump is following through on that commitment to keep America safe and hopefully, as we work for the weekend, we can get a resolution that achieves all of those objectives.

TRUMP:

Thank you very much, Steve. Thank you.

QUESTION:

(INAUDIBLE.)

TRUMP:

Major, go ahead. Sure.

QUESTION:

Mr. President--Mr. President, Senator Schumer came out and said that the meeting, from his point of view and Speaker Pelosi's, was contentious. He also said you said in the meeting, this is him

quoting you, I just want to check it, that the shutdown could go on for months or even a year or longer. Did you say that and is that your--.

TRUMP:

--I did. I did--.

QUESTION:

--Is that your assessment of where we are?

TRUMP:

I did say that. Absolutely, I said that. I don't think it will, but I am prepared and I think I could speak for Republicans in the House and Republicans in the Senate. They feel very strongly about having a safe country, having a border that makes sense. Without borders, I've said it many times, we don't have a country. I hope it doesn't go on even beyond a few more days. It really could open very quickly.

I told them at--bring who you want. We have three people. You can ideally bring three. But you can bring six. You can bring nine. You can bring 12. And they're going to be working over the weekend.

I think it may have been somewhat contentious, but I think it was very productive. I have to say that. And I think he said that too.

QUESTION:

What was the productive part, from your point of view, Mr. President? Did the Democrats move at all in your direction on funding of a border barrier?

TRUMP:

Well, I don't want to get into that because I don't want to put them in a position where they have to justify anything to a lot of the people that they have to make happy.

We want to--.

QUESTION:

--But you have to, on the--.

TRUMP:

--Save lives. We want children to be safe. The children are being decimated. And I'm not talking about necessarily children in our country. I'm talking about wonderful children that are coming up from other places, whether it's Honduras or Guatemala or El Salvador or Mexico or other places.

And we have to take care of those children also. We can't let them die on the way up. What's happening to women on those caravans, you're not talking about it, but it's horrible what's happening. If they know it's not going to take place because they can't get through because we have a great border wall or fence or barrier, they're not going to come up and you're not going to have the problem.

At the same time, they can apply to come into our country legally like so many people have done. And we need people, Major. We have to have people because we have all these companies coming in. We need great people. But we want them to come in on a merit basis, and they have to come in on a merit basis. They can't come in the way they've been coming in for years.

I get calls from the great tech companies, and they're saying we don't allow--people at the top of their class at the best schools in the country, we don't allow them to stay in our country. So, they end up going back to China and Japan and so many other countries all over the world, and we don't keep them. They get educated at our finest schools and then we don't allow 'em, through a various set of circumstances, to have any guarantees of staying, so we lose out on great minds.

We can't do that. We have companies that, if we don't change that--and we're working on that. And we discussed that with the Democrats, and I think they agree. We're working on that. But we don't want to lose our great companies because we have a ridiculous policy that we won't accept smart people. So, call it politically correct or not, but we have to let these great, brilliant companies have the smartest people in the world.

Yes, ma'am?

QUESTION:

(INAUDIBLE)

TRUMP:

Hold it. One at a time, please. Go ahead.

QUESTION:

Mr. President, why not reopen the government to create more space to have that broader conversation about immigration--?

TRUMP:

--Well, we think it could go very quickly--.

QUESTION:

--Reform?

TRUMP:

No, we won't be opening until it's solved. We think this is a much bigger problem. The border is a much more dangerous problem. It's a much bigger problem. It's a problem of national security. It's a problem of terrorists.

You know, I talk about human traffickers. I talk about drugs. I talk about gangs. But a lot of people don't say we have terrorists coming through the southern border because they find that's probably the easiest place to come through. They drive right in and they make a left. Not going to happen. Not going to happen.

QUESTION:

You talked--.

TRUMP:

--So, we're not going to do that. We won't be doing pieces. We won't be doing it in drips and drabs.

And I'll tell you what. I've seen a lot of people over the last week and a half. I've been right in this magnificent structure right behind you. It's called the White House. And I was here on Christmas and I was here--my family was in Florida. I said go to Florida. And I didn't even find it to be a lonely place. There's something very special about the White House.

But I was here Christmas. I was here on New Year's Eve. And I will tell you the people that I've spoken with--and I've gotten to meet a lot of people that I wouldn't have met. A lot of people have been coming through the White House and explaining different things and different attitudes.

A lot of people that you think are upset, and certainly they're not thrilled, but they say, sir, do the right thing. We need border security. And these are people that won't be getting paid. Border Patrol yesterday was saying, sir, we're affected by it. Do what's right. It's time.

This is after many, many decades; many, many decades. This should have taken place a long time ago. We're going to get it done.

Yes, ma'am?

QUESTION:

Thank you, two questions for you. Was DACA part of the discussions today?

TRUMP:

Yeah.

QUESTION:

And also, why did it take this many days for a working group to come together? Why didn't you just hash the details out today?

TRUMP:

Well, sometimes that's what happens in a negotiation. It does take longer than it should. And sometimes you agree to things that could have been agreed to two weeks ago. But that's just the way a negotiation is.

I mean, we--we set out a number, \$5.6 billion. We're very firm on a number. We also explained that, as you probably understand, the military is very affected. We may use the military for parts of it. Homeland Security obviously is very affected. We may--in addition to the 5.6, we will use Homeland Security funds. So, we have things happening in addition to the 5.6, but we have to get a structure built.

QUESTION:

Was DACA--was DACA part of the discussion--?

TRUMP:

--Please go ahead--.

QUESTION:

--Just to follow up?

QUESTION:

Mr. President?

TRUMP:

Go ahead.

QUESTION:

Was DACA discussed?

QUESTION:

Thank you, Mr. President. To follow up on that question, when--with respect to the DACA program, were you discussing that in terms of a pathway to citizen being included in the end to the partial government shutdown?

TRUMP:

Well, we discussed it a long time ago, as you remember. That was when they had this mythical number of \$25 billion. But actually it was \$25 billion, but only \$1 billion upfront. Then we talked \$2 billion, \$1.5 billion. The rest of it the government couldn't guarantee because it's not set up to guarantee. You remember those discussions.

But where it really ended was when the judge ruled against, and it was--I said as soon as that happened, 'cause that was a shocking decision. It was shocking to the Democrats and it was more shocking to the Republicans. It was an incorrect decision. It was a political decision made by a judge--and I know a lot of people don't like when I say it, but try going there sometime to the 9th Circuit and try winning a case; not easy. Everyone files right in the 9th Circuit. The fact is it was a terrible decision and an incorrect decision.

When that decision came down, when that judge ruled the way he ruled, I said--as soon as I heard it, I said you know what's going to happen? We're never going to hear from them again. And that's exactly--that's what broke up the DACA deal.

Yes, we had a pathway. We had many things. That was getting close to being a deal. The problem was that the money was a very small amount of money. It wasn't really the 25. It was 25 and then come back every year. Well, we don't want to go through that every year. But we were getting close.

And I said, as soon as that decision came down, that incorrect and horrible decision--I mean, there's been a number of them made lately. But as soon as that decision came down, I said you'll never hear from 'em again. And I called up. I said, hi, it's President Trump. What's going on? They say President Trump? We don't know who that is. It was over. The deal was over.

That's what killed the DACA deal. It was nothing else. It was the judge's decision. And if the Supreme Court does what really everyone thinks from a legal standpoint it should be doing, if they don't allow the president of the United States--which is me also, because if President Obama's allowed to do that, I'm allowed to do it also. Can you imagine?

If the Supreme Court overrules that wrong Executive Order, we'll have a deal very quickly on DACA and other things. And the Democrats want that and so do we. But once he ruled that way, it was something you couldn't really negotiate.

Yes, Hallie?

QUESTION:

Thank you, sir. Mr. President, two questions for you. Are you still proud to own this shutdown?

TRUMP:

Well, you know, I--I appreciate the way you say that. But once--I'm very proud of doing what I'm doing. I don't call it a shutdown. I call it doing what you have to do for the benefit and for the safety of our country.

But when Nancy Pelosi said you don't have the votes in Congress, I will tell you what I was proud of. I was never more proud of my Republican Party and those Congressmen and women when they saw that and they got together and they voted 217 to 185, and it wasn't even close. That was an incredible day. I'm very proud of that when she said you couldn't get the vote.

And I'm not holding that against her, because despite the fact that--I'm not saying it was an easy meeting or even a kind meeting or a nice meeting, but in the end I think we've come a long way. We're going to be working very hard over the weekend, and we'll see if we can do something. So, you can call it whatever you want. You can call it the Schumer or the Pelosi or the Trump shutdown. It doesn't make any difference to me, just words.

QUESTION:

Mr. President, my second question, sir, on federal workers, sir. Mr. President, my second--.

TRUMP:

--Go ahead--.

QUESTION:

--Question on federal workers, sir.

TRUMP:

Yeah, just one second. Just one second, please. Please. Go ahead.

QUESTION:

It may be the same question. Thank you, Mr. President, two questions. Just to follow up on DACA--.

TRUMP:

--Yeah--.

QUESTION:

--Are you open to a path to citizenship in theory for DACA recipients? And then can you explain to federal employees of the agencies that are closed, which are not Homeland Security, why those agencies should--should stay closed? Homeland Security is significant in of itself if it stayed closed.

TRUMP:

Because we want to do what's right and we want to do it all at one time. We don't want to take it in pieces. We just don't want to do that.

And DACA is going to be a great subject. I look forward to discussing it. We'll discuss it at another time. But there are a lot of great things that can happen with DACA if the Democrats want to do that.

I think what we're all waiting for, to be honest, is the Supreme Court judge--judges, the Supreme Court Justices' ruling in a not very long period of time. You know, as you know, it's up now. Hopefully they will be making a ruling maybe sometime in the summer.

So, I think before we discuss too much DACA, I would like to see what happens. I think it's a very important decision because frankly, if they rule the way it is, it gives the president too much power. Can you imagine me saying that? But I would be entitled to the same power. It's--it's not a correct thing that took place.

And President Obama never felt it was going to hold up and it held up. But I don't think it's going to hold up at the Supreme Court. If it doesn't hold up, you're going to see a lot of good things happening, because you'll be having DACA and you'll be putting other things with DACA. Hopefully by that time the wall will be well under construction.

And just a little statement on that. We've already built a lot of the wall. We've been working very, very hard. We've renovated a tremendous amount of wall. I just told you we did a lot of wall in San Diego where we needed it very badly, where they wanted it very badly.

So, we haven't been sitting still for the first, believe it or not, less than two years. We've been--we've been working very, very hard. The wall is--we've done a lot of miles of wall already, so we're not just starting off fresh. But we have large numbers of miles that we have to do. And we can't let gaps, because if you have gaps those people are going to turn their vehicles or the gangs of--they're going to be coming in through those gaps, and we cannot let that happen.

Kevin? Kevin? Kevin?

QUESTION:

So, the question--.

QUESTION:

Thank you, sir. Thank you, Mr. President. Appreciate that; question about government employees. What is your personal message to those who are impacted by the shutdown? And if you wouldn't mind, if you could comment on the remarks made by a freshman Congressperson about impeachment involving a bit of a profanity last night.

TRUMP:

Well, you can't impeach somebody that's doing a great job. That's the way I view it. I've probably done more in the first two years than any president, any administration in the history of our country.

You look at tax cuts. You look at regulations. You look at what we've done for the vets. You look at the rebuilding of the military and the numbers that we're talking about, and many other things. I could give you a list. It's pages long. So, I think it's very hard to impeach somebody who's done a great job. That's number one.

And we even talked about that today. I said why don't you use this for impeachment? And Nancy said we're not looking to impeach you. I said that's good, Nancy. That's good. But you know what? You don't impeach people when they're doing a good job, and you don't impeach people where there was no collusion, 'cause there was no collusion.

You know Russians better than I do, Kevin, okay? There was no collusion. I didn't need Russians to help me win Iowa. I didn't need Russians to help me win the great state of Wisconsin and Michigan and Pennsylvania. I won them because I went there and I campaigned hard. And my opponent didn't go there enough and she lost a lot of good states. A lot of states that, for many, many years, for decades, have gone Democrat, they went Republican. That's why I won.

QUESTION:

Your comment--?

TRUMP:

--Not because of--not because of Russian.

QUESTION:

Your comment about the--the freshman Congressperson's comments specifically about--?

TRUMP:

--Well, I thought her comments were disgraceful. This is a person that I don't know. I assume she's new. I think she dishonored herself and I think she dishonored her family. Using language like that in front of her son and whoever else was there, I thought that was a great dishonor to her and to her family. I thought it was highly disrespectful to the United States of America.

Yes?

QUESTION:

Mr. President?

TRUMP:

Go ahead.

QUESTION:

Thank you, Mr. President. Earlier this week you repeated your claim that, through the USMCA, Mexico will be paying for the--.

TRUMP:

--That's right--.

QUESTION:

--Wall. Can you describe in detail the specific mechanisms in the trade deal that will make--?

TRUMP:

--Well, you're going to be seeing it--.

QUESTION:

--Mexico pay for the wall--?

TRUMP:

--Very soon. We made a new deal, a new trade deal. NAFTA is one--been of the great disasters of all time, probably the worst trade deal ever made maybe. We lost millions of jobs, thousands and thousands of companies. NAFTA left our country dry. NAFTA was a disaster.

I campaigned on either terminating or renegotiating NAFTA. And Bob Lighthizer and Jared Kushner and a whole group of people did an incredible job. They did an incredible job. And now we have a deal that's great for our country and, by the way, good for Mexico, good for Canada also. As you know it's the three countries.

We will be taking in billions and billions of dollars more money for the United States, including companies that won't be leaving us anymore and going to Mexico and in some cases, Canada, to a lesser extent. But we lost 25 percent of our car business because of NAFTA. NAFTA was a disaster. Now we have the USMCA. The United States, Mexico, and Canada Trade Agreement.

It's brand new, it's totally different, it makes it very difficult for companies to, incentive-wise, move to other countries and we will be making billions and billions of dollars a year more money.

QUESTION:

So why not use that for the wall though?

TRUMP:

And that is paying, excuse me, because I didn't have to, that is paying for the wall many, many times over. In fact, what we save on the USMCA, the new trade deal we have with Mexico and Canada, what we save on that just with Mexico will pay for the wall many times over just in a period of a year, two years, and three years. So I view that as absolutely Mexico is paying for the wall. And that's fine. Yes. Yes, ma'am. Go.

QUESTION:

Mr. President, thank you. You ran your campaign promising supporters that Mexico is going to pay for the wall--.

TRUMP:

--Oh, here we go again--.

QUESTION:

--That the wall was going to be made of concrete. You just said earlier that the wall could be made of steel and right now our government is shutdown over a demand from your administration that the American taxpayer pay for the wall. So how can you say you're not failing on that promise to your supporters?

TRUMP:

Very nice question so beautifully asked, even though I just answered it.

QUESTION:

You didn't answer it. The USMCA--.

TRUMP:

--Let me just tell you--excuse me--.

QUESTION:

--Has not even passed--.

TRUMP:

--Excuse me--.

QUESTION:

--Congress yet, sir--.

TRUMP:

--Excuse me. Are you ready? Are you ready? I just told you that we just made a trade deal and we will take in billions and billions of dollars, far more than the cost of the wall. The wall is peanuts compared to what the value of this trade deal is to the United States. As far as concrete, I said I was going to build a wall. I never said I'm going to build a concrete--I said I'm going to build a wall.

QUESTION:

You said concrete.

TRUMP:

Just so you don't, because I know you're not into the construction business, you don't understand something. We now have a great steel business that's rebuilt and the United States. Steel is stronger than concrete. If I build this wall or fence or anything the Democrats need to call it because I'm not into names, I'm into production, I'm into something that works, if I build a steel wall rather than a concrete wall, it will actually be stronger than a concrete--steel is stronger than concrete. Okay? In case you--you can check it out.

Listen, if I build a wall and the wall is made out of steel instead of concrete, I think people will like that. And here's the other good thing, I'll have it done by the United States Steel Corporation, by companies in our country that are now powerful, great companies again and they've become powerful over the last two years because of me and because of our trade policies. So if I have a steel wall or you could call it a steel fence, but it will be more powerful than any of the concrete walls that we are talking about. It's possible that we'll look better.

And one of the things, I think you have seen this, that's very important for us, very, very important, in speaking to Border Patrol, ICE, and actually local law enforcement and even military, they want to be able to see through it. You can't really see through a concrete wall. They want to be able to see who's on the other side of the wall because if they are here and you have about a 12-inch concrete wall and you have people on the other side but you can see what's over there, it's very dangerous. They want to be able to see you through the wall.

A see-through wall made out of steel is far stronger than a concrete wall. So I'm very happy with it. I think, I think, I'm not sure, but I think that's what the Democrats prefer. And if it can get them

there, I'm okay. It actually will be a more powerful wall and it will be a more beautiful wall that having a concrete wall.

QUESTION:

So if the new trade deal, Mr. President--.

TRUMP:

--All right, Jeff. Jeff, go ahead.

QUESTION:

Mr. President if the new trade deal is going to pay for the wall, why is the government shut down right now?

QUESTION:

Mr. President.

TRUMP:

Go ahead. Go ahead, Jeff.

QUESTION:

You mentioned China, sir, in your remarks. Are you concerned about the words and the--the actions of Apple this week with regard to revenue and can you tell us what sort of progress you meant when you're referring to trade talks with China?

TRUMP:

Well, I think we're doing very well. China is paying us tremendous tariffs. We are getting billions and billions of dollars of money pouring into the Treasury of the United States, which in history, we've never gotten from China, as you know. It's been very unfair. I had a fantastic meeting with President Xi, who I both like and respect.

One of the things that came out of that meeting was fentanyl. As you know, almost all of it comes from China and he's going to now criminalize the making of fentanyl. And unlike our country, they have unbelievably strong prohibitions about drugs. It was not on their list. They view it as a, I guess is some kind of a commercial product. Now they view it as something that's very dangerous. They're going to be changing their laws to make--to make fentanyl a criminal, a criminal process if you're making fentanyl. If they do that, you know what their ultimate is, it's called the death penalty. I think they could have a--and I thanked President Xi very much.

So first question I said to him before--when we started the trade talks in Argentina, this was a meeting that was supposed to last for about 45 minutes and ended up being almost 4 hours. Some of you were there. It was a great meeting. We'll see what happens. You never know with a deal. But I will tell you, China is not doing well now and it puts us in a very strong position. We are doing very well.

But we're taking in billions and billions of dollars and I hope we are going to make a deal with China. And if we don't, they're paying us tens of billions of dollars worth of tariffs. This not the worst thing in the world but I think we will--I think will make a deal with China. I really think they want to. I think they sort of have to I think we're going to have a relationship. I think the President Xi and myself have a great relationship. Also, North Korea, we're doing very well with North Korea. And that's based on relationship also.

QUESTION:

Can you just--can--Mr. President, just a follow-up--.

TRUMP:

--All right, go ahead. One--one more quick one. Go ahead, Jeff.

QUESTION:

Just a follow-up, sir, Avenue, or Apple, rather, issued a revenue warning this week which led its stock to go down and the rest of the stock market to go down as well. Are you concerned about that?

TRUMP:

No, I'm not. I mean, look, they've gone up a lot. You know, they've gone up hundreds of percent since I'm president. Apple was at a number that was incredible and they're going to be fine. Apple is a great company but that's not my--look, I have to worry about our country. Don't forget--don't forget this, Apple takes the product in China.

I told Tim Cook, who's a friend of mine who I like a lot, make your product of the United States. Build those big beautiful plants to go on for miles it seems. Build those plants in the United States. I like that even better. Apple makes its product in China. China is the biggest beneficiary of Apple more than us because they build their product mostly in China. But now he's investing \$350 billion because of what we did with taxes and the incentives that we created in the United States. He's going to build a campus and lots of other places.

So my--my focus is the United States. I want to get those companies to come back like so many are doing it to the United States. I want Apple to make their iPhones at all of the great things that they make in the United States and that it will take place.

QUESTION:

Thank you Mr.--thank you Mr. President.

TRUMP:

Please, go ahead.

QUESTION:

Thank you, Mr. President. I want to ask you two questions. One, as you talk about the wall, eminent domain.

TRUMP:

Yeah.

QUESTION:

Many of those who own property on the southern border will lose their property because of this and, once this happens, they say that they could go to court with you for years. It could take years. And also, what is the safety net for federal workers? You're saying months and possibly a year for the shutdown. Do you have in mind a safety net for those who need their checks, those who need SSI, those who need Medicaid, what have you?

TRUMP:

Well the safety net it is going to be having a strong border because we're going to be safe. I'm not talking about economically, but ultimately economically. I really believe that these people, many of the people that we're talking about, many of the people you're discussing, I really believe that they agree with what we're doing. And we could have this, April, we could have this fixed very quickly. We can--this could happen by early next week. We're going to be working over the weekend. We can have a solution to this but I wanted to keep it all at one point.

And I think a lot of the people that you're a foreign two, April, are going--are really wanting that to happen, too. I really believe a lot of them want to see border security and they're willing to give it up. I had--when I had the people in yesterday, and they represent most of the border patrol, the people that you had yesterday that were at the news conference, they represent most of border patrol. Every one of them said, "Don't even think about us. Get this fixed. That is doing the right thing for our country."

As far as eminent domain, you're right 100 percent. Eminent domain is very interesting. But without eminent domain, you wouldn't have any highways, you wouldn't have any schools, you wouldn't have any roadways. What we're doing with eminent domain is, in many cases, we'll make a deal up front and we've already done that. The Secretary has done a lot of that. And if we can't make a deal, we take the land and we pay them three court process, which goes actually very fairly quickly, and we're generous but we take the land. Otherwise, you can never build anything.

If you didn't use eminent domain, you wouldn't have one highway in this country. You have to use eminent domain. It's actually something you don't want to use it, but if you're going to use a stretch, as an example, a pipelines and other things that go, you have to use eminent domain, otherwise you'd never be able to buy the land. If we had one person that wouldn't sell us out of hundreds, just one, it only takes one, then we wouldn't be able to build proper border security because we'd have that big opening that I was talking to you about.

So what happens is some are paid upfront, you make a deal upfront and we're willing to do that in all cases. And when they are unwilling to make a deal, which also happens, you go to court. But in the meantime, we are able to build the border security. So I think it's a fair process. I think it's a process that's very necessary, but I think it's fair.

QUESTION:

But that could hold--could not hold up your wall?

TRUMP:

No, it's not going to hold it up because under the military version of eminent domain, and under, actually, Homeland Security, we can do it before we even start. Now, a lot of times we'll make a deal and I would say a good percentage of the time we're making deals--we have already purchased a lot of it. You know, a lot of the money that we've been given has already been spent on purchasing the land, the right-of-way. It's essentially a right-of-way.

So we are very, very far along on that, but eminent domain is something that has to be used, usually you would say anything that's long like a road, like a pipeline, or like a wall or a fence. Okay? Thank you. Good question. That's a good question. Please. Please, go ahead.

QUESTION:

Thank you, sir. Two questions. First, Mr. President, have you considered using emergency powers--

TRUMP:

--Should we keep this going or not, folks?

QUESTION:

Sure. Please.

TRUMP:

I just don't want to say, oh, we stood out there. You know, you have somebody questions. I'm just looking at Mike and Steve and Kevin, I'm saying should we--and most importantly, Madam Secretary.

McCarthy: None of us brought coats.

TRUMP:

I'm just--oh, are you cold? Get out of here.

(LAUGHTER)

Here, take mine. You want mine? No, I'm just saying, should we keep this going a little bit longer?

QUESTION:

Please. Yes, indeed.

TRUMP:

Go ahead.

QUESTION:

So first--.

TRUMP:

--Let me know when you get tired.

QUESTION:

I'm not. Have you considered using emergency powers to grant yourself authorities to build this wall without congressional approval? And second, on Mexico--.

TRUMP:

--Yes, I have.

QUESTION:

You have?

TRUMP:

And I can do it if I want.

QUESTION:

So you don't need congressional approval to build a wall?

TRUMP:

No, we could use a--absolutely. We could call a national emergency because of the security of our country. Absolutely. No, we could do it. I haven't done it. I may do it. I may do it. But we could call a national emergency and build it very quickly and it's another way of doing it. But if we can do it through a negotiated process, we're giving that a shot.

QUESTION:

So is that a threat hanging over the Democrats?

TRUMP:

I'd never threatened anybody, but--but I am allowed to do that, yes.

QUESTION:

Second question--.

TRUMP:

--Called a national emergency.

QUESTION:

On Mexico, the benefits from that trade deal are going to go to private companies, private citizens, who you're talking about tax revenues--.

TRUMP:

--No, they're going to pay tremendous tax.

QUESTION:

So it's American taxpayers?

TRUMP:

Companies--I'll give you an example. When a company was going to leave for Mexico or Canada, but for Mexico because we lost tremendous amounts of our car business, like 25 percent, to Mexico, if they stay, all of those taxes that they have been paying, real estate taxes, sales taxes,

employee, employer taxes, tremendous--taxes that nobody even understands they pay, there are tremendous. Income taxes, federal income taxes, state income taxes in some cases, all of those taxes stay with us. The wall is, you know, it's--it's great, but the USMCA, which gives a disincentive for companies to leave, it's a tremendous disincentive, anybody that leaves after this deal is done--look, it's one of the primary reasons that I like it because I can live pre-NAFTA. Too. The only thing I can't live with as NAFTA.

I can live pre-NAFTA, before NAFTA, before everybody left New England and left all of the different places, Ohio, Pennsylvania, I mean, you still have empty steel factories all over the place and other factories. I can live pre-NAFTA very easily. But the only thing I'm not living with is NAFTA. That was one of the worst trade deals ever made.

QUESTION:

So those are American taxpayer dollars, which you consider, essentially, Mexico paying for the wall?

TRUMP:

Well, many, many times over. Look, the USMCA will make in the form that we right now are losing approximately 100, it's hard to believe, and this doesn't include the drugs pouring in, which is probably a much higher number than anybody would even know in addition to destroying lives and families so horribly, we are losing close to \$100 billion a year on trade with Mexico for many years. Not only that, they have a tax of 17 percent. We don't have a tax.

So they have a value added tax of 17 percent. We don't have a tax of 70 percent. That deal was bad the day it was made because they charged the tax before the deal was made and we didn't. It was an obsolete deal when it was made like 30 years ago, whatever it was. No, no. All of this stuff is changing now. This is a fair deal. This is a good deal for Mexico.

Frankly, oil companies and other companies have an incentive now to go to Mexico and take oil out. And that's why we're keeping gasoline prices so low. You look at what's going on with gasoline prices. I mean, it's rather incredible. If you look back four months ago, oil hit \$83 a barrel. 83. It was heading to 100 and then it could've gone to 125. You want to see problems? Let that happen.

After I made some phone calls to OPEC and the OPEC nations, which is essentially a monopoly, all of a sudden it started coming down. I'm very happy with what's happened and I'm very happy that people are paying a lot less, in many cases, than \$2 a gallon for gasoline. You look at what's happening, everyone's talking about it didn't happen by luck, it happened by talent. Go ahead. Go ahead. Go ahead.

QUESTION:

Thank you. If this shut down, sir, does last, since you said you'd come back for the second question, months or years, I--I want to understand how you expect federal workers to last that long without getting a paycheck

TRUMP:

Look, look--

QUESTION:

--Specifically since your cabinet members--

TRUMP:

--I don't think it will. I'm prepared--.

QUESTION:

--Well sir, your cabinet members are said to get raises tomorrow.

TRUMP:

Right.

QUESTION:

How is that fair?

TRUMP:

Well, we'll have to talk to the cabinet members then, okay? I'm sure they don't even know that. Let me just tell you--.

QUESTION:

--Will you ask them to give that money back?

TRUMP:

Let me just tell you this. It's very important that we have great border security. I think it's going to be over with sooner than people think. But I will do whatever we have to do. If we have to stay out for a very long period of time, we're going to do that. And many of those people, maybe even most of those people that really have not been and will not be getting that money in at this moment, those people in many cases are the biggest fan of what we're doing.

QUESTION:

How do you know that, sir? Do you have evidence to support that?

TRUMP:

Please, Major. Go ahead.

QUESTION:

Just to follow up on that, Mr. President, the \$10,000 raise that your cabinet members and senior administration officials are due to receive starting tomorrow, will you ask them not to accept that at least during the shutdown itself?

TRUMP:

Well, I might consider that. You know, that's something I may consider. That's a very good question. Okay, who else is out there? Mike, who do you see out there that's--that's always been fair to us ?

QUESTION:

Is there a commitment on that, Mr. President? Are you committing to that Mr. President? Mr. President, are you committing to that?

TRUMP:

Go ahead. Yeah. Good. Go ahead. Go ahead. No, that's--that's right. Right?

QUESTION:

Thank you, Mr. Vice President.

TRUMP:

Mike likes you.

(LAUGHTER)

QUESTION:

Thank you, sir.

TRUMP:

Mike highly recommended you. Watch, this will be the killer of them all. Go ahead.

QUESTION:

Well, two questions if that's all right. First one is kind of a follow-up for that. For--you are a landlord. For people that are worried about paying their rent checks, government employees right now, people that are worried about bill collectors, would you ask those companies, the landlords to kind of go easy on the federal workers--.

TRUMP:

--I think they will.

QUESTION:

But do you, I'm sorry, would you ask that, sir?

TRUMP:

No, I--I think that happens. You know, hey, I've been a landlord for a long time. I've been in the real estate business for a long time. When you see there are problems out there, difficulties out there, you know, the people are all good for the money. They work with people. They work with people.

QUESTION:

But so you would encourage landlords--.

TRUMP:

--Yeah, sure. I would encourage them to be nice and easy. We have a bigger subject that we're doing. It's called the security of our nation. Including terrorism, please. Okay.

QUESTION:

And if you don't mind, one more question, sir. But if you don't mind one more.

TRUMP:

Go ahead, please.

QUESTION:

Okay, thank you sir. Oh I'm--.

TRUMP:

--Go ahead. No, no., Come on.

QUESTION:

Okay, sorry. Excuse me.

QUESTION:

Thank you, Mr. President.

TRUMP:

Thank you.

QUESTION:

I had a question about the terrorism. I wanted to ask who are these individuals on--who are being captured terrorists? Are they people on the watch lists? Are they from travel banned countries? Second question I wanted to ask, why is Senator Mitch McConnell not here? Why was he not invited?

TRUMP:

Oh, he's been great. He's been really fantastic. Mitch McConnell, first of all, he was here. He was with us for hours at the meeting.

QUESTION:

Why is he not here at the--at this (INAUDIBLE)?

TRUMP:

Because he's running the Senate. I mean, Mitch McConnell has been fantastic. He has been really great. He's right at the top of everything that we are doing and he's really been fantastic. Kirstjen, do you want to ask answer that question about the terrorism?

NIELSEN:

Sure. So obviously, I can't get into classified information, but what we do know is we've stopped, CBP has stopped over 3,000, what we call special interest aliens trying to come into the country on the southern border. Those are aliens who the Intel community has identified are of concern. They either have travel patterns that are identified as terrorist travel patterns or they have known or suspected ties to terrorism. So we have 3,000 that we know about.

I think what the president continues to make clear is it's our sovereign duty to know who comes into our country. Without any kind of a structure and without changing the laws, we have no way to know the identity of every person that walks across the unsecured border. So the ones we know about, we can give you 3,000, but I'm sure we can give you--we'll look to see what else we can give you un-class. Obviously, there is ongoing investigations that I can't get into.

QUESTION:

Mr. President?

TRUMP:

So I think we can say that with surety, I think it was a great meeting. We'll see what happens. It may get solved, it may not get solved. You now know the number. You now know what we are willing to do and if we have to do it, we'll do it. And again, we're going to be, I believe, very productive over the weekend. We have a very talented group. They have a very talented group of people so I understand. And I think some tremendous things will happen.

I really believe the biggest beneficiaries of what we're doing are children, are women, are workers, and a lot of these people that really do benefit are not only the people in our country, but the people that travel up trying to get into a country that they think they're going to get into and they can't and they get sick and there's tremendous damage done to them and their families. These are all tremendous beneficiaries of what we're doing. So this really does have a higher purpose than next week's pay.

And the people that won't get next week's pay or the following week's pay, I think if you ever really looked at those people, I think they'd say, "Mr. President, keep going. This is far more important." I want to thank you all and we'll see you see. They'll be working very hard over the weekend. Thank you very much.