

From: (b) (6)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Jon Bowne: Merrick Garland Must Be Removed!
To: Horowitz, Michael E.(OIG); The Attorney General; McQuaid, Nicholas (CRM); Lesko, Mark (USANYE); Polite, Kenneth (CRM); Johnsen, Dawn E. (OLC); Iverson, Dena (PAO); (b)(6), (b)(7)(C), (b)(7)(E) per FBI
Sent: October 12, 2021 5:06 PM (UTC-04:00)

Merrick Garland Must Be Removed!

The Jon Bowne Report

Oct. 12, 2021

As the Associates Press authoritatively reported “Attorney General Merrick Garlanddirected federal authorities to hold strategy sessions in the next 30 days with law enforcement to address the increasing threats targeting school board members, teachers and other employees in the nation’s public schools.

Garland said there has been “a disturbing spike in harassment, intimidation, and threats of violence against school administrators, board members, teachers, and staff who participate in the vital work of running our nation’s public schools.”

As usual, the criminal Biden Administration is ignoring the First Amendment that clearly states that Congress shall make no law respecting the right of the people to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Of course Garland is so corrupt that he is using the power of the DOJ to enforce his social justice kingpin son-in-law’s school indoctrination program known as Panorama Education.

The DOJ is behaving like nothing less than a modern day Nazi Reich. While the FBI morphs into the Stasi. Hitler indoctrinated an entire generation with anti Semitic brainwashing with the help of willing teachers and educational institutions.

Replace the term anti-Semitic with anti-American and you will find very little difference.

Watch the 4-minute report below in MP4 video:

<https://assets.infowarsmedia.com/videos/ef7d9570-7959-4645-8c4d-4e9d92e446eb.mp4>

Sent from my iPhone

From: Mitchell, Kendall M. (PAO)
Subject: 10.8 LE Report
To: Mastropasqua, Kristina (PAO); Hornbuckle, Wyn (PAO); (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per BOP (BOP); Langwell, April L.; Edgecomb, Anne D; (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per FBI (OPA) (FBI); (b)(6), (b)(7)(C), (b)(7)(F) per USMS (USMS); Long, Shannon (COPS); (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per FBI (OPA) (FBI)
Cc: (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per FBI (OPA) (FBI); (b)(6), (b)(7)(C), (b)(7)(F) per USMS (USMS); Thomas, Sheryl (COPS); (b)(6), (b)(7)(C), (b)(7)(F) per USMS (USMS); Miller, Andre R.; Pfaff, Katherine M
Sent: October 8, 2021 6:45 PM (UTC-04:00)
Attached: 10.8 LE Weekly Report (KMM).docx

Hi all,

Please see attached for the LE Weekly Report. Have a great weekend!

-KMM

Kendall Mitchell
Press Assistant // Office of Public Affairs
U.S. Department of Justice

c: (b) (6)
e: (b) (6)

FBI

(b)(6), (b)(7)(C), (b)(7)(E) per FBI

Stories

Scoped Out Per Agreement



- [Washington Post: Continued Coverage of AG Garland's Directive for FBI to Address 'Increase in Harassment' of School Officials](#)

Law Enforcement Component Report – 10/8/2021

Attorney General Garland ordered the FBI to work with local leaders nationwide to help address what he called a “disturbing spike in harassment, intimidation, and threats of violence” against educators and school board members over highly politicized issues such as mask mandates and interpretations of critical race theory.

Scoped Out Per Agreement

Inquiries

Scoped Out Per Agreement

Law Enforcement Component Report – 10/8/2021

- *Fox News* asked if the FBI or other agencies have set up a task force to discuss threats to school officials with state, local, and tribal law enforcement partners. OPA referred to DOJ.

Scoped Out Per Agreement



From: Stueve, Joshua (PAO)
Subject: Final: DAG VAWA SJC Clips
To: Polite, Kenneth (CRM); McQuaid, Nicholas (CRM); Driscoll, Kevin (CRM)
Sent: October 5, 2021 7:30 PM (UTC-04:00)
Attached: VAWA Senate Judiciary Hearing Clips 6.30 PM.docx

Team:

Attached please find final end of day clips on the DAG's VAWA testimony. We will update this tomorrow with evening and morning coverage (please note that several TV/radio outlets have flagged that they plan to cover this tomorrow morning).

Joshua Stueve | Spokesman
U.S. Department of Justice
Cell: (b) (6)

VAWA Senate Judiciary Hearing

10/5/2021

OPA Note: Both Good Morning America and NPR Morning Edition are planning to cover the DAG's testimony tomorrow morning. Additionally, tomorrow, People will be sharing analytics from the DAG's op-ed.

1. [TV](#)
2. [Radio](#)
3. [Tweets](#) (Page 3)
4. [Print Headlines](#)
5. [Full Articles](#) (Page 8)

TV

[Deputy AG Testifies on Violence Against Women Act | C-SPAN.org](#)

[WTTG 10/5/2021 4:14:43 PM](#)

[OANN 10/5/2021 4:16:59 PM](#)

Radio

[KOMO 10/5/2021 9:04:05 AM](#)

[WBEN 10/5/2021 12:03:27 PM](#)

[WBZ 10/5/2021 12:48:27 PM](#)

[WNYC 10/5/2021 1:03:08 PM](#)

[WBAP 10/5/2021 2:34:35 PM](#)

[WINS 10/5/2021 1:44:30 PM](#)

[WTOP 10/5/2021 3:36:06 PM](#)

Print

Associated Press: [Decision to not prosecute agents in Nassar case under review](#), by Farnoush Amiri

Reuters: [U.S. Justice Department renews inquiry into FBI's failures in Larry Nassar probe](#), by Sarah N. Lynch

CNN: [Justice Department is reviewing decision not to prosecute former FBI agents who botched Larry Nassar investigation](#), by Jessica Schneider and Chandelis Duster

Wall Street Journal: [Justice Department Will Review Decision Not to Charge FBI Agents Who Mishandled Nassar Investigation](#), by Sadie Gurman and Louise Radnofsky

Fox News: [DOJ reviewing decision not to prosecute FBI agents in Nassar case](#), by Ronn Blitzer

Fox News: [Hawley, Cotton grill DOJ official on memo targeting threats against teachers, school board members](#), by Ronn Blitzer

Fox News: [Blackburn confronts Deputy AG Monaco about crackdown on alleged harassment of school officials](#), by Jessica Chasmar

- *OPA Note: we are engaging with FOX to clarify “confrontation” by pointing to CSPAN footage that shows the DAG walking up to Sen. Blackburn to introduce herself.*

ABC: [DOJ reviewing decision to not charge agents involved in investigating Larry Nassar](#), by Alexander Mallin and Ayushi Agarwal

USA Today: [Larry Nassar case: DOJ reviews decision not to prosecute FBI agents](#), by Kevin Johnson

Washington Post: [Justice Dept. reviewing earlier decision not to charge FBI agents in failed Nassar case](#), by Devlin Barrett

Washington Post: [Garland asks FBI to address recent ‘disturbing spike’ in threats against educators](#), by Timothy Bella and Devlin Barrett

The Hill: [DOJ reviewing non-prosecution of FBI agents who mishandled Nassar sex abuse allegations](#), by Jordan Williams

Forbes: [DOJ Launches New Probe Into FBI Investigation Of Disgraced Gymnastics Doctor Larry Nassar](#), by Catie Porterfield

Axios: [DOJ reviewing decision not to charge FBI agents in Nassar investigation](#), by Ivana Saric

Washington Times: [AG Merrick Garland directs FBI to target ‘disturbing spike’ in school board threats](#), by Emily Zantow

Tweets

Alexandra Raisman on Twitter: ["Encouraged DOJ has decided to review FBI misconduct re Nassar because new information "has come to light." Discouraged that after 6 YEARS we are still forced to rely on info trickling out. Congress, PLEASE compel a real investigation of USOPC/USAG!" / Twitter](#)

Maggie Nichols Rt: [\(1\) Rachael Denhollander on Twitter: "This is long past overdue. https://t.co/bcZU03G8Yz" / Twitter](#)

Rachael Denhollander



John Manly (gymnast's lawyer)



[Senate Judiciary Committee](#)



BREAKING: Deputy AG Lisa Monaco tells the Judiciary Committee that newly confirmed Assistant AG for the Criminal Division, Kenneth Polite, Jr, has opened a review of DOJ's earlier decision to decline prosecution of the agents who committed misconduct in the Larry Nassar case.

11:37 AM · Oct 5, 2021 · Twitter Web App

[National Network to End Domestic Violence \(NNEDV\)](#)



Thank you, Deputy Attorney General Lisa O. Monaco, for talking about the serious gaps in services and calling for increased investment and the reauthorization of [#VAWA](#) with needed improvements.

Tune in: judiciary.senate.gov/meetings/renew...

[#VAWA4ALL](#)



[Jewish Women International](#)



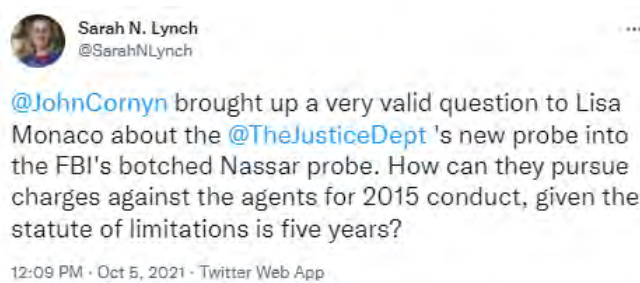
Deputy AG [@LisaMonaco](#) discussed how VAWA provides 2 million housing nights a year through its transitional housing program. JWI's Needs Assessment highlighted that there is a need for survivors to have access to housing in their existing community jwi.org/national-center.



11:13 AM · Oct 5, 2021 · Twitter Web App

Media:

[Sarah Lynch](#)



[Anne Thompson](#)



[Jessica Schneider](#)



[CSPAN](#)



Exchange between Sen. Josh Hawley and Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco on the attorney general's recent memo to address threats against school board officials and educators as the debate over critical race theory and mask mandates continue at the local level.



12:03 PM · Oct 5, 2021 · Twitter Ads

[CSPAN \(2\)](#)



U.S. Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco testifies on Reauthorizing the 1994 Violence Against Women Act – LIVE on C-SPAN3 c-span.org/video/?515047-...



10:39 AM · Oct 5, 2021 · TweetDeck

[CSPAN \(3\)](#)



Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco apologizes to Dr. Larry Nasser's sexual violence victims for the FBI's handling of the case: "I am deeply sorry that in this case the victims did not receive the response or the protection that they deserved."



11:12 AM · Oct 5, 2021 · Twitter Ads

[Jerry Dunleavy](#)



[Jen Bendery](#) (Senior politics reporter for HuffPost. President of Washington Press Club Foundation)



[2/2](#) More on the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women in here. Interior @SecDebHaaland has wasted no time trying to address this. [Deb Haaland Is Plowing Ahead With Tackling Violence Against Native Women | HuffPost](#)

Media tweets to reporting:

[Reuters Legal](#)

[The Washington Post](#)

[CNN Politics](#)

[ABC News Politics](#)

[Axios](#)

Full Articles

Associated Press: [Decision to not prosecute agents in Nassar case under review](#), by Farnoush Amiri

The Justice Department said Tuesday that it is reviewing an earlier decision to decline prosecution against two former FBI agents embroiled in the Larry Nassar sexual abuse cases after new information has emerged.

In testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco said the newly confirmed assistant attorney general for the department's criminal division will be taking a second look at the FBI's alleged failure to promptly address complaints made in 2015 against Nassar.

"I am deeply sorry that in this case, the victims did not receive the response or the protection that they deserved," Monaco said as she testified during a hearing on the renewal of the Violence Against Women's Act.

She added, "I do want the committee, and frankly, I want the survivors to understand how exceptionally seriously we take this issue and believe that this deserves a thorough and full review."

Monaco did not elaborate on what the new information was, but her testimony comes a couple weeks after USA Olympic gymnasts appeared before the same committee and [provided forceful testimony](#) that federal law enforcement and gymnastics officials turned a "blind eye" to the USA Gymnastics team doctor's sexual abuse of the gymnasts and hundreds of other women.

Last month's hearing was part of a congressional effort to hold the FBI accountable after multiple missteps in investigating the case, including delays that allowed the now-imprisoned Nassar to abuse other young gymnasts.

An [internal investigation by the Justice Department](#) released in July said the FBI made fundamental errors in the probe and did not treat the case with the "utmost seriousness" after USA Gymnastics first reported the allegations to the FBI's field office in Indianapolis in 2015. The FBI has acknowledged its own conduct was inexcusable.

In the hearing last month, FBI Director Christopher Wray blasted his own agents who failed to appropriately respond to the complaints and made a promise to the victims that he was committed to "make damn sure everybody at the FBI remembers what happened here" and that it never happens again.

Hundreds of girls and women have said Nassar sexually abused them under the guise of medical treatment when he worked for Michigan State University and USA Gymnastics, which trains Olympians.

He pleaded guilty in federal court to child pornography crimes before pleading guilty in state court to sexually assaulting female gymnasts, and was [sentenced in 2018](#) to 40 to 175 years in prison.

Reuters: [U.S. Justice Department renews inquiry into FBI's failures in Larry Nassar probe](#), by Sarah N. Lynch

The U.S. Justice Department has launched a fresh inquiry into the FBI's botched handling of its sex abuse investigation into disgraced former USA Gymnastics doctor Larry Nassar, after previously declining to prosecute the agents involved, Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco said on Tuesday.

"The recently confirmed assistant attorney general for the Criminal Division is currently reviewing this matter, including new information that has come to light," Monaco told the Senate Judiciary Committee on Tuesday, adding that she is "constrained" on what more she can say.

"I do want the committee and frankly, I want the survivors to understand how exceptionally seriously we take this issue," she added.

In an emotional hearing last month, famous gymnasts including Simone Biles and McKayla Maroney appeared before the same Senate panel, where they blasted the FBI for failing to properly investigate abuse they suffered under Nassar's care.

The hearing was prompted by a scathing investigation by the Justice Department's inspector general, which uncovered widespread and dire errors which allowed Nassar to continue to abuse at least 70 more victims before he was finally arrested.

Two former FBI agents were singled out in the report - the former Indianapolis field office Special Agent in Charge W. Jay Abbott and a former supervisory special agent who has since been identified as Michael Langeman.

The inspector general referred both former agents for prosecution, but the Justice Department declined to bring charges against them in September 2020.

Reuters: [U.S. Justice Dept defends efforts to step up monitoring threats to school boards](#), by Sarah N. Lynch

Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco on Tuesday defended a new initiative to combat a rise in threats and harassment targeting public school boards and teachers across the country, after Republican lawmakers accused the Justice Department of trying to stifle parents' free speech.

In a hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Monaco told lawmakers that the Justice Department is not trying to censor speech, but merely coordinate with state and local law enforcement to ensure "there is an awareness of how to report threats that may occur and to ensure that there's an open line of communication to address threats."

On Monday night, Attorney General Merrick Garland issued a new memo directing the FBI and federal prosecutors to meet with local and state police within 30 days to discuss strategies for addressing the "disturbing trend" of threats facing America's public educators.

"While spirited debate about policy matters is protected under our Constitution, that protection does not extend to threats of violence or efforts to intimidate individuals based on their views," Garland wrote.

The memo comes as school boards across the country, including in nearby Loudoun County, Virginia, have seen a rise in protests and violent rhetoric fueled by right-wing media over claims that public schools are indoctrinating children into thinking America is a racist country through the teaching of a doctrine known as critical race theory.

Critics say there is no evidence to suggest that critical race theory is being taught in most, if any, public schools, but the topic has led to waves of protests and often raucous school board meetings.

At the same time, schools have also been caught in the cross-hairs of an ongoing national debate over whether students should be required to wear masks to protect against the spread of the coronavirus.

Republican Senator Josh Hawley blasted the memo on Tuesday, comparing it to the "McCarthy era," a reference to the controversial practices of Republican Senator Joseph McCarthy, who stoked Cold War era fears in the 1950s by alleging that Communists had infiltrated the U.S. government, military and film industry.

"Is parents waiting, sometimes for hours, to speak at a local school board meeting to express concerns about critical race theory or the masking of their students... is that in and of itself harassment and intimidation?" he asked.

"Spirited debate is welcome," Monaco said, adding that the memo makes it clear that the department is only focused on addressing situations that could turn violent.

CNN: [Justice Department is reviewing decision not to prosecute former FBI agents who botched Larry Nasser investigation](#), by Jessica Schneider and Chandelis Duster

Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco said Tuesday that new information has emerged concerning two former FBI agents accused of mishandling the investigation into allegations of abuse against former USA Gymnastics doctor Larry Nassar.

"I can inform the committee today that the recently confirmed Assistant AG for the criminal division is currently reviewing this matter, including new information that has come to light," Monaco told the Senate Judiciary Committee. "I do want the committee, and frankly I want the survivors, to understand how exceptionally seriously we take this issue and believe this reserves a thorough and full review."

Several renowned gymnasts who were abused by Nassar [spoke before the Senate panel](#) last month about the lack of accountability and inaction by the FBI. Lawmakers and gymnasts expressed outrage over the Justice Department's decision to not charge two former FBI employees who were referred by the department's inspector general for potential prosecution.

The Justice Department is now reviewing its decision not to prosecute the agents, Monaco said on Tuesday. Monaco declined to provide more detail about the new information.

"In light of that review, I think you'll understand I'm constrained in what more I can say about it," she said.

Monaco also fielded questions about whether the statute of limitations for lying to the FBI or other potential criminal acts in this case has run out and said she believed it was five years.

Sexual abuse allegations against Nassar were reported to the FBI in 2015 and 2016, and the actions of the agents were [investigated](#) by the Justice Department's inspector general for several years after that.

Asked by Senate Judiciary Chairman Dick Durbin if there was urgency to this criminal review or timetable, Monaco said, "We take exceptionally seriously our duty to protect victims. There is a sense of urgency and gravity with the work that needs to be done."

The FBI recently fired Michael Langeman, the agent who had interviewed gymnast McKayla Maroney, while the other official, Jay Abbott, retired in early 2018.

Wall Street Journal: [Justice Department Will Review Decision Not to Charge FBI Agents Who Mishandled Nassar Investigation](#), by Sadie Gurman and Louise Radnofsky

The Justice Department is reviewing its decision not to prosecute the FBI agents who disregarded Olympic gymnasts' allegations that former national team doctor Larry Nassar sexually assaulted them and later made false statements to cover their mistakes.

"I want the survivors to understand how exceptionally seriously we take this issue and believe that this deserves a thorough and full review," Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco said Tuesday, testifying before the Senate Judiciary Committee.

The inquiry, being led by the head of the Justice Department's Criminal Division, Kenneth Polite, will examine "new information that has come to light," Ms. Monaco said, declining to elaborate. "You can be assured there is a sense of urgency and gravity with the work that needs to be done."

The Justice Department review of its decision-making, while unusual, does not necessarily mean officials will reopen the case and charge the former agents. But it will renew pressure on the agency to examine the way it deals with sex assault cases more broadly.

Victims had been furious over the decision not to prosecute Jay Abbott and Michael Langeman, the two agents at the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Indianapolis Field Office who, in a July report by the Justice Department's inspector general, came in for the most blame for their actions in 2015 and 2016.

Senators had also criticized the move during a recent hearing involving testimony from the current FBI director, Christopher Wray, and four of the star gymnasts initially identified as potential victims of the doctor: Simone Biles, McKayla Maroney, Maggie Nichols and Aly Raisman.

Mr. Abbott, then the special agent in charge of the office, has retired. The FBI last month fired Mr. Langeman, then a supervisory special agent, in the wake of the inspector general's report that concluded that the men had not taken seriously the complaint brought to them by USA Gymnastics in late July 2015.

Mr. Abbott did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Tuesday, but said in a statement issued after the OIG report came out said that he was grateful for the law enforcement officers and prosecutors who brought Nassar to justice and hoped "the courageous victims of Nassar's horrible crime find peace." Mr. Langeman did not immediately respond to attempts to contact him.

John Manly, a lawyer who represents all four gymnasts, said Ms. Monaco called him ahead of the hearing to inform his clients. He said they were pleased and hoped that the review would result in prosecutions, as well as more insight into why the FBI agents had failed to act.

Agents were confused about whether there was a federal crime to investigate, or whether it would fall under their jurisdiction in Indianapolis, the watchdog's report found. They didn't document the meeting with USA Gymnastics, or the receipt of evidence in the form of a thumb drive in which Nassar described his procedures in graphic terms and with troubling language.

The Indianapolis office also didn't transfer the Nassar allegations to the FBI's resident agency in Lansing, Mich., which would have been the most likely place to investigate potential federal crimes that had been committed in the area.

Nor did the FBI inform state and local authorities of the ongoing threat posed by Nassar, the report said. Dozens of young women have said they were abused by Nassar after he had been reported to the FBI, but the investigation went nowhere.

Last week, Ms. Monaco sent a Justice Department memo encouraging prosecutors to pursue federal charges in sex crimes whenever possible, saying that "ongoing victimization is a strong indication of a federal interest." She also underscored the need for federal investigators to coordinate with state and local law enforcement in cases even if they do not bring federal charges, particularly where there is an ongoing threat or violent crimes.

One of the most devastating points in that report involved the initial effort to investigate complaints about Nassar by the FBI's Indianapolis field office, via a telephonic interview with Ms. Maroney in early September 2015. Mr. Langeman conducted the interview but did not document it until February 2017, which is around the time The Wall Street Journal first documented delays in the investigation. The agent then recorded statements that Ms. Maroney says she did not make, and has never made.

Mr. Abbott, according to the inspector general's report, showed "extremely poor judgment and violated FBI policy" by communicating with the then-head of USA Gymnastics, about a potential vacancy at the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee while the two continued to discuss the Nassar allegations. Mr. Abbott then applied for the job, and later twice told internal investigators he had not.

Fox News: [DOJ reviewing decision not to prosecute FBI agents in Nassar case](#), by Ronn Blitzer

The [Justice Department](#) is reviewing its decision not to charge [FBI](#) agents for their conduct during the investigation of former USA Gymnastics doctor and convicted sex offender Larry Nassar, following testimony from several female athletes who said their complaints to the bureau had gone ignored for years.

The news came from Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco, who told the Senate Judiciary Committee about it Tuesday during a hearing focused on the Violence Against Women Act.

"I can inform the committee today that the recently-confirmed assistant attorney general for the criminal division is currently reviewing this matter, including new information that has come to light," Monaco said.

The deputy attorney general did not indicate what that new information is, noting the need for sensitivity during an ongoing investigation.

Nassar is serving sentences totaling hundreds of years following convictions for child pornography and numerous counts of criminal sexual conduct stemming from abuse he committed against women and girls under the guise of medical treatment.

During a September hearing before the same committee, gymnasts including Olympic champions [Simone Biles](#), McKayla Maroney and Aly Raisman described how the FBI failed to act after they spoke to officials about their experiences. The hearing came after a DOJ Inspector General's report revealed the bureau's inaction.

"In reviewing the OIG's report," Biles continued, "it truly feels that the FBI turned a blind eye to us and went out of its way to protect [USA Gymnastics] and [the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee]. A message needs to be sent: if you allow a predator to harm children, the consequences will be swift and severe. Enough is enough."

Maroney recalled her experience with the FBI, speaking to them on the phone for three hours because she was too sick to meet in person. She told the committee about how she answered all of their questions and discussed every instance of abuse she endured, in detail, only for FBI agents to provide a false account of what she said.

"After telling my entire story of abuse to the FBI in the summer of 2015 not only did the FBI not report my abuse, but when they eventually documented my report 17 months later they made entirely false claims about what I said," Maroney said, stating that she "was shocked and deeply disappointed" by what she had read in the inspector general's report.

Maroney specifically called out Monaco for not being present at that hearing.

"Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco couldn't even bring herself to be here today, and it is the Department of Justice's job to hold them accountable," Maroney said. "I am tired of waiting for people to do the right thing."

Fox News was told Monaco was in Washington at the time, but that she had already been scheduled to appear before the committee in October and was willing to answer questions about the matter at that time.

At Tuesday's hearing, Monaco stressed that the Justice Department does view the situation as a priority.

"I do want the committee, and frankly I want the survivors to understand how exceptionally seriously we take this issue and believe that this deserves a thorough and full review."

Fox News: [Hawley, Cotton grill DOJ official on memo targeting threats against teachers, school board members](#), by Ronn Blitzer

Republican senators challenged Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco on a new memo from Attorney General Merrick Garland to Justice Department employees that discussed federal intervention in state and local school board meetings.

The [memo](#) condemned violence against officials, and while the GOP senators agreed with that sentiment, they expressed concern over other language Garland used in reference to "intimidation" and

"harassment" that they worried was vague and problematic for potentially leading to First Amendment infringements.

"Tell me where the line is with parents expressing their concerns," Sen. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., said, questioning what sort of behavior might warrant federal intervention.

Hawley, who called the memo "wrong" and "dangerous," said that parents sometimes wait for hours to ask questions about school policies regarding mask wearing and critical race theory. He asked what the DOJ's memo means when it refers to harassment and intimidation, claiming that these are vague terms that will have a chilling effect on school board meeting participation.

The senator asked if Monaco was aware of any time in American history when the FBI was getting involved in school board meetings.

"That is not going on," she replied.

Monaco said that the attorney general's memo clearly stated that violence is inappropriate but "spirited debate" is permitted.

Earlier in the hearing, however, Sen. Tom Cotton, R-Ark., noted that Garland's memo came days after the National School Boards Association sent a [letter](#) to President Biden asking the administration to look into using the PATRIOT Act against domestic terrorism as well as other measures to combat what it said were "threats or actual acts of violence against our school districts."

In discussing past instances, the NSBA did reference a number of cases of violence, but it also cited an instance when someone "prompted the board to call a recess because of opposition to critical race theory," and referred to how in states including New Jersey and Ohio, "anti-mask proponents are inciting chaos during board meetings."

"Is it domestic extremism for a parent to advocate for their child's best interests?" Cotton asked.

NSBA interim Executive Director and CEO Chip Slaven called Garland's memo "a strong message to individuals with violent intent who are focused on causing chaos, disrupting our public schools, and driving wedges between school boards and the parents, students, and communities they serve."

Sen. Marsha Blackburn, R-Tenn., who did not get to ask questions during the hearing, approached Monaco after it had ended. Their conversation was caught on camera.

"The implication of all of this is you all expect parents that do not take the progressive agenda to be violent," Blackburn said, stating that "it's not always what you say it's what people perceive that you are saying."

"The message that you are sending to parents, to individuals is you take everything that we say or we're not going to be able to protect you," Blackburn added, "and I think that that is a very dangerous place to be."

"I hear you on the misperception," Monaco said, but she insisted that the FBI would only be investigating crimes, and that the memo is "about violence, and that's it."

Fox News: [Blackburn confronts Deputy AG Monaco about crackdown on alleged harassment of school officials](#), by Jessica Chasmar

OPA discussing current headline with FOX.

Sen. Marsha Blackburn, R-[Tenn.](#), on Tuesday confronted U.S. Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco over the [Justice Department's](#) new crackdown on the alleged harassment of [school](#) officials, saying it will unfairly target parents who oppose the progressive agenda.

Blackburn [caught up](#) with Monaco as she was leaving a hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee and asked about the [DOJ's memo](#). The memo directed the [FBI](#) and U.S. attorney offices to hold meetings with federal, state and local law enforcement leaders within 30 days to discuss ways to combat what the DOJ described as an "increase in harassment, intimidation and threats of violence against school board members, teachers and workers in our nation's public schools."

C-SPAN cameras captured the confrontation between Blackburn and Monaco.

The senator said the "implication" of the memo was that parents who do not adhere to the progressive agenda are to be considered by the state as "violent."

Monaco attempted to protest, but Blackburn continued, "It's not always what you say, it's what people perceive that you are saying. So, I think this is an incredibly dangerous precedent.

"And this coupled with the lack of respect for these young women that came for the Larry Nassar hearing is something that's not very good for the DOJ right now," Blackburn added, referring to the FBI's mishandling of the sexual abuse of Olympic gymnasts.

"The message that you are sending to parents, to individuals, is, 'You take everything that we say or we're not going to be there to protect you.' And I think that's a very dangerous place to be," the senator continued. "This memo last night looks as if you are second-guessing every parent who is asking the question about what is being taught."

Monaco repeatedly offered to get Blackburn a copy of the one-page memo "right away," suggesting she hadn't read or understood it.

"So, I hear you on the misperception, but I would ask you to look at the memo," Monaco said.

Blackburn pushed back, saying, "the FBI has no business doing this anyway. Casting doubt on parents because they are going to question and trying to make certain how they're being taught. I just think—"

"The FBI is not doing that," Monaco interjected. "The role of the Justice Department is to, as you well know, investigate crimes. It's about violence and that's it."

Blackburn said she would follow up with the DOJ later on the issue but added that parents just want their kids to learn in school and not be "indoctrinated."

The exchange occurred after Blackburn arrived at the hearing late because she had been attending the Senate Commerce subcommittee hearing of Facebook whistleblower Frances Haugen.

ABC: [DOJ reviewing decision to not charge agents involved in investigating Larry Nassar](#), by Alexander Mallin and Ayushi Agarwal

Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco said at a Senate hearing Tuesday that the Department of Justice is conducting a new review into its decision to not bring charges against agents who failed to investigate allegations of sex abuse by former USA Gymnastics doctor Larry Nassar.

Less than three weeks ago, gymnasts Simone Biles, McKayla Maroney, Maggie Nichols and Aly Raisman testified before the Senate over alleged FBI failures in handling the case against Nassar.

Monaco's announcement followed widespread condemnation from lawmakers during a blockbuster hearing last month with the gymnasts, who detailed horrific experiences of sexual assault, and a damning inspector general report that highlighted the abuses and how agents initially on the case appear to have mishandled the athletes' allegations.

Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle were deeply critical of the Justice Department last month for declining their invitation to attend the hearing alongside FBI Director Christopher Wray and IG Michael Horowitz.

"I can inform the committee today that the recently confirmed assistant attorney general for the criminal division [Kenneth Polite] is currently reviewing this matter, including new information that has come to light," Monaco said. "In light of that review, I think you'll understand, Mr. Chairman, that I'm constrained in what more I can say about it, but I do want the committee, and frankly I want the survivors, to understand how exceptionally seriously we take this issue and believe that this deserves a thorough and full review."

Monaco further assured Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., there was a "sense of urgency and gravity" with the recently launched review.

Earlier in her testimony, Monaco said she was "shocked" and "horrified" both about the findings included in the DOJ IG's report as well as the experiences detailed by Biles, Maroney, Maggie and Raisman.

"I am deeply sorry that in this case the victims did not receive the response or the protection that they deserved," Monaco said.

USA Today: [Larry Nassar case: DOJ reviews decision not to prosecute FBI agents](#), by Kevin Johnson

The Justice Department is reconsidering its decision not to prosecute former FBI agents in the botched investigation of disgraced former USA Gymnastics physician Larry Nassar who sexually abused dozens of young athletes and women in his care, Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco told a Senate Committee Tuesday.

Less than a month after four elite gymnasts provided wrenching testimony of the FBI's failure to act on their allegations against Nassar, Monaco said "new information" had emerged in the investigation and Justice's initial decision to decline prosecution against two agents, including the former special agent in charge of the FBI's Indianapolis Division, is being re-examined.

"The survivors who testified so bravely deserve better than they got from the FBI and the Justice Department," Monaco told the Senate Judiciary Committee. "There is a sense of urgency and gravity for the work that needs to be done."

The four athletes who testified last month – Simone Biles, Aly Raisman, McKayla Maroney and Maggie Nichols – slammed the FBI and the Justice Department, describing an alarming breakdown in the government's handling of abuse allegations.

"It was like serving innocent children up to a pedophile on a silver platter," Raisman told the panel in September.

Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., has characterized the FBI's handling of the case as "a stain" on the agency.

"The FBI failed them," Durbin said Tuesday, referring to Nassar's victims. "Our government failed them; we failed them."

In July, Justice's inspector general issued a stinging 119-page report that found Indianapolis FBI officials made false statements and failed to respond for months to early allegations that allowed Nassar to abuse dozens of additional victims.

Last month, FBI Director Wray said the supervisory special agent involved in the case, Michael Langeman, was fired. His former boss, W. Jay Abbott, who served as chief of the Indianapolis office, retired in 2018.

The inspector general's report specifically singled out Abbott for lying about the field office's handling of the Nassar allegations and for violating policy when he discussed a potential job opportunity with the U.S. Olympic Committee while the allegations against Nassar were pending.

An attorney for Abbott declined to address the Justice action Tuesday. Langeman could not be reached for comment.

On Tuesday, some lawmakers took aim at Monaco, noting that the Justice Department's failed to send a representative to last month's hearing.

Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, said the absence represented "profound disrespect" for the plight of the victims.

"You are about three weeks too late," Cornyn said.

Washington Post: [Justice Dept. reviewing earlier decision not to charge FBI agents in failed Nassar case](#), by Devlin Barrett

The Justice Department is reviewing its decision not to charge FBI agents who failed to properly investigate sex abuse allegations leveled against Larry Nassar, the disgraced former USA gymnastics doctor who sexually abused his patients, including world-famous gymnasts.

Deputy Attorney General Lisa O. Monaco made the announcement at a hearing Tuesday before the Senate Judiciary Committee. Lawmakers on the panel have sharply criticized the Justice Department for not pursuing false statements charges against a supervisory FBI agent and his boss for what the [agency's inspector general concluded were lies to internal investigators](#) to cover up their failures.

Monaco told the committee that the newly-confirmed head of the criminal division, Kenneth Polite, “is currently reviewing this matter, including new information that has come to light.” She said the review is being conducted with “a sense of urgency and gravity.”

It is rare for the Justice Department to even consider reopening a case that has been closed without charges. In the case of the Nassar agents, one retired years ago; the other was [fired this summer](#) in the wake of a scathing report by Inspector General Michael Horowitz that found major missteps in the FBI’s handling of allegations against Nassar in 2015, allowing him to victimize scores more patients before he was arrested by state authorities the following year.

The Justice Department review comes less than a month after Simone Biles and three other high-profile gymnasts [gave emotional testimony](#) to the Judiciary committee about how they had been abused by Nassar and ignored by the FBI.

“I blame Larry Nassar, and I also blame an entire system that enabled and perpetrated his abuse,” Biles told the committee.

Nassar was ultimately convicted of state sex abuse and federal child pornography charges and is currently serving an effective life sentence in prison.

At the hearing on Tuesday, Monaco apologized to the gymnasts, saying, “I am deeply sorry that in this case the victims did not receive the response or the protection that they deserved.”

Sen. John Cornyn (R-Tex.) said Monaco had shown “profound disrespect” for the victims by declining to testify at the hearing where they appeared last month.

“I mean no disrespect, Senator,” Monaco replied.

“You’re about three weeks too late, by my account,” said Cornyn.

The key conduct at issue in the Nassar case occurred well within the federal statute of limitations for prosecuting those involved.

Supervisory Special Agent Michael Langeman, who was fired a month ago, allegedly lied to agents with the inspector general’s office in interviews in 2020 and 2021, according to Horowitz’s report.

Langeman was questioned at length about why he did not pursue a case against Nassar, and whether he had in fact referred the matter to a different FBI office, and why he wrote a report of an interview with a key victim more than a year after the interview took place.

The inspector general report did not identify Langeman by name, but found that he lied to investigators “in an effort to minimize or excuse his errors.”

Horowitz found that while the FBI was dealing with the Nassar allegations in late 2015, the head of the FBI’s Indianapolis office, Jay Abbott, talked to Stephen Penny, then-president of USA Gymnastics, about getting Abbott a job with the Olympic Committee.

The inspector general said Abbott applied for the job but did not get it, and when confronted about it in 2019, falsely claimed to the inspector general that he had not sought the job. Penny resigned under

pressure from his job with USA Gymnastics in 2017, and was charged in 2018 with evidence-tampering in the sex-abuse case. Abbott retired from the FBI.

One of the FBI's chief failures in the Nassar case was not alerting state authorities to the possibility that he might be committing sex crimes against children — crimes which state prosecutors could, and eventually did, charge him with.

In response to that criticism, Monaco last week urged prosecutors and agents to coordinate more closely with state and local law enforcement about potential crimes that may fall outside federal law but may still be worth pursuing.

"Even in those instances where the federal government cannot bring its own criminal charges, our obligation to protect crime victims and ensure public safety does not end," Monaco wrote in the memo. "Instead, proper coordination with state, local, or tribal law enforcement partners may become more important, particularly in the face of apparent, ongoing criminal behavior that puts victims at risk."

Washington Post: [Garland asks FBI to address recent 'disturbing spike' in threats against educators](#), by Timothy Bella and Devlin Barrett

Attorney General Merrick Garland on Monday ordered the FBI to work with local leaders nationwide to help address what he called a "disturbing spike in harassment, intimidation, and threats of violence" against educators and school board members over highly politicized issues such as mask mandates and interpretations of critical race theory.

In a memorandum to FBI Director Christopher A. Wray and federal prosecutors, Garland wrote that the Justice Department will hold strategy sessions with law enforcement in the next 30 days and is expected to announce measures in response to "the rise in criminal conduct directed toward school personnel" in the nation's public schools.

"While spirited debate about policy matters is protected under our Constitution, that protection does not extend to threats of violence or efforts to intimidate individuals based on their views," he wrote. "Threats against public servants are not only illegal, they run counter to our nation's core values. Those who dedicate their time and energy to ensuring that our children receive a proper education in a safe environment deserve to be able to do their work without fear for their safety."

Garland's order comes days after the National School Boards Association, a group representing school board members across the United States, pleaded with President Biden for federal assistance to help investigate and stop the recent threats against educators. The group said in a letter to Biden that much of the vitriol has involved policies focusing on mask mandates to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus. The NSBA likened the harassment and abuse over face coverings in schools to domestic terrorism.

"America's public schools and its education leaders are under an immediate threat," the group wrote to Biden.

Republicans at a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing Tuesday accused Biden's Justice Department of heavy-handed tactics to try to intimidate parents speaking at local school board meetings about mask mandates or school curriculums.

“If this isn’t a deliberate attempt to chill parents from showing up at school board meetings, I don’t know what is,” Sen. Josh Hawley (R-Mo.) said to Deputy Attorney General Lisa O. Monaco. “You’re using the FBI to intervene in school board meetings. This is extraordinary.”

Monaco said that was not what Garland’s memo did. She said the FBI is not investigating people for speaking out at school board meetings.

“You are attempting to intimidate them. You are attempting to silence them,” Hawley replied.

The “disturbing spike” in threats in public schools is playing out at a time when educators, parents and school boards continue to clash with one another over a litany of issues. The NSBA noted more than 20 instances of intimidation, threats, harassment and disruption in states such as California, Florida, New Jersey, Ohio and Georgia.

Mask disputes have regularly made headlines in recent months. A Northern California father was banned from his daughter’s school after he allegedly struck a teacher in the face while arguing about masks. In Austin’s Eanes Independent School District, the superintendent said one parent ripped a teacher’s mask off her face, while others yelled at another teacher to remove her mask because they claimed it made it difficult to understand what she was saying.

A school meeting in Michigan was disrupted when a man performed a Nazi salute to protest masks in the classroom. A letter mailed to an Ohio school board member called the official “a filthy traitor” for instituting a mask mandate.

“We are coming after you,” the letter said, according to the NSBA. “You are forcing them to wear [a] mask — for no reason in this world other than control. And for that you will pay dearly.”

The order also comes as educators and elected officials nationwide are engaged in heated and fraught debates over how far teachers can go in teaching about history, race and systemic racism in the classroom. Most of those battles have been focused on critical race theory, an academic framework for examining the way laws and policies perpetuate systemic racism.

The backlash over the issue, which has become a focus of heavy coverage by right-leaning news outlets, has led to what the NSBA describes as “propaganda purporting the false inclusion of critical race theory within classroom instruction and curricula.”

“This propaganda continues despite the fact that critical race theory is not taught in public schools and remains a complex law school and graduate school subject well beyond the scope of a K-12 class,” the group wrote.

The back-and-forth over critical race theory has also spilled over into the classroom. James Whitfield, a Texas high school principal, was suspended last month after being publicly accused of promoting critical race theory, which he has denied. The school board voted to not renew the contract of Whitfield, the first Black principal for Colleyville Heritage High School.

He told The Washington Post last month that he was the target of political activists who want to block attempts to make schools more inclusive.

“That sounds absurd,” he said, “but that is the nature of what we’re dealing with.”

Garland, who said the FBI would work with U.S. attorneys and authorities in each district to develop strategies against these incidents, emphasized Monday that federal prosecutors would use their resources to help curb the number of threats made against educators. A training program and new federal task force are expected to be implemented by the Justice Department to help with the public-school threats.

“The Department takes these incidents seriously and is committed to using its authority and resources to discourage these threats, identify them when they occur, and prosecute them when appropriate,” the attorney general wrote.

The order was welcomed by Chip Slaven, NSBA’s interim executive director and CEO. In a statement, Slaven said Garland’s move is “a strong message to individuals with violent intent who are focused on causing chaos, disrupting our public schools, and driving wedges between school boards and the parents, students, and communities they serve.”

“The individuals who are intent on causing chaos and disrupting our schools — many of whom are not even connected to local schools — are drowning out the voices of parents who must be heard when it comes to decisions about their children’s education, health, and safety,” he said.

“We need to get back to the work of meeting all students’ needs and making sure that each student is prepared for a successful future,” Slaven said.

The Hill: [DOJ reviewing non-prosecution of FBI agents who mishandled Nassar sex abuse allegations](#), by Jordan Williams

The Department of Justice is launching a new inquiry into the FBI’s handling of allegations against disgraced gymnastics doctor Larry Nassar, specifically reviewing the department’s decision not to charge agents who mishandled the investigation.

Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco confirmed the new probe during a hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee on Tuesday, when she was asked to respond to criticism the DOJ has received for declining to prosecute the agents.

“The recently confirmed assistant attorney general for the Criminal Division is currently reviewing this matter, including new information that has come to light,” Monaco said.

The announcement comes roughly a month after the judiciary panel heard testimony from star U.S. gymnasts about the way the FBI disregarded allegations of abuse, following a bombshell report from the DOJ Inspector General Michael Horowitz.

The report specifically refers to two people who the report singles out for lying to investigators from Horowitz’s office.

The report found that Michael Langeman, who was a supervisory special agent for the FBI’s Indianapolis Field Office, made false statements during two OIG interviews regarding an interview with one of Nassar’s victim. Langeman had been fired a week before last month’s hearing.

Langeman's former boss, W. Jay Abbott, separately lied about seeking a job with the U.S. Olympic Committee while the Nassar investigation was ongoing, according to Horowitz's report.

During Tuesday's hearing, Senate Judiciary Chairman [Richard Durbin](#) (D-Ill.) noted that some people are currently in jail for lying to the government.

"People are charged with the crime of lying to the government and are held accountable, and some are in prison for the very act that appears to have taken place here. And yet, the decision not to prosecute is one which most of us don't even understand," Durbin said.

Monaco told the panel that the gymnasts who testified "deserved better than they got from the FBI and from the Justice Department."

"I want the committee — and frankly I want the survivors — to understand how exceptionally seriously we take this issue and believe that this deserves a thorough and full review," she added.

The Hill has reached out to the FBI for comment.

Forbes: [DOJ Launches New Probe Into FBI Investigation Of Disgraced Gymnastics Doctor Larry Nassar](#), by Catie Porterfield

The U.S. Department of Justice will renew its investigation into the Federal Bureau of Investigation's handling of the allegations of sex abuse made against former USA Gymnastics Doctor Larry Nassar, and review its decision to not prosecute two agents accused of mishandling the case.

KEY FACTS

Assistant Attorney General Kenneth Polite Jr. has opened a review of the FBI's probe into Nassar that will include "new information that has come to light," Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco told the Senate Judiciary Committee Tuesday morning during a hearing about the [Violence Against Women Act](#). Monaco did not offer more details, saying she was "[constrained](#)" as to how much she could share.

CRUCIAL QUOTE

"I want the survivors to understand how exceptionally seriously we take this issue, and believe that this deserves a [thorough and full review](#)," Monaco said Tuesday.

TANGENT

The announcement follows [emotional testimony](#) during a Senate Judiciary hearing last month by four elite gymnasts who claimed the FBI and gymnastics groups "[enabled and perpetrated](#)" Nassar's abuse, as Simone Biles, the most-decorated U.S. gymnast in history, said. Aly Raisman, captain of the U.S. Women's Gymnastics team during the 2012 and 2016 Olympic Games, said the FBI "failed to handle [their most basic duties](#)" and allowed Nassar access to children for a year after first being made aware of the allegations against him. She compared the move to "[serving innocent children](#) up to a pedophile on a silver platter."

Axios: [DOJ reviewing decision not to charge FBI agents in Nassar investigation](#), by Ivana Saric

The Justice Department said Tuesday it is reviewing a previous decision not to charge FBI agents accused of mishandling the investigation into disgraced former USA Gymnastics doctor Larry Nassar.

Why it matters: Less than a month ago, FBI director Christopher Wray [formally apologized](#) to the U.S. gymnasts abused by Nassar, noting that the FBI's failure to stop Nassar was "inexcusable."

- His apology came after four gymnasts — including Olympic gold medalists Aly Raisman, Simone Biles and McKayla Maroney — testified before the committee and detailed how the FBI mishandled their reports.

What they're saying: The department "is currently reviewing this matter, including new information that has come to light," Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco said at a Senate Judiciary Committee [hearing](#).

- She added that the review is being conducted with "a sense of urgency and gravity" but noted that she was "constrained" about what else she could say on the matter.
- "I am deeply sorry that in this case the victims did not receive the response or the protection that they deserved."

The big picture: Nassar, the former Olympic Team USA gymnastics doctor, was [sentenced to 40–175 years](#) in prison in 2018 after [160 women](#) accused him of sexually abusing them under the pretense of medical treatment.

- In July, the FBI's inspector general issued a [scathing report](#) highlighting the "numerous and fundamental errors" in how the bureau handled its investigation into Nassar.
- For the Justice Department to review and consider reopening a case that has been closed without charges is a rare occurrence, notes the [Washington Post](#).

Washington Times: [AG Merrick Garland directs FBI to target 'disturbing spike' in school board threats](#), by Emily Zantow

Attorney General Merrick Garland told federal officials Monday to meet with law enforcement to discuss strategies for responding to the growing number of threats against school board members, teachers and other education staff.

Mr. Garland issued a memorandum describing a need to address the "disturbing spike" in threats of violence, harassment and intimidation against school officials in recent months.

"While spirited debate about policy matters is protected under our Constitution, that protection does not extend to threats of violence or efforts to intimidate individuals based on their views," the attorney general said.

His call-to-action comes days after the National School Boards Association (NSBA) sent a letter to President Biden asking for federal law enforcement to investigate and prevent the threats, which it said "could be equivalent to a form of domestic terrorism and hate crimes."

The letter said school board members across the country have been attacked for approving pandemic-related mask policies and many are facing physical threats linked to “propaganda purporting the false inclusion of critical race theory” in the curriculum.

NSBA cited nearly two dozen examples, including a school board meeting in Michigan where a person protesting masking yelled a Nazi salute and the arrest of an Illinois man who allegedly hit a school official at a meeting.

A letter sent to a school board member in Ohio reportedly said: “You are forcing them to wear [a] mask — for no reason in this world other than control. And for that you will pay dearly.”

The hostility is forcing school board members tasked with approving school budgets and policies — many of whom are unpaid — to resign or not seek another term, according to NSBA.

The association requested that federal authorities examine whether the threats and violence amount to violations of federal laws governing domestic terrorism and civil rights.

It also asked the Justice Department, FBI, the Department of Homeland Security, the Secret Service and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service to assess threat levels and intervene when possible.

Heeding their call, Mr. Garland directed the FBI and state attorneys generals to meet with federal, state, local, tribal and territorial leaders to develop strategies and communication lines for threat reports, assessment and response by Nov. 3.

The attorney general also said the Justice Department is planning to announce a series of actions to address the uptick in criminal conduct against school officials.

“The department takes these incidents seriously and is committed to using its authority and resources to discourage these threats, identify them when they occur, and prosecute them when appropriate,” he said.

Chip Slaven, NSBA interim executive director and CEO, applauded DOJ’s “swift” action in response to the association’s request.

“Over the last few weeks, school board members and other education leaders have received death threats and have been subjected to threats and harassment, both online and in person,” Mr. Slaven said in a statement on Monday.

The department’s effort “is a strong message to individuals with violent intent who are focused on causing chaos, disrupting our public schools and driving wedges between school boards and the parents, students, and communities they serve,” he said.

Meanwhile, Neal McCluskey, director of the Center for Educational Freedom at The Cato Institute, warned of the potential consequences linked to the NSBA’s request.

“While protestors have been unruly, and some physical altercations have occurred, this request threatens to chill even legitimate speech about what school districts teach or do not teach, or policies they have, citing several examples that appear to be clear political speech as criminally threatening,” Mr. McCluskey said in a statement last week.

From: Klapper, Matthew B. (OAG)
Subject: DOJ Weekly Report
To: Murray, Tara EOP/WHO
Cc: DL EOP Cabinet Reports; Washington, Tracy T (OAG)
Sent: October 7, 2021 6:49 PM (UTC-04:00)
Attached: DOJ Weekly Report 10.07.21.docx

Attached! Sorry for delay – we're on the road.

From: Mitchell, Kendall M. (PAO)
Subject: WH Press Briefing
To: Iverson, Dena (PAO); Coley, Anthony D. (PAO)
Sent: October 6, 2021 6:17 PM (UTC-04:00)

The livestream of the press briefing started pretty late.

Reporter: “A week ago, the National School Boards Association wrote to the President to say they their teachers feel like some parents protesting recently could be the equivalent to a form of domestic terrorism. And then the Attorney General put the FBI on the case. So does the Administration agree...parents upset about their kids’ curriculums could be considered domestic terrorism?”

Psaki: “Well, let me unravel this a little. The National School Boards Association is not a part of the U.S. government, I’d point you to them. What the Department of Justice said in a letter from the Attorney General is that ‘threats against public servants are not only illegal, they run counter to our nation’s core values.’ That is true. These were threats against public servants, threats against members of the school board. Regardless of the reasoning, threats of violence against public servants is illegal. That’s what he was conveying from the Department of Justice.”

Reporter: “But the Department of Justice does now have the FBI on this. Something that the school board is asking for is the Administration to consider using the Patriot Act to investigate some of these school board protestors. Would the Administration be okay with the FBI using the Patriot Act to surveil these parents, if that is what they decide?”

Psaki: “I don’t speak on behalf of the National School Board Association, I speak on behalf of this government. The Attorney General has put out a letter, they will take action and I would point you to them for more information.”

Kendall Mitchell

Press Assistant // Office of Public Affairs
U.S. Department of Justice

c: (b) (6)
e: (b) (6)

**OPA Nightly Look Ahead
October 5**

Stories of Note:

Scoped Out Per Agreement

- **Reporting on school board threats memo**

Numerous outlets reported on the Attorney General's memo addressing violent threats against school board members, officials, and other school personnel. Editorialists on FOX news and other outlets mischaracterized the memo as targeting parents' free speech and those opposing "critical race theory" curricula and COVID-19 public health measures. A department spokesperson pushed back: "There has been misinformation circulated that the Attorney General's directive is an effort to silence those with particular views about COVID-related policies, school curricula, or other topics of public discussion. This is simply not true. As stated clearly in the Attorney General's guidance to the FBI and United States Attorney's Offices, the Department's efforts are about rooting out criminal threats of violence, not about any particular ideology." FOX modified an opinion segment on air and apologized to OPA for a headline that falsely stated DOJ was considering "labeling parents as 'terrorists'" (Hornbuckle)

Scoped Out Per Agreement

From: McDowell, Ephraim A. EOP/WHO
Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE: NSBA Letter to the President
To: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)
Sent: September 30, 2021 9:26 AM (UTC-04:00)

Thanks, Kevin. I appreciate it.

From: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6)
Sent: Thursday, September 30, 2021 9:25 AM
To: McDowell, Ephraim A. EOP/WHO (b) (6)
Subject: RE: NSBA Letter to the President

Thanks, Ephraim. We're discussing internally and I will reach back out to you soon. To manage expectations, it will not be before this letter is sent to the President.

Best,
Kevin

From: McDowell, Ephraim A. EOP/WHO (b) (6)
Sent: Thursday, September 30, 2021 9:11 AM
To: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] NSBA Letter to the President

Hi Kevin – Please find attached a letter that the National School Boards Association will be sending to the President today. Let me know if you've had a chance to think through the issues (b) (5). It would be great to have an update at some point soon. Thanks!

From: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)
Subject: Re: Documents referenced in TF meeting
To: (b)(6) per CRT (CRT)
Sent: October 14, 2021 8:48 AM (UTC-04:00)

This makes good sense. (b)(6) per CRT mentioned that there may be (b) (5) , though I don't remember quite where we left the conversation. I'll find the thread and forward.

One way or the other I fully appreciate that CRT authority may be limited.

Sent from my iPhone

On Oct 14, 2021, at 8:42 AM, (b)(6) per CRT (CRT) (b) (6) wrote:

Kevin,

Thanks so much for including me in today's meeting. I wanted to quickly follow up on two things that you raised. First, please let me know if you need any assistance coordinating with the Department of Education. I'd be happy to put you in touch with folks there, if needed.

Second, you mentioned the possibility that (b) (5)

As a general matter, (b) (5)

I'll continue to give this some thought but wanted to share these immediate reactions. And again, please let me know if you need any contacts at the Department of Ed.

Thanks,
(b)(6) per CRT

(b)(6) per CRT
(b) (6) Educational Opportunities Section
U.S. Department of Justice
Civil Rights Division
(b) (6) (work mobile)

From: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)
Sent: Wednesday, October 13, 2021 5:32 PM
To: (b)(6) per CRT (CRT) (b) (6); (b)(6) per CRT (CRT)
(b) (6); (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per EOUSA (USAEO) (b) (6), (b) (7)(C); (b)(6) per EOUSA
(USAEO) (b) (6); (b) (6); (OJP/OVC)
(b) (6); (b) (6); (OJP) (b) (6); (b) (6)
(JMD) (b) (6); (b) (6); (CRS) (b) (6); (b) (6)
(CRS) (b) (6); (b) (6); (CRS) (b) (6); (b)(6) per CRM
(CRM) (b) (6); (b)(6) per CRM (CRM) (b) (6)

(b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per F (CTD) (FBI) (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI, (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per FBI (CID) (FBI) (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI, (b)(6) per NSD
(NSD) (b) (6)

Cc: Matthews-Johnson, Tamarra D. (OAG) (b) (6)

Subject: Documents referenced in TF meeting

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.11997

Before we meet, OAG has asked for a working list of **federal** statutes potentially applicable to threats made against school board members and school administrators, and workers. The below includes that list to date, based on conversations and input received from components related to this and other threats responses. Please supplement with any other potentially applicable statutes as appropriate. With apologies for the timing, please provide any supplements to me by end of day tomorrow. As simple citation to the statute is fine.

Many thanks,
Kevin

(b) (5)

(b) (5)

From: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)

Sent: Friday, October 8, 2021 2:32 PM

To: Polite, Kenneth (CRM) (b) (6); McQuaid, Nicholas (CRM) (b) (6)
Clarke, Kristen (CRT) (b) (6); Moossy, Robert (CRT) (b) (6); Greenberg, Jay
(CID) (FBI) (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI; Langan, Timothy R. Jr. (CTD) (FBI) (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI; Jensen, Steven J. (CTD) (FBI)
(b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI; Wilkinson, Monty (USAE0) (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per EOUSA; Wong, Norman (USAE0)
(b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per EOUSA; Lesko, Mark (NSD) (b) (6); Toscas, George (NSD)
(b) (6); Wiegmann, Brad (NSD) (b) (6); Ratliff, Gerri L (JMD)
(b) (6); Darke Schmitt, Katherine (OJP/OVC) (b) (6); Monroe,
Becky (OASG) (b) (6); Solomon, Amy (OJP) (b) (6)
Cc: Newman, David A. (ODAG) (b) (6); Braden, Myesha (ODAG)
(b) (6); Singh, Anita M. (ODAG) (b) (6)
Subject: RE: Task Force Representatives: School Board and School Worker Threats

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.5889

From: (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per EOUSA (USAEO)
Subject: RE: Task Force Welcome / Request for Statutes
To: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)
Cc: (b)(6) per EOUSA (USAEO)
Sent: October 11, 2021 5:10 PM (UTC-04:00)

Hi, Kevin:

So good to hear from you. We need to catch up sometime!

Looking at the list, my only thought is (b) (5)
could arguably also apply.

Catch you later!

(b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per EOUSA

Trial Attorney

Detailed to the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia

Federal Major Crimes Section

555 4th St., N.W.

Washington, DC 20530

Phone: (b) (6), (b) (7)(C)

From: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6)
Sent: Sunday, October 10, 2021 12:35 PM
To: (b) (6) (CRT) (b) (6); (b) (6) (CRT) (b) (6);
(b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per EOUSA (USAEO) (b) (6), (b) (7)(C); (b)(6) per EOUSA (USAEO) (b) (6);
(b) (6); (b) (6) (OJP/OVC) (b) (6); (b) (6) (b) (6)
(OJP) (b) (6); (b) (6) (JMD) (b) (6); (b) (6) (CRS)
(b) (6); (b) (6) (CRS) (b) (6); (b) (6) (CRS)
(b) (6)
Cc: Polite, Kenneth (CRM) (b) (6); McQuaid, Nicholas (CRM) (b) (6);
Greenberg, Jay (CID) (FBI) (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI; Langan, Timothy R. Jr. (CTD) (FBI) (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI; Jensen,
Steven J. (CTD) (FBI) (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI; Lesko, Mark (NSD) (b) (6); Toscas, George (NSD)
(b) (6); Wiegmann, Brad (NSD) (b) (6)
Subject: Task Force Welcome / Request for Statutes

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.11846

From: Matthews-Johnson, Tamarra D. (OAG)
Subject: Re: Task Force Welcome / Request for Statutes
To: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)
Sent: October 10, 2021 10:31 PM (UTC-04:00)

Thanks for sending!

On Oct 10, 2021, at 6:52 PM, Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6) wrote:

Re (b) (5)

(b) (6). Will have limited avail, but will continue to track.

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)" (b) (6)
Date: October 10, 2021 at 6:28:53 PM EDT
To: "McQuaid, Nicholas (CRM)" (b) (6)
Subject: Fwd: Task Force Welcome / Request for Statutes

Nick,

Who in CRM would know about (b) (5) below in (b) (6) per CRT's note below?

Thx

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: (b)(6) per CRT (CRT)" (b) (6)
Date: October 10, 2021 at 5:30:31 PM EDT
To: "Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)" (b) (6)
Subject: RE: Task Force Welcome / Request for Statutes

Kevin –

To be clear, (b) (5)

However,

we'll see what we may have compiled. The folks in Criminal may have monographs or jury instructions that touch cover the issue in some depth.

(b)(6) per CRT

Special Legal Counsel
Criminal Section
Civil Rights Division
U.S. Department of Justice

(b) (6) (o)

(b) (6) (c)

From: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)

Sent: Sunday, October 10, 2021 2:42 PM

To: (b)(6) per CRT (CRT) (b) (6)

Subject: Re: Task Force Welcome / Request for Statutes

Thanks, (b)(6) per CRT. Particularly on a Sunday.

One question I had is whether (b) (5)

[REDACTED]

So I guess the questions are

- 1) (b) (5), and
- 2) (b) (5).

Thanks!

Sent from my iPhone


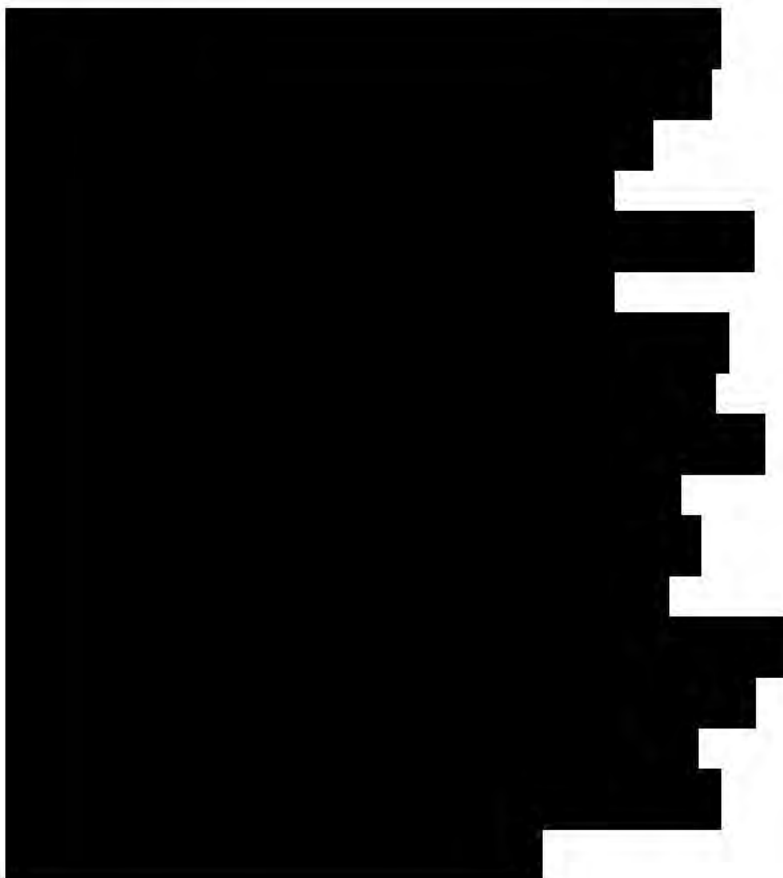
On Oct 10, 2021, at 1:48 PM, (b)(6) per CRT (CRT)
(b) (6) wrote:

Kevin,

(b) (5)

[REDACTED]

(b) (5)

A large rectangular area of the document is completely redacted with a solid black box.A large rectangular area of the document is completely redacted with a solid black box.A large rectangular area of the document is completely redacted with a solid black box.

(b)(6) per CRT
Special Legal Counsel
Criminal Section
Civil Rights Division
U.S. Department of Justice

(b) (6) (o)
(b) (6) (c)

From: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)

Sent: Sunday, October 10, 2021 12:35 PM

To: (b)(6) per CRT (CRT) (b) (6)

(b)(6) per CRT (CRT) (b) (6)

(USAE0) (b) (6), (b) (7)(C)

(USAE0) (b) (6)

(b) (6)

(OJP/OVC)

(b) (6)

; (b) (6) (OJP)

(b) (6)

; (b) (6)

(JMD)

(b) (6)

; (b) (6)

(CRS)

(b) (6)

; (b) (6)

(CRS)

(b) (6)

; (b) (6)

(CRS)

(b) (6)

Cc: Polite, Kenneth (CRM) (b) (6)

; McQuaid,

Nicholas (CRM) (b) (6)

; Greenberg, Jay

(CID) (FBI) (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI; Langan, Timothy R. Jr. (CTD)

(FBI) (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI; Jensen, Steven J. (CTD) (FBI)

(b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI; Lesko, Mark (NSD)

(b) (6)

; Toscas, George (NSD)

(b) (6)

; Wiegmann, Brad (NSD)

(b) (6)

Subject: Task Force Welcome / Request for Statutes

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.11846

From: (b)(6) per CRT (CRT)
Subject: Re: Task Force Welcome / Request for Statutes
To: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)
Sent: October 10, 2021 3:52 PM (UTC-04:00)

All good questions. We can pull together some research. I'll have someone in the office get on it right away.

Sent from my iPhone

On Oct 10, 2021, at 2:42 PM, Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6) wrote:

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.11499

From: (b) (6) (OJP/OVC)
Subject: RE: Task Force Welcome / Request for Statutes
To: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)
Cc: (b) (6) (OJP)
Sent: October 10, 2021 12:44 PM (UTC-04:00)

Hi Kevin. OJP doesn't have any particular statutes that authorize activities to protect school boards. (b) (5)

(b) (5)

(b) (6)

(b) (6)

Chief of Staff
Office of the Assistant Attorney General
Office of Justice Programs | US Department of Justice

C: (b) (6)

From: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)

Sent: Sunday, October 10, 2021 12:35 PM

To: (b) (6) per CRT (CRT) (b) (6); (b) (6) per CRT (CRT) (b) (6);
(b) (6), (b) (7)(C) per EOUSA (USAEO) (b) (6), (b) (7)(C); (b) (6) per EOUSA (USAEO) (b) (6);
(b) (6); (b) (6) (OJP/OVC) (b) (6); (b) (6) (OJP) (b) (6); (b) (6) (JMD) (b) (6); (b) (6) (CRS);
(b) (6); (b) (6) (CRS); (b) (6); (b) (6) (CRS);

Cc: Polite, Kenneth (CRM) (b) (6); McQuaid, Nicholas (CRM) (b) (6);
Greenberg, Jay (CID) (FBI) (b) (6); (b) (7)(E) per FBI; Langan, Timothy R. Jr. (CTD) (FBI) (b) (6); (b) (7)(E) per FBI; Jensen,
Steven J. (CTD) (FBI) (b) (6); (b) (7)(E) per FBI; Lesko, Mark (NSD) (b) (6); Toscas, George (NSD)
(b) (6); Wiegmann, Brad (NSD) (b) (6)

Subject: Task Force Welcome / Request for Statutes

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.11846

From: Darke Schmitt, Katherine (OJP/OVC)
Subject: RE: Task Force Representatives: School Board and School Worker Threats
To: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)
Cc: Solomon, Amy (OJP); Betsy Pearl
Sent: October 6, 2021 2:02 PM (UTC-04:00)

Hi Kevin- thanks for the opportunity to participate!

(b) (6) and (b) (6) will represent OJP.

(b) (6)

(b) (6)

Katherine Darke Schmitt
Chief of Staff
Office of the Assistant Attorney General
Office of Justice Programs | US Department of Justice

C: (b) (6)

From: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)
Sent: Wednesday, October 6, 2021 9:03 AM
To: Polite, Kenneth (CRM) (b) (6); McQuaid, Nicholas (CRM) (b) (6);
Clarke, Kristen (CRT) (b) (6); Moossy, Robert (CRT) (b) (6); Greenberg, Jay
(CID) (FBI) (b) (6); (b) (7) (E) per FBI; Langan, Timothy R. Jr. (CTD) (FBI) (b) (6); (b) (7) (E) per FBI; Jensen, Steven J. (CTD) (FBI)
(b) (6); (b) (7) (E) per FBI; Wilkinson, Monty (USAEO) (b) (6); (b) (7) (C) per EOUSA; Wong, Norman (USAEO)
(b) (6); (b) (7) (C) per EOUSA; Lesko, Mark (NSD) (b) (6); Toscas, George (NSD)
(b) (6); Wiegmann, Brad (NSD) (b) (6); Ratliff, Gerri L (JMD)
(b) (6); Darke Schmitt, Katherine (OJP/OVC) (b) (6); Monroe,
Becky (OASG) (b) (6); Solomon, Amy (OJP) (b) (6)
Cc: Newman, David A. (ODAG) (b) (6); Braden, Myesha (ODAG)
(b) (6); Singh, Anita M. (ODAG) (b) (6)
Subject: Task Force Representatives: School Board and School Worker Threats

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.5889

From: Braden, Myesha (ODAG)
Subject: Re: Task Force Representatives: School Board and School Worker Threats
To: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)
Sent: October 6, 2021 10:31 AM (UTC-04:00)

Kevin,

(b) (5), it would make sense to (b) (5).

Best,

Myesha

Sent from my iPhone

On Oct 6, 2021, at 9:02 AM, Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6) wrote:

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.5889

From: Cochran, Shaylyn (CRT)
Subject: RE: Task Force Representatives: School Board and School Worker Threats
To: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)
Cc: Clarke, Kristen (CRT)
Sent: October 6, 2021 10:28 AM (UTC-04:00)

Good Morning Kevin,

On behalf of AAG Clarke, CRT designates (b) (6) (Educational Opportunities Section) and (b) (6) (Criminal Section) to this task force. Please let me know if I can be of further assistance.

Best,
Shaylyn

Shaylyn Cochran

Chief of Staff
Office of the Assistant Attorney General
Civil Rights Division
U.S. Department of Justice
(b) (6) (work cell)
(b) (6)

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)" (b) (6)
Date: October 6, 2021 at 9:02:45 AM EDT
To: "Polite, Kenneth (CRM)" (b) (6) >, "McQuaid, Nicholas (CRM)" (b) (6) >, "Clarke, Kristen (CRT)" (b) (6) >, "Moossy, Robert (CRT)" (b) (6) >, "Greenberg, Jay (CID) (FBI)" (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI, "Langan, Timothy R. Jr. (CTD) (FBI)" (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI, "Jensen, Steven J. (CTD) (FBI)" (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI, "Wilkinson, Monty (USAEO)" (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per EOUSA, "Wong, Norman (USAEO)" (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per EOUSA, "Lesko, Mark (NSD)" (b) (6) >, "Toscas, George (NSD)" (b) (6) >, "Wiegmann, Brad (NSD)" (b) (6) >, "Ratliff, Gerri L (JMD)" (b) (6) >, "Darke Schmitt, Katherine (OJP/OVC)" (b) (6) >, "Monroe, Becky (OASG)" (b) (6) >, "Solomon, Amy (OJP)" (b) (6) >
Cc: "Newman, David A. (ODAG)" (b) (6) >, "Braden, Myesha (ODAG)" (b) (6) >, "Singh, Anita M. (ODAG)" (b) (6) >
Subject: Task Force Representatives: School Board and School Worker Threats

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.5889

From: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)
Subject: RE: Task Force Representatives: School Board and School Worker Threats
To: Wilkinson, Monty (USAEO)
Sent: October 6, 2021 10:22 AM (UTC-04:00)

Thank you Monty!

From: Wilkinson, Monty (USAEO) (b) (6)
Sent: Wednesday, October 6, 2021 10:11 AM
To: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6)
Subject: RE: Task Force Representatives: School Board and School Worker Threats

Kevin-
(b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per EOUSA and (b)(6) per EOUSA will represent EOUSA on the Task Force.
Please let us know if you have any questions.
Thanks,
Monty

From: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6)
Sent: Wednesday, October 6, 2021 9:03 AM
To: Polite, Kenneth (CRM) (b) (6); McQuaid, Nicholas (CRM) (b) (6)
Clarke, Kristen (CRT) (b) (6); Moossy, Robert (CRT) (b) (6); Greenberg, Jay
(CID) (FBI) (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI; Langan, Timothy R. Jr. (CTD) (FBI) (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI; Jensen, Steven J. (CTD) (FBI)
(b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI; Wilkinson, Monty (USAEO) (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per EOUSA; Wong, Norman (USAEO)
(b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per EOUSA; Lesko, Mark (NSD) (b) (6); Toscas, George (NSD)
(b) (6); Wiegmann, Brad (NSD) (b) (6); Ratliff, Gerri L (JMD)
(b) (6); Darke Schmitt, Katherine (OJP/OVC) (b) (6); Monroe,
Becky (OASG) (b) (6); Solomon, Amy (OJP) (b) (6)
Cc: Newman, David A. (ODAG) (b) (6); Braden, Myesha (ODAG)
(b) (6); Singh, Anita M. (ODAG) (b) (6)
Subject: Task Force Representatives: School Board and School Worker Threats

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.5889

From: Singh, Anita M. (ODAG)
Subject: Fwd: Task Force Representatives: School Board and School Worker Threats
To: Carlin, John P. (ODAG)
Sent: October 6, 2021 9:04 AM (UTC-04:00)

Just FYSA.

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)" (b) (6)
Date: October 6, 2021 at 9:02:45 AM EDT
To: "Polite, Kenneth (CRM)" (b) (6), "McQuaid, Nicholas (CRM)" (b) (6), "Clarke, Kristen (CRT)" (b) (6), "Moosy, Robert (CRT)" (b) (6), "Greenberg, Jay (CID) (FBI)" (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI, "Langan, Timothy R. Jr. (CTD) (FBI)" (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI, "Jensen, Steven J. (CTD) (FBI)" (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI, "Wilkinson, Monty (USAEO)" (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per EOUSA, "Wong, Norman (USAEO)" (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per EOUSA, "Lesko, Mark (NSD)" (b) (6), "Toscas, George (NSD)" (b) (6), "Wiegmann, Brad (NSD)" (b) (6), "Ratliff, Gerri L (JMD)" (b) (6), "Darke Schmitt, Katherine (OJP/OVC)" (b) (6), "Monroe, Becky (OASG)" (b) (6), "Solomon, Amy (OJP)" (b) (6)
Cc: "Newman, David A. (ODAG)" (b) (6), "Braden, Myesha (ODAG)" (b) (6), "Singh, Anita M. (ODAG)" (b) (6)
Subject: Task Force Representatives: School Board and School Worker Threats

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.5889

From: Singh, Anita M. (ODAG)
Subject: RE: DRAFT EMAIL: DOJ [School Administrator Threats] Task Force
To: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)
Sent: October 5, 2021 2:54 PM (UTC-04:00)

Sounds good. Thanks.

From: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6)
Sent: Tuesday, October 5, 2021 2:53 PM
To: Singh, Anita M. (ODAG) (b) (6)
Subject: RE: DRAFT EMAIL: DOJ [School Administrator Threats] Task Force

Thanks,

Unless you disagree I'll plan to send to head of each component and seconds who've been involved in the process. FBI is a little trickier and I'll send to the ADs for CTS and CID. Will also send to relevant ODAG (Myesha, Iris, David)

Will get out this evening.

CRM Polite (AAG), McQuaid (PDAAG)
CRT Clarke (AAG), Moossy (DAAG Criminal Section)
FBI Greenberg (Acting AD CID); Langan (AD CTD); Jensen (GC)
EOUSA Wilkinson (Director), Wong (Dep. Director)
NSD Lesko (A/AAG); Toscas (DAAG); Wiegmann (DAAG)
OJP Sullivan (AAG);
CRS Ratliff (A/Dir)

From: Singh, Anita M. (ODAG) (b) (6)
Sent: Tuesday, October 5, 2021 1:22 PM
To: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6); Carlin, John P. (ODAG) (b) (6)
Subject: RE: DRAFT EMAIL: DOJ [School Administrator Threats] Task Force

Thanks, Kevin. My edits below (largely non-substantive – (b) (5)
(b) (5) Given the way we have handled other similar TFs after they were announced (and this one was captured in yesterday's PR), this can come from you to component heads since you have been running point so far. This would commit you to calendaring a meeting next week. If you are good with this, you are free to launch. Happy to answer any questions. Thanks!

(b) (5)

(b) (5)

From: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6)

Sent: Tuesday, October 5, 2021 12:43 PM

To: Carlin, John P. (ODAG) (b) (6); Singh, Anita M. (ODAG) (b) (6)

Subject: DRAFT EMAIL: DOJ [School Administrator Threats] Task Force

John/Anita

A decent amount of incoming (internally and from press other agencies) about POCs and asking for more detail about the TF. We should probably try to get it up and running sooner than later. If we want to start with an email to components, I've drafted something below.

(b) (5)

From: Press
Subject: FW: [EXTERNAL] Media Inquiry from Alex Nester - Washington Free Beacon
To: Coley, Anthony D. (PAO)
Cc: Gelber, Sophie (PAO); Press
Sent: October 5, 2021 12:09 PM (UTC-04:00)

-----Original Message-----

From: no-reply@usdoj.gov <no-reply@usdoj.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, October 5, 2021 10:57 AM
To: Press <Press@jmd.usdoj.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Media Inquiry from Alex Nester - Washington Free Beacon

Date Tuesday, October 5, 2021 - 10:56am EDT

Name: Alex Nester

Email Address: (b) (6)

Topic: Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

Media Outlet: Washington Free Beacon

Deadline: 3:00 PM today, Tuesday, October 5

Inquiry:
To whom it may concern:

I'm emailing to inquire about the AG Garland's memorandum directing the FBI and state attorneys general to investigate parents who intimidate or harass public school officials at school board meetings.

Did the letter from the National School Board Association influence the Attorney General's decision? Is there a specific case of parents threatening district officials with violence? There have been such cases in reverse, as we've seen in Fairfax County, Virginia.

Will law enforcement also investigate cases of school board officials who intimidate and harass parents?

There was also a Democratic official in Prince Williams County, Virginia, who screamed expletives at parents.

Any statement or response would be appreciated

Thanks so much,
Alex

From: Iverson, Dena (PAO)
Subject: RE: MSNBC's All In with Chris Hayes - tonight, Tues., 10/5
To: Pietranton, Kelsey (PAO)
Cc: Coley, Anthony D. (PAO)
Sent: October 5, 2021 11:32 AM (UTC-04:00)

Oh, I saw...

Dena Iverson
Principal Deputy Director, Office of Public Affairs
U.S. Department of Justice

(b) (6) - Office
(b) (6) - Cell
(b) (6)

From: Pietranton, Kelsey (PAO) (b) (6)
Sent: Tuesday, October 5, 2021 11:32 AM
To: Iverson, Dena (PAO) (b) (6)
Cc: Coley, Anthony D. (PAO) (b) (6)
Subject: Re: MSNBC's All In with Chris Hayes - tonight, Tues., 10/5

Hawley went OFF on this. Coons coming to defense now.

Kelsey Pietranton
Office of Public Affairs
Department of Justice

(o) (b) (6)
(m) (b) (6)

On Oct 5, 2021, at 11:30 AM, Iverson, Dena (PAO) (b) (6) wrote:

FYI

Dena Iverson
Principal Deputy Director, Office of Public Affairs
U.S. Department of Justice

(b) (6) - Office
(b) (6) - Cell
(b) (6)

From: Shamis, Diane (NBCUniversal) (b) (6)
Sent: Tuesday, October 5, 2021 11:21 AM
To: Iverson, Dena (PAO) (b) (6); Saez, Mariel S. EOP/WHO
(b) (6)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] MSNBC's All In with Chris Hayes - tonight, Tues., 10/5

Would Merrick Garland or Vanita Gupta or Lisa Monaco please be able to join Chris on MSNBC's All In with Chris Hayes tonight, Tuesday, 10/5 in the 8-9pm hour to discuss the Department of Justice response to ongoing threats against school board members, educators and school workers?

Can connect via our mobile studio or through Skype, FaceTime or Zoom.

Thank you so much for your kind consideration of this request.

**Respectfully,
Diane**

--

**Diane Shamis
Editorial & Senior Booking Producer
MSNBC's All In with Chris Hayes**

(b) (6)

(b) (6)

<image001.jpg>

From: Iverson, Dena (PAO)
Subject: FW: MSNBC's All In with Chris Hayes - tonight, Tues., 10/5
To: Gupta, Vanita (OASG)
Sent: October 5, 2021 11:30 AM (UTC-04:00)

Going to decline and gently remind her that these issues are not within the associate's portfolio so she doesn't think we're just always saying no just because.

Dena Iverson
Principal Deputy Director, Office of Public Affairs
U.S. Department of Justice

(b) (6) - Office
(b) (6) - Cell
(b) (6)

From: Shamis, Diane (NBCUniversal) (b) (6)
Sent: Tuesday, October 5, 2021 11:21 AM
To: Iverson, Dena (PAO) (b) (6); Saez, Mariel S. EOP/WHO (b) (6)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] MSNBC's All In with Chris Hayes - tonight, Tues., 10/5

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.10767

From: Coley, Anthony D. (PAO)
Subject: FW: [EXTERNAL] Justice Department Addresses Violent Threats Against School Officials and Teachers
To: Bates, Andrew J. EOP/WHO; Gwin, Michael J. EOP/WHO
Cc: Iverson, Dena (PAO)
Sent: October 4, 2021 6:12 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: USDOJ-Office of Public Affairs <USDOJ-OfficeofPublicAffairs@public.govdelivery.com>
Sent: Monday, October 4, 2021 6:08 PM
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Justice Department Addresses Violent Threats Against School Officials and Teachers

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.29149



From: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)
Subject: RE: IMPORTANT: Attorney General Memorandum - Partnership Among Federal, State, Local, Tribal and Territorial Law Enforcement to Address Threats Against School Administrators , Board Members, Teachers, and Staff
To: Singh, Anita M. (ODAG)
Sent: October 4, 2021 4:22 PM (UTC-04:00)
Thank you.

-----Original Message-----

From: Singh, Anita M. (ODAG) (b) (6)
Sent: Monday, October 4, 2021 4:21 PM
To: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6); Carlin, John P. (ODAG) (b) (6)
Cc: Lin, Frank (ODAG) (b) (6); Suero, Maya A. (ODAG) (b) (6)
Brockman, Audrey (ODAG) (b) (6)
Subject: FW: IMPORTANT: Attorney General Memorandum - Partnership Among Federal, State, Local, Tribal and Territorial Law Enforcement to Address Threats Against School Administrators , Board Members, Teachers, and Staff

FYI JPC/Kevin, and team - for hard copies. PR to go around 5 pm per OPA.

-----Original Message-----

From: Lofthus, Lee J (JMD) (b) (6) >
Sent: Monday, October 4, 2021 4:12 PM
To: Abbate, Paul M. (DO) (FBI) (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI; Sallet, Jeffrey S. (DO) (FBI) (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI; Polite, Kenneth (CRM) (b) (6); Wilkinson, Monty (USAEO) (b) (6)
Cc: Klapper, Matthew B. (OAG) (b) (6); Singh, Anita M. (ODAG) (b) (6)
Coley, Anthony D. (PAO) (b) (6); Iverson, Dena (PAO) (b) (6); Harwood, Stacy (OAG) (b) (6); (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per FBI
(DO) (FBI) (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI
Subject: IMPORTANT: Attorney General Memorandum - Partnership Among Federal, State, Local, Tribal and Territorial Law Enforcement to Address Threats Against School Administrators , Board Members, Teachers, and Staff

All - please see the attached memorandum from the Attorney General. Thank you. Lee

Lee J. Lofthus
Assistant Attorney General for Administration U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington DC 20530
(b) (6)

From: Darke Schmitt, Katherine (OJP/OVC)
Subject: RE: FOR IMMEDIATE REVIEW: Draft AG Memo Re: School Board Threats and Draft Press Release
To: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)
Sent: October 4, 2021 3:28 PM (UTC-04:00)

No concerns from OJP.

(b) (6)

Katherine Darke Schmitt
Chief of Staff
Office of the Assistant Attorney General
Office of Justice Programs | US Department of Justice

C: (b) (6)

From: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)
Sent: Monday, October 4, 2021 3:00 PM
To: Jensen, Steven J. (CTD) (FBI) <sjjensen@fbi.gov>; McQuaid, Nicholas (CRM) (b) (6);
Moossy, Robert (CRT) (b) (6); Wilkinson, Monty (USAEO) (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per EOUSA; Toscas,
George (NSD) (b) (6); Darke Schmitt, Katherine (OJP/OVC)
(b) (6); Tarasca, James A. (CTD) (FBI) (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI; Blue, Matt (NSD)
(b) (6); Langan, Timothy R. Jr. (CTD) (FBI) (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI; (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per FBI (CTD) (FBI)
(b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI; (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per FBI (CTD) (FBI) (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI; Vorndran, Kevin (CTD) (FBI)
(b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI; Lesko, Mark (NSD) (b) (6); Wiegmann, Brad (NSD)
(b) (6); Driscoll, Kevin (CRM) (b) (6); >; Rossi, Rachel (OASG)
(b) (6); Monroe, Becky (OASG) (b) (6); Wong, Norman (USAEO)
(b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per EOUSA
Cc: Braden, Myesha (ODAG) (b) (6); Newman, David A. (ODAG)
(b) (6); Lan, Iris (ODAG) (b) (6)
Subject: FOR IMMEDIATE REVIEW: Draft AG Memo Re: School Board Threats and Draft Press Release

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.5740

From: Brockman, Audrey (ODAG)
Subject: RE: Meeting: Kevin Chambers
To: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)
Sent: October 4, 2021 3:28 PM (UTC-04:00)

Will do. Thanks!

From: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6)
Sent: Monday, October 4, 2021 3:27 PM
To: Brockman, Audrey (ODAG) (b) (6)
Subject: RE: Meeting: Kevin Chambers

We can pull this. It was for the School Threats item. John and I have spent some quality time on it this weekend.

-----Original Appointment-----

From: Brockman, Audrey (ODAG) (b) (6) **On Behalf Of** Carlin, John P. (ODAG)
Sent: Monday, October 4, 2021 3:26 PM
To: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)
Subject: Meeting: Kevin Chambers
When: Tuesday, October 5, 2021 11:00 AM-11:30 AM (UTC-05:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada).
Where: Room 4208 Main Justice Building

Attendees: John Carlin, Kevin Chambers

From: Hornbuckle, Wyn (PAO)
Subject: RE: Draft PR
To: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)
Sent: October 4, 2021 3:25 PM (UTC-04:00)
Attached: AG Memo Threats Against School Workers 10-4-2021 1515.docx

You mean (b) (5) or something else?

From: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6)
Sent: Monday, October 4, 2021 3:21 PM
To: Singh, Anita M. (ODAG) (b) (6); Hornbuckle, Wyn (PAO) (b) (6)
Coley, Anthony D. (PAO) (b) (6)
Subject: RE: Draft PR

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.6846

From: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)
Subject: RE: FOR IMMEDIATE REVIEW: Draft AG Memo Re: School Board Threats and Draft Press Release
To: Braden, Myesha (ODAG)
Sent: October 4, 2021 3:21 PM (UTC-04:00)

Hi, Myesha:

Good points. (b) (5)

kAC

From: Braden, Myesha (ODAG) (b) (6)
Sent: Monday, October 4, 2021 3:18 PM
To: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6)
Subject: RE: FOR IMMEDIATE REVIEW: Draft AG Memo Re: School Board Threats and Draft Press Release

Kevin,

I think the training paragraph will trigger lots of questions: Which DOJ component is creating/presenting the training? When will it be available? Is the training available to anyone or is it of limited availability? How will local school boards gain access to the training?

If we can't answer these as soon as the PR goes out, perhaps we should (b) (5).

Best,

Myesha

From: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6)
Sent: Monday, October 4, 2021 3:00 PM
To: Jensen, Steven J. (CTD) (FBI) (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI; McQuaid, Nicholas (CRM) (b) (6); Moosy, Robert (CRT) (b) (6); Wilkinson, Monty (USAEO) (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per EOUSA; Toscas, George (NSD) (b) (6); Darke Schmitt, Katherine (OJP/OVC) (b) (6); Tarasca, James A. (CTD) (FBI) (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI; Blue, Matt (NSD) (b) (6); Langan, Timothy R. Jr. (CTD) (FBI) (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI; (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per FBI (CTD) (FBI) (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI; (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per FBI (CTD) (FBI) (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI; Vorndran, Kevin (CTD) (FBI) (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI; Lesko, Mark (NSD) (b) (6); Wiegmann, Brad (NSD) (b) (6); Driscoll, Kevin (CRM) (b) (6); Rossi, Rachel (OASG) (b) (6); Monroe, Becky (OASG) (b) (6); Wong, Norman (USAEO) (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per EOUSA
Cc: Braden, Myesha (ODAG) (b) (6); Newman, David A. (ODAG) (b) (6); Lan, Iris (ODAG) (b) (6)
Subject: FOR IMMEDIATE REVIEW: Draft AG Memo Re: School Board Threats and Draft Press Release

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.5740

From: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)
Subject: RE: FOR IMMEDIATE REVIEW: Draft AG Memo Re: School Board Threats and Draft Press Release
To: Wilkinson, Monty (USAEO)
Sent: October 4, 2021 3:18 PM (UTC-04:00)

Many thanks, Monty.

From: Wilkinson, Monty (USAEO) (b) (6)
Sent: Monday, October 4, 2021 3:17 PM
To: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6)
Cc: Wong, Norman (USAEO) (b) (6)
Subject: RE: FOR IMMEDIATE REVIEW: Draft AG Memo Re: School Board Threats and Draft Press Release

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.6831

From: Hornbuckle, Wyn (PAO)
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] Media Inquiry from Sophia Tulp - The Associated Press
To: Coley, Anthony D. (PAO); Press
Cc: Gelber, Sophie (PAO)
Sent: October 5, 2021 12:24 PM (UTC-04:00)
Yes, will do

-----Original Message-----

From: Coley, Anthony D. (PAO) (b) (6)
Sent: Tuesday, October 5, 2021 12:23 PM
To: Press <Press@jmd.usdoj.gov>; Hornbuckle, Wyn (PAO) (b) (6)
Cc: Gelber, Sophie (PAO) (b) (6)
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] Media Inquiry from Sophia Tulp - The Associated Press

Wyn will you handle?

-----Original Message-----

From: Press <Press@jmd.usdoj.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, October 5, 2021 12:11 PM
To: Coley, Anthony D. (PAO) (b) (6)
Cc: Gelber, Sophie (PAO) (b) (6); Press <Press@jmd.usdoj.gov>
Subject: FW: [EXTERNAL] Media Inquiry from Sophia Tulp - The Associated Press

-----Original Message-----

From: no-reply@usdoj.gov <no-reply@usdoj.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, October 5, 2021 9:59 AM
To: Press <Press@jmd.usdoj.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Media Inquiry from Sophia Tulp - The Associated Press

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.7067

From: Hornbuckle, Wyn (PAO)
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] Media Inquiry from Kendall Tietz - The Daily Caller News Foundation
To: Mastropasqua, Kristina (PAO); Bradford, Aryele (PAO); Stueve, Joshua (PAO)
Sent: October 5, 2021 11:36 AM (UTC-04:00)
I'll take them

-----Original Message-----

From: Mastropasqua, Kristina (PAO) (b) (6)
Sent: Tuesday, October 5, 2021 10:58 AM
To: Bradford, Aryele (PAO) (b) (6); Stueve, Joshua (PAO) (b) (6); Hornbuckle, Wyn (PAO) (b) (6)
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] Media Inquiry from Kendall Tietz - The Daily Caller News Foundation

Ha yeah and OJP didn't know either. The PR basically lists everyone. Let me know who wants it. I have three for you.

Those efforts are expected to include the creation of a task force, consisting of representatives from the department's Criminal Division, National Security Division, Civil Rights Division, the Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys, the FBI, the Community Relations Service and the Office of Justice Programs

Kristina Mastropasqua
Office of Public Affairs
Department of Justice
(b) (6)

-----Original Message-----

From: Bradford, Aryele (PAO) (b) (6)
Sent: Tuesday, October 5, 2021 10:56 AM
To: Mastropasqua, Kristina (PAO) (b) (6); Stueve, Joshua (PAO) (b) (6); Hornbuckle, Wyn (PAO) (b) (6)
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] Media Inquiry from Kendall Tietz - The Daily Caller News Foundation

I have no idea. I don't think it's me though as I didn't have a hand in the release that went out yesterday.

-----Original Message-----

From: Mastropasqua, Kristina (PAO) (b) (6)
Sent: Tuesday, October 5, 2021 10:51 AM
To: Stueve, Joshua (PAO) (b) (6); Hornbuckle, Wyn (PAO) (b) (6); Bradford, Aryele (PAO) (b) (6)
Subject: FW: [EXTERNAL] Media Inquiry from Kendall Tietz - The Daily Caller News Foundation

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.5314

From: Singh, Anita M. (ODAG)
Subject: RE: Draft PR
To: Hornbuckle, Wyn (PAO); Chambers, Kevin (ODAG); Coley, Anthony D. (PAO)
Sent: October 4, 2021 4:25 PM (UTC-04:00)
Attached: Attorney General Memorandum - Partnership Among Federal, State, Local, Tribal and Territorial Law Enforcement to Address Threats Against School Administrators , Board Members, Teachers, and Staff.pdf

Here you go (and yes).

From: Hornbuckle, Wyn (PAO) (b) (6)
Sent: Monday, October 4, 2021 4:24 PM
To: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6); Coley, Anthony D. (PAO) (b) (6)
Singh, Anita M. (ODAG) (b) (6)
Subject: RE: Draft PR

Did we change the memo to reflect (b) (5)? Can I get the final memo (OAG asked about this so just want to be certain)

From: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6)
Sent: Monday, October 4, 2021 2:07 PM
To: Hornbuckle, Wyn (PAO) (b) (6); Coley, Anthony D. (PAO) (b) (6)
Singh, Anita M. (ODAG) (b) (6)
Subject: RE: Draft PR

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.6846

From: Ramamurti, Arjun R. (OAG)
Subject: RE: For formatting
To: Harwood, Stacy (OAG); Davidson, Marcia A. (OAG)
Cc: Klapper, Matthew B. (OAG)
Sent: October 4, 2021 2:27 PM (UTC-04:00)
Attached: Final.AG MEMO TO USAOs AND SACs (10.4.21) MBG 10.4.2021_arr.docx

Here is a revised version that catches a few typos.

Arjun

From: Harwood, Stacy (OAG) (b) (6)
Sent: Monday, October 4, 2021 2:13 PM
To: Davidson, Marcia A. (OAG) (b) (6)
Cc: Klapper, Matthew B. (OAG) (b) (6); Ramamurti, Arjun R. (OAG)
(b) (6)
Subject: RE: For formatting

Good afternoon:

Please see the attached for your review of the formatting. I have already pre-dated this document in anticipation of it being signed today. I have also attached a recent AG Memo (for example of formatting only). Please let me know if you want me to bring a printed original back to Marcia.

Thank you,
Stacy

From: Davidson, Marcia A. (OAG) (b) (6)
Sent: Monday, October 4, 2021 1:53 PM
To: Harwood, Stacy (OAG) (b) (6)
Subject: For formatting

Stacy –

Once you have it formatted, can you send it to Matt Klapper, Arjun Ramamurti, and me for a final look before we get the AG to sign off on it? Thanks for your help./marcia

Marcia A. Davidson
Confidential Assistant
Office of the Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

From: Coley, Anthony D. (PAO)
Subject: FW: For formatting
To: Singh, Anita M. (ODAG)
Sent: October 4, 2021 2:12 PM (UTC-04:00)
Attached: Final.AG MEMO TO USAOs AND SACs (10.4.21) MBG.docx

(b) (5)

From: Klapper, Matthew B. (OAG) (b) (6)
Sent: Monday, October 4, 2021 1:57 PM
To: Coley, Anthony D. (PAO) (b) (6)
Subject: FW: For formatting

Fyi

From: Davidson, Marcia A. (OAG) (b) (6)
Sent: Monday, October 4, 2021 1:54 PM
To: Klapper, Matthew B. (OAG) (b) (6)
Subject: FW: For formatting

From: Davidson, Marcia A. (OAG)
Sent: Monday, October 4, 2021 1:53 PM
To: Harwood, Stacy (OAG) (b) (6)
Subject: For formatting

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.8062

From: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)
Subject: FW: For formatting
To: Carlin, John P. (ODAG); Singh, Anita M. (ODAG)
Sent: October 4, 2021 1:58 PM (UTC-04:00)
Attached: Final.AG MEMO TO USAOs AND SACs (10.4.21) MBG.docx

Revisions from 5. They are minor and I will clear for OAG.

From: Klapper, Matthew B. (OAG) (b) (6)
Sent: Monday, October 4, 2021 1:56 PM
To: Matthews-Johnson, Tamarra D. (OAG) (b) (6); Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)
(b) (6)
Cc: Heinzelman, Kate (OAG) (b) (6)
Subject: FW: For formatting

Please review by 2:30.

From: Davidson, Marcia A. (OAG) (b) (6)
Sent: Monday, October 4, 2021 1:54 PM
To: Klapper, Matthew B. (OAG) (b) (6)
Subject: FW: For formatting

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.9513

From: Klapper, Matthew B. (OAG)
Subject: RE: announcements on threats to school workers and officials
To: Coley, Anthony D. (PAO); Singh, Anita M. (ODAG); Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)
Cc: Hornbuckle, Wyn (PAO); Pietranton, Kelsey (PAO); Roberts, Alivia P. (PAO)
Sent: October 4, 2021 1:07 PM (UTC-04:00)

Nobody in OAG. Will call you about AG memo rollout shortly.

From: Coley, Anthony D. (PAO) (b) (6)
Sent: Monday, October 4, 2021 1:04 PM
To: Singh, Anita M. (ODAG) (b) (6); Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6)
Klapper, Matthew B. (OAG) (b) (6)
Cc: Hornbuckle, Wyn (PAO) (b) (6); Pietranton, Kelsey (PAO) (b) (6)
Roberts, Alivia P. (PAO) (b) (6)
Subject: announcements on threats to school workers and officials

Team, Has anyone be in touch with Chip Slaven, the ED and CEO of the Nat'l School Board Assoc? He's the one individual that we should touch before this afternoon's announcement. We can work the Public Engagement team at Educ, etal to further build out the list.

Would the AG or DAG want to make the Slavin touch? If not, I can do it in the 3 pm hour....

Anthony D. Coley, Director
Office of Public Affairs &
Sr. Advisor to the Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
Direct: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)
@AnthonyColeyDOJ

From: Newman, David A. (ODAG)
Subject: Fwd: FOR REVIEW: Draft Documents Re: School Board Threats
To: Atkinson, Lawrence (ODAG)
Sent: October 4, 2021 1:06 PM (UTC-04:00)
Attached: DRAFT AG MEMO TO USAOs AND SACs (10.3.21) ((b) (5)).docx

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)" (b) (6)
Date: October 3, 2021 at 7:26:43 PM EDT
To: "Jensen, Steven J. (CTD) (FBI)" (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI, "McQuaid, Nicholas (CRM)" (b) (6), "Moossy, Robert (CRT)" (b) (6), "Wilkinson, Monty (USAEO)" (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per EOUSA, "Toscas, George (NSD)" (b) (6), "Darke Schmitt, Katherine (OJP/OVC)" (b) (6), "Tarasca, James A. (CTD) (FBI)" (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI, "Blue, Matt (NSD)" (b) (6), "Langan, Timothy R. Jr. (CTD) (FBI)" (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI, (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per FBI, (CTD) (FBI) (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI, (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per FBI, (CTD) (FBI) (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI, "Vorndran, Kevin (CTD) (FBI)" (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI, "Lesko, Mark (NSD)" (b) (6), "Wiegmann, Brad (NSD)" (b) (6), "Driscoll, Kevin (CRM)" (b) (6), >, "Rossi, Rachel (OASG)" (b) (6), "Monroe, Becky (OASG)" (b) (6), "Wong, Norman (USAEO)" (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per EOUSA
Cc: "Braden, Myesha (ODAG)" (b) (6), "Newman, David A. (ODAG)" (b) (6), "Lan, Iris (ODAG)" (b) (6)
Subject: RE: FOR REVIEW: Draft Documents Re: School Board Threats

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.10792-000006

From: McDowell, Ephraim A. EOP/WHO
Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE: NSBA Letter to the President
To: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)
Sent: October 4, 2021 12:47 PM (UTC-04:00)

Ok understood. Thanks, Kevin.

From: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6)
Sent: Monday, October 4, 2021 12:15 PM
To: McDowell, Ephraim A. EOP/WHO (b) (6)
Subject: RE: NSBA Letter to the President

Hey Ephraim,

Apologies for missing the last email.

We are still discussing internally (b) (5). I'm afraid I don't have any updates yet but will reach out when I have more information. Rest assured that it is a priority here.

Kevin

From: McDowell, Ephraim A. EOP/WHO (b) (6)
Sent: Monday, October 4, 2021 12:05 PM
To: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE: NSBA Letter to the President

Kevin – I'm just bumping my email below. I have to (b) (5) and would love to provide an update on DOJ's thinking. Do you think we could check in at some point this afternoon?

From: McDowell, Ephraim A. EOP/WHO
Sent: Friday, October 1, 2021 12:34 PM
To: 'Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6)
Subject: RE: NSBA Letter to the President

Hi Kevin – (b) (5)
(b) (5). Do you have a sense of timing for when you and I might be able to talk (b) (5) ?

Thanks so much.

From: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6) >
Sent: Thursday, September 30, 2021 9:25 AM
To: McDowell, Ephraim A. EOP/WHO (b) (6)
Subject: RE: NSBA Letter to the President

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.6597

From: Klapper, Matthew B. (OAG)
Subject: School board letter
To: Rose, Abraham (JMD)
Sent: October 4, 2021 12:40 PM (UTC-04:00)
Attached: NSBA Letter to President Biden Concerning Threats to Public Schools and School Board Members.pdf

From: Hornbuckle, Wyn (PAO)
Subject: RE: School Boards
To: Coley, Anthony D. (PAO); Iverson, Dena (PAO)
Sent: October 4, 2021 12:36 PM (UTC-04:00)
Attached: AG Memo to Address Threats Against School Workers_10.04.21 1240pm.docx

Here's a first draft. Is this what you had in mind?

From: Coley, Anthony D. (PAO) (b) (6)
Sent: Monday, October 4, 2021 11:55 AM
To: Iverson, Dena (PAO) (b) (6); Hornbuckle, Wyn (PAO) (b) (6)
Subject: FW: School Boards

All, We're going to announce four things later today w/r/t/ to security of school board members and officials.

The first, is an AG directive to USAO and FBI field offices [first attachment]

And then:

- Creation of a Department of Justice Task Force

- (b) (5)

- Development of Training Materials

- (b) (5)

- Threat Assessment and Filtering

- (b) (5)

Who is best positioned to take a pen on the a short release. Would need draft by 1:30PM.

From: Coley, Anthony D. (PAO)
Subject: RE: School Boards
To: Hornbuckle, Wyn (PAO); Iverson, Dena (PAO)
Sent: October 4, 2021 12:04 PM (UTC-04:00)

Or maybe a press asst or spox? [I just don't have as much visibility into everyone's capacity as you both do]

From: Hornbuckle, Wyn (PAO) (b) (6)

Sent: Monday, October 4, 2021 11:58 AM

To: Coley, Anthony D. (PAO) (b) (6); Iverson, Dena (PAO) (b) (6)

Subject: RE: School Boards

I can

From: Coley, Anthony D. (PAO) (b) (6)

Sent: Monday, October 4, 2021 11:55 AM

To: Iverson, Dena (PAO) (b) (6); Hornbuckle, Wyn (PAO) (b) (6)

Subject: FW: School Boards

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.9154

From: Coley, Anthony D. (PAO)
Subject: FW: School Boards
To: Iverson, Dena (PAO)
Sent: October 4, 2021 11:20 AM (UTC-04:00)
Attached: DRAFT AG MEMO TO USAOs AND SACs (10.3.21) ((b) (5)).docx, Draft NSBA Response Strategy and Statement.docx

From: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) ((b) (6))
Sent: Monday, October 4, 2021 10:57 AM
To: Coley, Anthony D. (PAO) ((b) (6))
Subject: School Boards

From: Klapper, Matthew B. (OAG)
Subject: School board threats memo - DRAFT
To: Davidson, Marcia A. (OAG)
Sent: October 4, 2021 11:10 AM (UTC-04:00)
Attached: DRAFT AG MEMO TO USAOs AND SACs (10.4.21) MK.docx

Attached.

From: Coley, Anthony D. (PAO)
Subject: Fwd: Joe Slaven NSBA on Morning Joe
To: Iverson, Dena (PAO)
Sent: October 4, 2021 10:07 AM (UTC-04:00)

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Gelber, Sophie (PAO)" (b) (6)
Date: October 4, 2021 at 10:05:46 AM EDT
To: "Coley, Anthony D. (PAO)" (b) (6)
Cc: "Roberts, Alivia P. (PAO)" (b) (6)
Subject: Joe Slaven NSBA on Morning Joe

Hi Anthony,
See the clip of Joe Slaven on Morning Joe below. [Here's](#) the full segment. [Here's](#) the letter to president Biden.

	<p>MSNBC10/1/2021 6:31:31 AM U.S. Cable Morning Joe</p> <p>asking a supreme court to block an order requiring education have at least one vaccine dose before returning to classrooms next week. the group is arguing thousands of public school employees will be forced out of work if the vaccination mandates remained in effect by violating their fundamental right to pursue an occupation. the order does not apply to other city employees. the emergency appears to be in the hands of justice sotomayor.</p>
--	---

Sophie Gelber
Press Assistant, Office of Public Affairs
U.S. Department of Justice
(b) (6) – work
(b) (6)

From: Gelber, Sophie (PAO)
Subject: Re: Joe Slaven NSBA on Morning Joe
To: Coley, Anthony D. (PAO)
Cc: Roberts, Alivia P. (PAO)
Sent: October 4, 2021 10:08 AM (UTC-04:00)

My apologies! I meant Chip Slaven, not Joe.

Sent from my iPhone

On Oct 4, 2021, at 10:05 AM, Gelber, Sophie (PAO) (b) (6) wrote:

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.9124

From: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] RE: DOJ-ED connection, school board meeting disruptions
To: Carlin, John P. (ODAG)
Cc: Singh, Anita M. (ODAG)
Sent: October 4, 2021 9:46 AM (UTC-04:00)

Will do.

From: Carlin, John P. (ODAG) (b) (6)
Sent: Monday, October 4, 2021 9:38 AM
To: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6)
Cc: Singh, Anita M. (ODAG) (b) (6)
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] RE: DOJ-ED connection, school board meeting disruptions

Can you call and open up a line of communication?

On Oct 4, 2021, at 9:34 AM, Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6) wrote:

See below for reachout from Dept. of Ed on school board threats efforts.

From: Braden, Myesha (ODAG) (b) (6)
Sent: Monday, October 4, 2021 8:55 AM
To: Goldberg, Suzanne <Suzanne.Goldberg@ed.gov>
Cc: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6)
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] RE: DOJ-ED connection, school board meeting disruptions

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.10801

From: Braden, Myesha (ODAG)
Subject: Re: FOR REVIEW: Draft Documents Re: School Board Threats
To: Cochran, Shaylyn (CRT)
Sent: October 4, 2021 9:14 AM (UTC-04:00)

...FYI: I connected Suzanne and Kevin.

Sent from my iPhone

On Oct 4, 2021, at 9:11 AM, Braden, Myesha (ODAG) (b) (6) wrote:

FYI: Draft amended following (b) (5)

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)" (b) (6)
Date: October 3, 2021 at 7:26:43 PM EDT
To: "Jensen, Steven J. (CTD) (FBI)" (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI, "McQuaid, Nicholas (CRM)" (b) (6), "Moossy, Robert (CRT)" (b) (6), "Wilkinson, Monty (USAEO)" (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per EOUSA, "Toscas, George (NSD)" (b) (6), "Darke Schmitt, Katherine (OJP/OVC)" (b) (6), "Tarasca, James A. (CTD) (FBI)" (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI, "Blue, Matt (NSD)" (b) (6), "Langan, Timothy R. Jr. (CTD) (FBI)" (b) (6), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per FBI, (CTD) (FBI)" (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI, (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per FBI (CTD) (FBI)" (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI, "Vorndran, Kevin (CTD) (FBI)" (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI, "Lesko, Mark (NSD)" (b) (6), "Wiegmann, Brad (NSD)" (b) (6), "Driscoll, Kevin (CRM)" (b) (6), "Rossi, Rachel (OASG)" (b) (6), "Monroe, Becky (OASG)" (b) (6), "Wong, Norman (USAEO)" (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per EOUSA
Cc: "Braden, Myesha (ODAG)" (b) (6), "Newman, David A. (ODAG)" (b) (6), "Lan, Iris (ODAG)" (b) (6)
Subject: RE: FOR REVIEW: Draft Documents Re: School Board Threats

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.10792-000006

From: Cochran, Shaylyn (CRT)
Subject: RE: FOR REVIEW: Draft Documents Re: School Board Threats
To: Braden, Myesha (ODAG)
Sent: October 4, 2021 9:14 AM (UTC-04:00)

Thanks, Myesha. I'm going to (b) (5)

The communication seems straightforward, but I will let you know ASAP if there are any concerns.

Shaylyn

From: Braden, Myesha (ODAG)
Sent: Monday, October 4, 2021 9:12 AM
To: Cochran, Shaylyn (CRT) (b) (6)
Subject: Fwd: FOR REVIEW: Draft Documents Re: School Board Threats

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.5727

From: Klapper, Matthew B. (OAG)
Subject: DRAFT school board officials memo
To: Rose, Abraham (JMD)
Sent: October 3, 2021 6:17 PM (UTC-04:00)
Attached: DRAFT AG MEMO TO USAOs AND SACs (10.3.21) ((b) (5)) tmj edits.docx

Attached.

From: Matthews-Johnson, Tamarra D. (OAG)
Subject: DRAFTS of (b) (5) school boards
To: Heinzelman, Kate (OAG); Klapper, Matthew B. (OAG)
Sent: October 3, 2021 1:33 PM (UTC-04:00)
Attached: (b) (5) DRAFT AG MEMO TO USAOs
AND SACs (10.3.21) (b) (5)) tmj edits.docx

Hi - here are the current drafts.

From: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)
Subject: FW: DRAFT Memorandum from AG to USAOs and SACs: (b) (5)
To: Singh, Anita M. (ODAG); Carlin, John P. (ODAG)
Sent: October 3, 2021 1:24 PM (UTC-04:00)
Attached: DRAFT AG MEMO TO USAOs AND SACs (10.3.21) ((b) (5)) tmj edits.docx

OAG revisions – Largely organizational. I'm good with them.

From: Matthews-Johnson, Tamarra D. (OAG) (b) (6)
Sent: Sunday, October 3, 2021 11:52 AM
To: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6)
Cc: Heinzelman, Kate (OAG) (b) (6); Klapper, Matthew B. (OAG)
(b) (6)
Subject: Re: DRAFT Memorandum from AG to USAOs and SACs: (b) (5)

Hi Kevin -

Thanks so much for all of your hard work on this excellent draft. Attached are our collective thoughts; we're happy to discuss.

Tamarra Matthews Johnson
she/her/hers
Counsel
Office of the Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
Mobile: (b) (6)

On Oct 2, 2021, at 1:59 PM, Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6) wrote:

Thanks for forwarding the draft, guys. I am turning to this now. Will reach out with questions. I can try and incorporate (b) (5).

From: Matthews-Johnson, Tamarra D. (OAG) (b) (6) >
Sent: Saturday, October 2, 2021 1:02 PM
To: Heinzelman, Kate (OAG) (b) (6)
Cc: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6); Klapper, Matthew B. (OAG)
(b) (6)
Subject: Re: DRAFT Memorandum from AG to USAOs and SACs: (b) (5)

Hi Kevin -

I just gave you a call to coordinate - thanks! T

Tamarra Matthews Johnson
she/her/hers
Counsel
Office of the Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
Mobile: (b) (6)

On Oct 2, 2021, at 12:38 PM, Heinzelman, Kate (OAG) (b) (6) wrote:

Kevin,

I hope you're having a fantastic weekend. I am attaching a draft of a memorandum to the field about (b) (5). I apologize for the redlines, I'm working from my phone.

This draft is not perfect. But I wanted to send it on now because I understand that (b) (5). That means I think we will need (b) (5).

. One more thing, we wanted to add (b) (5). I haven't been able to incorporate that into this draft because I'm on the road without my computer. Happy to do that as soon as you're done. Thank you again. We'll standby and are happy to hop on the phone.

Kate

<CRM DRAFT MEMO AG to USAOs and SACs tmj keh edits_tmj 9.29.21.docx>

From: Heinzelman, Kate (OAG)
Subject: FW: DRAFT Memorandum from AG to USAOs and SACs: (b) (5)
To: Klapper, Matthew B. (OAG)
Sent: October 3, 2021 12:24 PM (UTC-04:00)
Attached: DRAFT AG MEMO TO USAOs AND SACs (10.3.21) (b) (5)) tmj edits.docx

Matt –

I'm not sure about all of the conversations that have been had on this – but a few points I don't want to lose:

1. (b) (5) . Happy to discuss. Have shared my thinking with Tamarra.
2. Do you want me to (b) (5) , or is someone handling this?

Kate

From: Matthews-Johnson, Tamarra D. (OAG) (b) (6)
Sent: Sunday, October 3, 2021 11:52 AM
To: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6)
Cc: Heinzelman, Kate (OAG) (b) (6) ; Klapper, Matthew B. (OAG) (b) (6)
Subject: Re: DRAFT Memorandum from AG to USAOs and SACs: (b) (5)

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.6246

From: Matthews-Johnson, Tamarra D. (OAG)
Subject: DRAFT
To: Matthews-Johnson, Tamarra D. (OAG)
Sent: October 3, 2021 11:51 AM (UTC-04:00)
Attached: DRAFT AG MEMO TO USAOs AND SACs (10.3.21) ((b) (5)) tmj edits.docx

Tamarra Matthews Johnson

she/her/hers

Counsel

Office of the Attorney General

U.S. Department of Justice

Mobile: ((b) (6))

From: Matthews-Johnson, Tamarra D. (OAG)
Subject: RE: PLEASE USE THIS ONE: Threats to school boards
To: Klapper, Matthew B. (OAG); Heinzelman, Kate (OAG)
Sent: October 3, 2021 11:48 AM (UTC-04:00)

Yes,

From: Klapper, Matthew B. (OAG) (b) (6)
Sent: Sunday, October 3, 2021 11:47 AM
To: Matthews-Johnson, Tamarra D. (OAG) (b) (6); Heinzelman, Kate (OAG) (b) (6)
Subject: RE: PLEASE USE THIS ONE: Threats to school boards

To confirm, have you connected with Kate to incorporate her edits? If so, this is good to transmit to Kevin.

From: Matthews-Johnson, Tamarra D. (OAG) (b) (6)
Sent: Sunday, October 3, 2021 11:38 AM
To: Heinzelman, Kate (OAG) (b) (6); Klapper, Matthew B. (OAG) (b) (6)
Subject: PLEASE USE THIS ONE: Threats to school boards
Importance: High

Two more small edits in this one:

Here's the latest draft of the schools memo. And I've reattached (b) (5).

I will be away from my computer starting at noon for approximately one hour. But if this redline to the schools memo is good to send to Kevin, I can send it on before then. Thanks! T

From: Matthews-Johnson, Tamarra D. (OAG)
Sent: Sunday, October 3, 2021 10:45 AM
To: Heinzelman, Kate (OAG) (b) (6); Klapper, Matthew B. (OAG) (b) (6)
Subject: RE: Threats to school boards

Hi all-

My edits are attached in the redline. (b) (5) and these edits reflect the addition, along with my other thoughts.

I have also attached a revision to the (b) (5). I am also attaching it because (b) (5)

From: Heinzelman, Kate (OAG) (b) (6)
Sent: Sunday, October 3, 2021 10:31 AM
To: Matthews-Johnson, Tamarra D. (OAG) (b) (6)
Cc: Klapper, Matthew B. (OAG) (b) (6)

Subject: Re: Threats to school boards

Tamarra, Matt,

I'm also fine with (b) (5) though I'd like to understand Crim's specific reasoning as well. In the absence of that, here are my edits and comments, so that Tamarra and I don't have version control issues. Tamarra, would be great if you can incorporate.

- 1) (b) (5)
- 2) (b) (5)
- 3) (b) (5)
- 4) (b) (5)
- 5) (b) (5)
- 6) (b) (5)
- 7) (b) (5)
- 8) (b) (5)

Happy to talk by phone. Will be tied up for 30 minutes now.

Kate

Sent from my iPhone

On Oct 3, 2021, at 10:02 AM, Matthews-Johnson, Tamarra D. (OAG) (b) (6) wrote:

Hi -
I'm fine with (b) (5); I see the wisdom in that choice

On Oct 3, 2021, at 9:42 AM, Klapper, Matthew B. (OAG) (b) (6) wrote:

Actually give me a quick ring prior to engaging with Kevin so we can discuss the threshold question of (b) (5)

(b) (5)

Sent from my iPhone

On Oct 3, 2021, at 9:30 AM, Klapper, Matthew B. (OAG) (b) (6) wrote:

Would like to ship this to AG by noon if possible. Please engage directly with Kevin if you have questions or edits (Kate and I are happy to discuss too, of course). The attached has component and ODAG sign off. We'll obviously have

to run it through again once AG offers edits. Note that issuance is NLT Tuesday morning, but we'll aim for tomorrow.

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Singh, Anita M. (ODAG)" (b) (6)
Date: October 3, 2021 at 7:54:43 AM EDT
To: "Klapper, Matthew B. (OAG)"
(b) (6)
Cc: "Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)" (b) (6),
"Carlin, John P. (ODAG)" (b) (6) >
Subject: Threats to school boards

Matt - I think you are tracking this from JPC (copied). We have a draft AG memo for consideration addressing the issue of threats to school boards. Many thanks to Kevin (also copied) for working this up this weekend (and coordinating with components). Kevin has lead for us, but I wanted to get this to you ASAP this am, as I understand the target is a launch by COB tomorrow. It is styled as a memo from the AG to the FBI Director, along with EOUSA, USAs, and AAG/CRM (but we can discuss which of those or others should be included in the final). I also attached the incoming letter to POTUS for background. I will be out of pocket this morning but available after noon or so, though Kevin is closest to the substance and process run so far, so your team can go direct with him with revisions and questions. He will also be able to speak to other ideas in the pipeline, etc.

Kevin - can you let the components (esp CRM) know that at their rec we are contemplating (b) (5)

(b) (5)

Thanks!

Anita M. Singh
Chief of Staff
Office of the Deputy Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice

C: (b) (6)
O: (b) (6)

<NSBA Letter to President Biden Concerning Threats to Public Schools and School Board Members.pdf>

<DRAFT AG MEMO TO USAOs AND SACs (10.3.21) (b) (5)
(b) (5).docx>

From: Klapper, Matthew B. (OAG)
Subject: RE: Threats to school boards
To: Matthews-Johnson, Tamarra D. (OAG); Heinzelman, Kate (OAG)
Sent: October 3, 2021 11:04 AM (UTC-04:00)

Thanks. Kate, I gave two edits to Tamarra over phone since she sent this draft. She has some questions for you about your edits – call her when you can.

From: Matthews-Johnson, Tamarra D. (OAG) (b) (6)
Sent: Sunday, October 3, 2021 10:45 AM
To: Heinzelman, Kate (OAG) (b) (6); Klapper, Matthew B. (OAG)
(b) (6)
Subject: RE: Threats to school boards

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.17572

From: Klapper, Matthew B. (OAG)
Subject: (b) (5)
To: Matthews-Johnson, Tamarra D. (OAG)
Cc: Heinzelman, Kate (OAG)
Sent: October 3, 2021 11:00 AM (UTC-04:00)
Attached: DRAFT AG MEMO TO USAOs AND SACs (10.2.21).docx

Attached find draft (b) (5)
memo in the event AG wants to move in that direction.

From: Matthews-Johnson, Tamarra D. (OAG)
Subject: Re: Threats to school boards
To: Heinzelman, Kate (OAG)
Cc: Klapper, Matthew B. (OAG)
Sent: October 3, 2021 10:40 AM (UTC-04:00)

I am sending edits

(b) (5)

On Oct 3, 2021, at 10:31 AM, Heinzelman, Kate (OAG) (b) (6) wrote:


Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.17572

From: Carlin, John P. (ODAG)
Subject: Fwd: FOR REVIEW: Draft Documents Re: School Board Threats
To: Klapper, Matthew B. (OAG)
Sent: October 3, 2021 9:35 AM (UTC-04:00)

Begin forwarded message:

From: "McQuaid, Nicholas (CRM)" (b) (6)
Date: October 2, 2021 at 6:14:58 PM EDT
To: "Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)" (b) (6)
Cc: "Carlin, John P. (ODAG)" (b) (6), "Braden, Myesha (ODAG)" (b) (6), "Newman, David A. (ODAG)" (b) (6), "Lan, Iris (ODAG)" (b) (6), "Driscoll, Kevin (CRM)" (b) (6)
Subject: Re: FOR REVIEW: Draft Documents Re: School Board Threats

(b)(5) per CRM



Happy to discuss on a call if helpful.

Best,

Nick

Nicholas L. McQuaid
Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General
Criminal Division, United States Department of Justice
Desk: (b) (6)

On Oct 2, 2021, at 4:02 PM, Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6) wrote:

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.10792-000001

From: Singh, Anita M. (ODAG)
Subject: Re: Drafts for DAG Review
To: Wagner, Rose (JMD)
Cc: Carlin, John P. (ODAG)
Sent: October 3, 2021 7:27 AM (UTC-04:00)

Will do. Thanks!

Anita M. Singh
Chief of Staff
Office of the Deputy Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice

C: (b) (6)
O: (b) (6)

On Oct 2, 2021, at 10:21 PM, Wagner, Rose (JMD) (b) (6) wrote:

Thanks very much. Agree – let's make the change on (b) (5)

thanks

From: Singh, Anita M. (ODAG) (b) (6)
Sent: Saturday, October 2, 2021 10:11 PM
To: Wagner, Rose (JMD) (b) (6)
Cc: Carlin, John P. (ODAG) (b) (6)
Subject: Re: Drafts for DAG Review

Agree - I think he can (b) (5)

I think with that edit, we could (b) (5)

. We could also (b) (5)

Happy to make any changes you want to share (or propose specific redlines for you to review) and send to Klapper tomorrow. I am out of pocket tomorrow morning but can turn back to this after noon.

Anita M. Singh
Chief of Staff
Office of the Deputy Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice

C: (b) (6)
O: (b) (6)

On Oct 2, 2021, at 9:26 PM, Wagner, Rose (JMD) (b) (6) wrote:

Thanks. Let me know when you'd like to discuss. I can do so later tonight (post 10) or tomorrow morning

Quick reaction - (b) (5)

Sent from my iPhone

On Oct 2, 2021, at 9:02 PM, Carlin, John P. (ODAG) (b) (6) wrote:

For review and discussion

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)" (b) (6)
Date: October 2, 2021 at 8:01:29 PM EDT
To: "Carlin, John P. (ODAG)" (b) (6)
Subject: Drafts for DAG Review

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.6241

From: Carlin, John P. (ODAG)
Subject: Fwd: Drafts for DAG Review
To: Singh, Anita M. (ODAG)
Sent: October 2, 2021 9:51 PM (UTC-04:00)

Version for Ag will need this tweak.

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Wagner, Rose (JMD)" (b) (6)
Date: October 2, 2021 at 9:26:52 PM EDT
To: "Carlin, John P. (ODAG)" (b) (6)
Cc: "Singh, Anita M. (ODAG)" (b) (6)
Subject: Re: Drafts for DAG Review

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.27908

From: Carlin, John P. (ODAG)
Subject: Fwd: FOR REVIEW: Draft Documents Re: School Board Threats
To: Singh, Anita M. (ODAG)
Sent: October 2, 2021 9:49 PM (UTC-04:00)

Begin forwarded message:

From: "McQuaid, Nicholas (CRM)" (b) (6)
Date: October 2, 2021 at 6:14:58 PM EDT
To: "Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)" (b) (6)
Cc: "Carlin, John P. (ODAG)" (b) (6), "Braden, Myesha (ODAG)" (b) (6), "Newman, David A. (ODAG)" (b) (6), "Lan, Iris (ODAG)" (b) (6), "Driscoll, Kevin (CRM)" (b) (6)
Subject: Re: FOR REVIEW: Draft Documents Re: School Board Threats

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.6243

From: Carlin, John P. (ODAG)
Subject: Re: Drafts for DAG Review
To: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)
Sent: October 2, 2021 9:03 PM (UTC-04:00)

Thank you

On Oct 2, 2021, at 8:01 PM, Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6) wrote:

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.6241

From: Rossi, Rachel (OASG)
Subject: Fwd: FOR REVIEW: Draft Documents Re: School Board Threats
To: Visser, Tim (OAG)
Sent: October 2, 2021 8:23 PM (UTC-04:00)
Attached: Draft School Board Threats Response Strategy (10.2.21).docx, DRAFT AG MEMO TO USAOs AND SACs (10.2.21).docx, NSBA Letter to President Biden Concerning Threats to Public Schools and School Board Members.pdf

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)" (b) (6)
Date: October 2, 2021 at 4:02:33 PM EDT
To: "Jensen, Steven J. (CTD) (FBI)" (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI, "McQuaid, Nicholas (CRM)" (b) (6), "Moossy, Robert (CRT)" (b) (6), "Wilkinson, Monty (USAEO)" (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per EOUSA, "Toscas, George (NSD)" (b) (6), "Darke Schmitt, Katherine (OJP/OVC)" (b) (6), "Tarasca, James A. (CTD) (FBI)" (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI, "Blue, Matt (NSD)" (b) (6), "Langan, Timothy R. Jr. (CTD) (FBI)" (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI, (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per FBI, (CTD) (FBI)" (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI, (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per FBI, (CTD) (FBI)" (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI, "Vorndran, Kevin (CTD) (FBI)" (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI, "Lesko, Mark (NSD)" (b) (6), "Wiegmann, Brad (NSD)" (b) (6), "Driscoll, Kevin (CRM)" (b) (6), "Rossi, Rachel (OASG)" (b) (6), "Monroe, Becky (OASG)" (b) (6), "Wong, Norman (USAEO)" (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per EOUSA
Cc: "Carlin, John P. (ODAG)" (b) (6), "Braden, Myesha (ODAG)" (b) (6), "Newman, David A. (ODAG)" (b) (6), "Lan, Iris (ODAG)" (b) (6)
Subject: FOR REVIEW: Draft Documents Re: School Board Threats

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.10792-000001

From: Visser, Tim (OAG)
Subject: Re: Flagging for Tuesday
To: Rossi, Rachel (OASG)
Cc: Monroe, Becky (OASG)
Sent: October 2, 2021 7:08 PM (UTC-04:00)

Thanks, Rachel. I think (b) (5)

[REDACTED] But open to other thoughts.

(b) (5)

FWIW, (b) (5)

Sent from my iPhone

On Oct 2, 2021, at 11:03 AM, Rossi, Rachel (OASG) (b) (6) wrote:

Happy Saturday Tim!

We have received incoming from John Carlin (or above...) for responses to the below articles, potentially for (b) (5)

I wanted to flag that I plan to (b) (5)

Let me know if you have any thoughts.

<https://www.npr.org/sections/back-to-school-live-updates/2021/09/30/1041870027/school-boards-federal-help-threats-violence>

<https://nsba.org/-/media/NSBA/File/nsba-letter-to-president-biden-concerning-threats-to-public-schools-and-school-board-members-92921.pdf>

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-joe-biden-health-education-school-boards-940da42fac771366929fc2150c8acf4d>

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/30/us/school-board-threats-violence/index.html>

Sent from my iPhone

From: Carlin, John P. (ODAG)
Subject: Re: FOR REVIEW: Draft Documents Re: School Board Threats
To: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)
Sent: October 2, 2021 6:22 PM (UTC-04:00)

Rgr thx

On Oct 2, 2021, at 5:46 PM, Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6) wrote:

FYI.

From: Wilkinson, Monty (USAEO) (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per EOUSA
Sent: Saturday, October 2, 2021 5:44 PM
To: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6)
Cc: Wong, Norman (USAEO) (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per EOUSA
Subject: RE: FOR REVIEW: Draft Documents Re: School Board Threats

Kevin-

We have a few non-substantive suggestions/comments:

1. (b) (5)
2. (b) (5) ?
3. (b) (5)

Please let us know if you have any follow up questions and thanks for the opportunity to provide comments.

Monty

From: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6)
Sent: Saturday, October 2, 2021 4:02 PM
To: Jensen, Steven J. (CTD) (FBI) (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI; McQuaid, Nicholas (CRM) (b) (6); Moosy, Robert (CRT) (b) (6); Wilkinson, Monty (USAEO) (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per EOUSA; Toscas, George (NSD) (b) (6); Darke Schmitt, Katherine (OJP/OVC) (b) (6); Tarasca, James A. (CTD) (FBI) (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI; Blue, Matt (NSD) (b) (6); Langan, Timothy R. Jr. (CTD) (FBI) (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI; (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per FBI (CTD) (FBI) (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI; (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per FBI (CTD) (FBI) (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI; Vorndran, Kevin (CTD) (FBI) (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI; Lesko, Mark (NSD) (b) (6); Wiegmann, Brad (NSD) (b) (6); Driscoll, Kevin (CRM) (b) (6); Rossi, Rachel (OASG) (b) (6); Monroe, Becky (OASG) (b) (6); Wong, Norman (USAEO) (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per EOUSA
Cc: Carlin, John P. (ODAG) (b) (6); Braden, Myesha (ODAG) (b) (6); Newman, David A. (ODAG) (b) (6); Lan, Iris (ODAG) (b) (6)
Subject: FOR REVIEW: Draft Documents Re: School Board Threats

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.10792-000001

From: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)
Subject: RE: FOR REVIEW: Draft Documents Re: School Board Threats
To: Wilkinson, Monty (USAEO)
Cc: Wong, Norman (USAEO)
Sent: October 2, 2021 5:48 PM (UTC-04:00)

Thank you Monty. On 2, I believe (b) (5), but that is not yet finalized. Agree on 3 and will put that on our tick list.

From: Wilkinson, Monty (USAEO) (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per EOUSA
Sent: Saturday, October 2, 2021 5:44 PM
To: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6)
Cc: Wong, Norman (USAEO) (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per EOUSA
Subject: RE: FOR REVIEW: Draft Documents Re: School Board Threats

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.6741

From: Singh, Anita M. (ODAG)
Subject: Re: FOR REVIEW: Draft Documents Re: School Board Threats
To: Carlin, John P. (ODAG)
Sent: October 2, 2021 5:03 PM (UTC-04:00)

Thanks.

Anita M. Singh
Chief of Staff
Office of the Deputy Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice

C: (b) (6)
O: (b) (6)

On Oct 2, 2021, at 4:30 PM, Carlin, John P. (ODAG) (b) (6) wrote:

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)" (b) (6)
Date: October 2, 2021 at 4:02:33 PM EDT
To: "Jensen, Steven J. (CTD) (FBI)" (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI, "McQuaid, Nicholas (CRM)" (b) (6), "Moossy, Robert (CRT)" (b) (6), "Wilkinson, Monty (USAEO)" (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per EOUSA, "Toscas, George (NSD)" (b) (6), "Darke Schmitt, Katherine (OJP/OVC)" (b) (6), "Tarasca, James A. (CTD) (FBI)" (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI, "Blue, Matt (NSD)" (b) (6), "Langan, Timothy R. Jr. (CTD) (FBI)" (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI, (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per FBI (CTD) (FBI)" (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per FBI (CTD) (FBI)" (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI, "Vorndran, Kevin (CTD) (FBI)" (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) per FBI, "Lesko, Mark (NSD)" (b) (6), "Wiegmann, Brad (NSD)" (b) (6), "Driscoll, Kevin (CRM)" (b) (6), "Rossi, Rachel (OASG)" (b) (6), "Monroe, Becky (OASG)" (b) (6), "Wong, Norman (USAEO)" (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per EOUSA
Cc: "Carlin, John P. (ODAG)" (b) (6), "Braden, Myesha (ODAG)" (b) (6), "Newman, David A. (ODAG)" (b) (6), "Lan, Iris (ODAG)" (b) (6)
Subject: FOR REVIEW: Draft Documents Re: School Board Threats

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.10792-000001

From: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)
Subject: RE: Draft Documents to be Circulated Later Today
To: Newman, David A. (ODAG)
Sent: October 2, 2021 2:34 PM (UTC-04:00)

Apologies if you tried to call – just realized my phone died. You can try (b) (6).

From: Newman, David A. (ODAG) (b) (6)
Sent: Saturday, October 2, 2021 2:11 PM
To: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6)
Subject: Re: Draft Documents to be Circulated Later Today

Let me know if you have 2 mins to chat (and best #) — just got question from FBI.

On Oct 2, 2021, at 11:58 AM, Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6) wrote:

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.6872

From: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)
Subject: RE: Draft Documents to be Circulated Later Today
To: Newman, David A. (ODAG)
Sent: October 2, 2021 2:12 PM (UTC-04:00)

(b) (6)

From: Newman, David A. (ODAG) (b) (6)

Sent: Saturday, October 2, 2021 2:11 PM

To: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6)

Subject: Re: Draft Documents to be Circulated Later Today

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.6724

From: James Tarasca
Subject: Fwd: Threats to School Boards
To: Newman, David A. (ODAG)
Sent: October 2, 2021 12:57 PM (UTC-04:00)

David,
Can you give a quick call about this? (b) (6)
Thanks.
Jim

From: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6)
Sent: Saturday, October 2, 2021, 11:47 AM
To: Toscas, George (NSD) (JMD); Jensen, Steven J. (CTD) (FBI)
Cc: (b)(6) per NSD (NSD) (JMD); Newman, David A. (ODAG) (JMD); Blue, Matt (NSD) (JMD); Lan, Iris (ODAG) (JMD); Tarasca, James A. (CTD) (FBI); (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per FBI (CTD) (FBI)
Subject: [EXTERNAL EMAIL] - RE: Threats to School Boards

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.10792-000010

From: Wilkinson, Monty (USAEO)
Subject: Re: Draft Documents to be Circulated Later Today
To: McQuaid, Nicholas (CRM)
Cc: Toscas, George (NSD); Chambers, Kevin (ODAG); Moossy, Robert (CRT); Darke Schmitt, Katherine (OJP/OVC); Jensen, Steven J. (CTD) (FBI); Tarasca, James A. (CTD) (FBI); (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per FBI (CTD) (FBI); Blue, Matt (NSD); Braden, Myesha (ODAG); Newman, David A. (ODAG); Lan, Iris (ODAG); Lesko, Mark (NSD); Wiegmann, Brad (NSD); Driscoll, Kevin (CRM); Wong, Norman (USAEO)
Sent: October 2, 2021 12:23 PM (UTC-04:00)

+ Norm Wong

Sent from my iPhone

On Oct 2, 2021, at 12:11 PM, McQuaid, Nicholas (CRM) (b) (6) wrote:

Adding Kevin Driscoll as well.

On Oct 2, 2021, at 12:03 PM, Toscas, George (NSD) (b) (6) wrote:

Adding Mark Lesko and Brad Wiegmann.

On Oct 2, 2021, at 11:58 AM, Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6) wrote:

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.6872

From: Toscas, George (NSD)
Subject: Re: Threats to School Boards
To: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)
Sent: October 2, 2021 11:51 AM (UTC-04:00)

10-4. Thanks.

On Oct 2, 2021, at 11:47 AM, Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6) wrote:

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.10792-000010

From: Carlin, John P. (ODAG)
Subject: Fwd: NSBA
To: Wagner, Rose (JMD)
Sent: October 2, 2021 9:55 AM (UTC-04:00)
Attached: Draft NSBA Response Strategy and Statement.docx, NSBA Letter to President Biden Concerning Threats to Public Schools and School Board Members.pdf

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)" (b) (6)
Date: October 2, 2021 at 2:34:31 AM EDT
To: "Carlin, John P. (ODAG)" (b) (6), "Klapper, Matthew B. (OAG)" (b) (6)
Subject: NSBA

Matt/John:

Attached is a strategy proposal and draft statement covering the items we've discussed throughout the day.

Matt, you discussed the possibility of (b) (5). I did not include that in this document, but will run that to ground if we decide to go that route.

The document (b) (5)

For convenience, the NSBA letter is attached.

Kevin

From: Carlin, John P. (ODAG)
Subject: (b) (5) fysa (b) (5)
To: Remus, Who
Sent: October 2, 2021 9:55 AM (UTC-04:00)
Attached: (b) (5).docx

From: Klapper, Matthew B. (OAG)
Subject: Re: NSBA
To: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)
Cc: Carlin, John P. (ODAG)
Sent: October 2, 2021 8:20 AM (UTC-04:00)

Thanks very much for this Kevin. Strong work. Traveling and working from my phone this morning - probably most efficient to offer feedback verbally. Give a ring at your convenience, preferably once John has been able to offer his thoughts since your strategy largely reflects our conversation last night.

Sent from my iPhone

On Oct 2, 2021, at 2:34 AM, Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) (b) (6) wrote:

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.6092

From: Matthews-Johnson, Tamarra D. (OAG)
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] PERF Daily Clips: School board group asks US for help policing threats
To: Heinzelman, Kate (OAG)
Sent: October 1, 2021 10:20 PM (UTC-04:00)
Attached: ~WRD0000.jpg

School boards seeking federal assistance to address threats. Kevin Chambers is tracking.

Tamarra Matthews Johnson

she/her/hers

Counsel

Office of the Attorney General

U.S. Department of Justice

Mobile: (b) (6)

On Oct 1, 2021, at 9:51 PM, Heinzelman, Kate (OAG) <(b) (6)> wrote:

Which issue?

From: Matthews-Johnson, Tamarra D. (OAG) <(b) (6)>
Sent: Friday, October 1, 2021 8:05 AM
To: Klapper, Matthew B. (OAG) <(b) (6)> Heinzelman, Kate (OAG) <(b) (6)>
Subject: Fwd: [EXTERNAL] PERF Daily Clips: School board group asks US for help policing threats

Hi -

This was in the PERF clips and elsewhere. Are you all tracking this? I've sent it to Kevin Chambers and CRM

Tamarra Matthews Johnson

she/her/hers

Counsel

Office of the Attorney General

U.S. Department of Justice

Mobile: (b) (6)

Begin forwarded message:

From: PERF Daily Clips <perf@memberclicks-mail.net>
Date: October 1, 2021 at 7:07:35 AM EDT
To: "Matthews-Johnson, Tamarra D. (OAG)" <(b) (6)>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] PERF Daily Clips: School board group asks US for help policing threats
Reply-To: perfclips@policeforum.org

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.6605

From: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)
Subject: RE: School Boards
To: Gannon, Anne (ODAG); Braden, Myesha (ODAG)
Cc: Braverman, Adam L. (ODAG)
Sent: October 1, 2021 4:51 PM (UTC-04:00)

Thanks. Their answer is not surprising, but we need to understand (b) (5)

From: Gannon, Anne (ODAG) <(b) (6)>
Sent: Friday, October 1, 2021 4:47 PM
To: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) <(b) (6)> Braden, Myesha (ODAG) <(b) (6)>
Cc: Braverman, Adam L. (ODAG) <(b) (6)>
Subject: RE: School Boards

Waiting to hear back from USMS on the question below regarding (b) (5)

With regard to the initial query, USMS responded. (b) (5)

From: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) <(b) (6)>
Sent: Friday, October 1, 2021 1:38 PM
To: Gannon, Anne (ODAG) <(b) (6)> Braden, Myesha (ODAG) <(b) (6)>
Cc: Braverman, Adam L. (ODAG) <(b) (6)>
Subject: RE: School Boards

[-Myesha]

Okay – PADAG wants a “clean answer” on (b) (5)

As a legal matter (separate from what our policy has been) (b) (5)

We may need to (b) (5)

From: Gannon, Anne (ODAG) <(b) (6)>
Sent: Friday, October 1, 2021 3:55 PM
To: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) <(b) (6)> Braden, Myesha (ODAG) <(b) (6)>
Cc: Braverman, Adam L. (ODAG) <(b) (6)>
Subject: RE: School Boards

Nothing from USMS yet.

I also reached out to EOUSA on (b) (5)

Quick research confirmed that (b) (5)

From: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) <(b) (6)>
Sent: Friday, October 1, 2021 12:48 PM
To: Gannon, Anne (ODAG) <(b) (6)> Braden, Myesha (ODAG) <(b) (6)>
Cc: Braverman, Adam L. (ODAG) <(b) (6)>
Subject: FW: School Boards

Anne/Myesha:

Just FYI on what I've put in front of John so far. This is all brainstorming stuff and not ready for outside discussion until we hear back from a number of stakeholders.

(b) (5) r.

Anne: anything on USMS?

Kevin

From: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)

Sent: Friday, October 1, 2021 3:13 PM

To: Carlin, John P. (ODAG) <(b) (6)>

Subject: School Boards

John,

Here is what we are working on but understand that (b) (5) . I think it is important that we discuss this today before communicating outside of 4th floor. Perhaps after our 4p?

Kevin

**Draft DOJ Response
to School Board Threats**

(b) (5)

From: Singh, Anita M. (ODAG)
Subject: RE: School Boards
To: Gannon, Anne (ODAG)
Sent: October 1, 2021 4:13 PM (UTC-04:00)

Thank you!

From: Gannon, Anne (ODAG) <(b) (6)>
Sent: Friday, October 1, 2021 4:09 PM
To: Singh, Anita M. (ODAG) <(b) (6)>
Subject: FW: School Boards

Looping you into the latest (waiting on USMS and EOUSA). Below is Kevin's email to John that incorporates our initial thoughts.

From: Gannon, Anne (ODAG)
Sent: Friday, October 1, 2021 12:55 PM
To: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) <(b) (6)> Braden, Myesha (ODAG) <(b) (6)>
Cc: Braverman, Adam L. (ODAG) <(b) (6)>
Subject: RE: School Boards

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.5693

From: Newman, David A. (ODAG)
Subject: RE: School Boards Letter
To: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG); Braden, Myesha (ODAG)
Sent: October 1, 2021 1:47 PM (UTC-04:00)

I would loop in (b)(6) per NSD [REDACTED] (and copy George T and Matt Blue on it).

From: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG) <(b) (6)>
Sent: Friday, October 1, 2021 1:21 PM
To: Braden, Myesha (ODAG) <(b) (6)> Newman, David A. (ODAG)
<(b) (6)>
Subject: RE: School Boards Letter

Duplicative Material, Document ID: 0.7.1451.5626

From: Chambers, Kevin (ODAG)
Subject: Federal response to school board threats
To: Gannon, Anne (ODAG); Braverman, Adam L. (ODAG)
Sent: October 1, 2021 1:35 PM (UTC-04:00)
Attached: NSBA Letter to President Biden Concerning Threats to Public Schools and School Board Members.pdf

From: (b)(6) Tamarra Matthews-Johnson (OAG)
Subject: Request by National School Boards Association
To: Klapper, Matthew B. (OAG); Heinzelman, Kate (OAG)
Sent: October 1, 2021 8:03 AM (UTC-04:00)

Hi -

This was in the PERF clips and in other spaces.

Are you all tracking this?

<https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/school-board-group-asks-us-policing-threats-80328174>

Tamarra Matthews Johnson

she/her/hers

Counsel

Office of the Attorney General

U.S. Department of Justice

Mobile: (b) (6)

From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, September 30, 2021
To: Bradford, Aryele (PAO)
Sent: September 30, 2021 5:59 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 30, 2021

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, September 30, 2021

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

2:34 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Okay. Welcome back, Dr. Harper.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. I'm breaking my streak. I do have some items at the top for all of you. Lots going on in the world.

The U.S. government condemns in the strongest possible terms the government of Ethiopia's unprecedented action to expel the leadership of all of the United Nations organizations involved in ongoing humanitarian operations. We agree with U.N. leaders: This is a stain on our collective conscience and it must stop.

The action follows the release of reports warning that hundreds of thousands of people are starving to death in northern Ethiopia. We're deeply concerned that this action continues a pattern by the Ethiopian government of obstructing the delivery of food, medicine, and other lifesaving supplies that most -- to those most in need.

We call on the U.N. Security Council and members of the international community to take urgent action to make clear to the government of Ethiopia that impeding humanitarian operations and depriving your own citizens of the basic means of survival is unacceptable.

President Biden signed an executive order, earlier this month, enabling the U.S. government to impose financial sanctions

on those prolonging the conflict in northern Ethiopia. We will not hesitate to use this or any other tool at our disposal to respond quickly and decisively to those who obstruct humanitarian assistance to the people of Ethiopia.

One more items -- one more item. Some news from -- out of the First Lady's office: Today, Joining Forces -- the White House initiative led by the First Lady to support military families -- and the National Security Council released a White House report, signed by the President and Secretaries of 15 executive departments, which outlines the first round of administration-wide commitments and proposals to supporting military and veteran families, caregivers, and survivors.

In May of 2021, the Office of the First Lady and the National Security Council launched a Joining Forces Interagency Policy Committee with representatives from across the executive agencies to work collaboratively on priorities related to the families of service members and veterans, caregivers, and survivors.

This report details more than 800 -- 80, sorry -- specific commitments and proposals from across the administration and is the product of the Interagency Policy Committee's months of work.

Going forward, this committee will continue to advance these priorities, including those outlined in the report, through cross-agency working groups and will report results and updated plans annually.

Jonathan, why don't you kick us off.

Q Thank you, Jen. A few -- all on the dealings at Capitol Hill right now. Senator Manchin told reporters a short time ago that he told President Biden that \$1.5 trillion would be as high as he was willing to go for the reconciliation package. What was the President's reaction to that? Is that an acceptable number?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say, as we've said many times, we're not going to outline private negotiations or private discussions, and we'll let the senators speak for that, as Senator Manchin did earlier today. The way the President sees it is that this is an ongoing discussion, an ongoing negotiation.

Here's what we know: We know that timelines help make progress. We've seen that play out over the course of the last couple of days. We know that compromise is inevitable. We've also seen that play out over the last couple of days. And right now, we're clearly in the thick of it.

I'd also note that during his -- during Senator Manchin's -- and obviously, I'm not his spokesperson; he can certainly speak for himself -- but during his Q&A he did on the Hill today, he also referenced the fact that he -- that there was a document from a couple of months ago. And I'll let him and Senator -- Leader Schumer speak to that. And he was repeatedly pushed and asked, "Would you go higher than 1.5? Would you go higher than 1.5?" I will leave it to all of you to determine if he answered that question.

But this is an ongoing discussion, an ongoing negotiation. And as I said yesterday, that's going to require all sides giving a little, and we're in the midst of that right now.

Q So on that -- so, key Democratic House leaders have said they will, quote, "stay here all weekend" to work to get a deal. Does the President plan to do the same? Will he be at the White House working this weekend, having visitors, calling and hosting congressional lawmakers?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as Speaker Pelosi said earlier -- and we're following the same motto -- we're taking it hour by hour here and making a decision and determination about what's most needed.

So, as it relates to what's even going to happen this afternoon, we're open; he's available. He's been making calls this morning. He's open to having visitors. He's open to going places. But we're going to make those decisions hour by hour.

So, the weekend is a little bit away, but I will tell you that this is the President's top priority right now: getting relief to the

American people; making sure we're lowering costs for the American people; we're addressing the climate crisis; we're rebuilding our roads, rails, and bridges. We've made progress, and we're still at work at it.

Q All right. And last one from me. One of the President's central promises when he was elected was to restore Americans' ability to be confident in their government again, to believe in institutions again. What is the White House's message to Americans right now who look at this and see a mess? Nearly a government shutdown, the debt ceiling is unclear, legislation not being passed, at least not yet, even though Democrats control all the bodies of government. And those Americans don't feel that they can be confident in government.

What's the White House's response?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say: The President, the Speaker of the House, and the Leader have more experience getting legislation across the finish line than any group of Democrat -- Democratic leaders in history.

We're in the middle of it right now. It's messy, this sausage-making, on Capitol Hill. Policymaking is messy. There's negotiations. They all have representatives who are advocating for their points of view. That's democracy in action.

What I can tell them is that we're on the path to keep the government open. You just saw that pass the Senate. It was going over to the House. That's not just keeping the government open, that's getting relief to make sure we can -- we can take care of refugees, people who fought by our side in Afghanistan; that's to make sure we get relief to the Gulf Coast -- additional relief to the Gulf Coast. All important priorities.

And we would also tell them that the President is going to stop at -- he's going to use every lever at his disposal to fight to get this legislation passed -- these two pieces of legislation -- that will have a historic -- make historic investments. And he's doing it because he wants to have an impact on their lives.

But these type of packages, not a lot of precedent for them, but he's going to work at it. He's going to get it done. That's what he would tell them.

Go ahead.

Q Does the President see any strategic value in a vote failing on the House floor?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as Speaker Pelosi said earlier today, we're on a path to win. I don't want to even consider any other options than that. We're in it to win it. The President is also in it to win it. That's what we're working toward. It's only 2:40 right now; lots of time left in the day. And he's going to continue to engage -- stay closely engaged with her about the path forward.

Q You've repeatedly referred to this week -- to this moment as an "inflection point." How is the President viewing this moment, given where his caucuses are and where his members are?

MS. PSAKI: This moment as in "this moment" -- 2:40 p.m. this afternoon -- or just today?

Q As in it's deadline day for an infrastructure bill; he doesn't have the votes. One member of the United States Senate is about \$2 trillion below his topline number, and there's no clear way to bridge those gaps.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think the President views this as the last several days and even longer than that. His view is we've made some progress. You've seen some members come down. You've seen some members come up. You've seen active negotiations. He's obviously been hard at work at them himself.

And what we clearly see is an agreement about the need to get this done, whether it's the infrastructure bill or the reconciliation practice -- package, which has key priorities for the President -- key priorities. I think the Speaker referred

to it earlier today as the cause of her -- as her public li- -- as her time in public life. That's a bit of a paraphrase. I'll leave you to her words.

So, look, he sees this moment -- he knew that as we got closer to self-imposed timelines, which are important -- often these timelines can help make progress; we've seen progress made -- that more members would be out there advocating for what was important to them. That's happening.

We saw -- we would hopefully see more willingness to compromise; that's happening too. We're hard at work. And he's been through this before, so he's not too thrown off his game on it.

Q And then just one quick last one. Do you guys see a possibility of some type of framework agreement that could unlock the infrastructure vote today?

MS. PSAKI: That's what we're working towards.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. You talked about "self-imposed timelines" as opposed to the other real timelines for debt ceiling and the CR. The progressives don't seem to feel any sense of urgency about passing infrastructure, and the moderates, like Manchin, don't seem to feel any urgency about passing reconciliation. The only Democrat that I can think of who really has a sense of urgency is Terry McAuliffe.

Do you feel it -- does the President want this done in a certain amount of time, or does he also feel that this could play out over weeks and months and still come to the conclusion that he wants?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as I said a little bit earlier, we know -- and the President knows from his time in public office -- that timelines can help make progress. That's often how legislating happens on the Hill. And as the Speaker --

Q These ones aren't.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we would -- we would disagree with that. You've seen a lot of members out there advocating for their viewpoints, being very vocal about what they want to see; some coming up, some coming down. That's a sense of progress. And we're working at it hour by hour here.

Q But does he have -- does he feel that he needs it done by a certain time, like the end of the year?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to set new deadlines here for you. Obviously, we're trying to get it done now. We're working on it as of right now, today, and that's what our focus is on in this moment.

Go ahead. I'll go back to you, Weijia. Go ahead.

Q It's all right.

Q To follow up a little on what Phil was asking --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- what does the President want and what is he asking members of Congress to do on this infrastructure vote tonight? Is he calling progressives, and Republicans even, asking them to vote for it? Does he definitely want this vote tonight? Or is this all still this murky -- sort of trying to link these two things together and hope something emerges out of that?

MS. PSAKI: There's nothing really murky about what's going on here. I mean, we understand what progressive members

want. Right? They've been out there vocally talking to all of you about what they want.

It's clear we also need their votes in order to pass an infrastructure bill. They want to have a clear path forward on a reconciliation package. The President wants both pieces of legislation to pass. That's what he wants, bottom line. He's also going to work with the Speaker and the Leader to get that done.

So, what he's been spending his time on over the last couple of days is that -- having conversations with Senator Manchin, Senator Sinema, and others who have been very vocal about the fact that they're not quite there yet. And his objective is to try to get them there because that's what members of the Progressive Caucus are looking for in order to support an infrastructure bill, many compo- -- of components of which they support.

Q I guess, to put a finer point on it: If your choice is between a vote tonight that fails but sort of puts everybody on the record, or pulling the vote tonight and continuing deliberations despite it potentially upsetting moderates who feel like they've been promised this vote, what does the President prefer?

MS. PSAKI: We're working towards winning a vote tonight. We have several hours left in the day.

Q All right. Last one. What's the plan on the debt ceiling? I mean, Republicans have sort of made clear that they're not going to back any efforts. So it would seem at this point that Democrats' only hope here is to turn towards a reconciliation process on the debt ceiling.

I understand that you've made the point many times that Mitch McConnell is being hypocritical on this, that Republicans should support it, but it does seem now that the votes are on the table, that you're kind of pursuing this political point at the potential risk of default for the U.S. economy.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think that's a bit of a shorthand of what's happening, which I understand; it's a bit of a complicated thing.

But first, since you gave me the opportunity, it's not just Senator McConnell; Republicans are playing politics with an economic catastrophe, and they're treating a calamity for working families like a D.C. game. There are huge impacts here.

You touched on the fact, but let me give the public a little sense of that: an instant recession, 6 million jobs lost, \$15 trillion in savings wiped out, Social Security checks and payments to our troops blocked. Those are real impacts.

Republicans in Congress are treating this like a game. Let me give you some examples. Senator Rick Scott -- and this is a real quote, I will note: "This is going to be a...ball. I'm going to have so much fun." That's about the debt limit.

Senator Kevin Kramer: "It's sort of fun to watch."

And Senator Cornyn said yesterday that Republicans would use every tool at their disposal to slow Democrats from doing this on their own.

What we're trying to do right now is do it on their own -- do it on our own. That is what Leader Schumer is working to proceed -- working to move forward on.

And, obviously, as you know, Republicans have blocked that effort. So, of course, we are going to continue to press. We're not going to let up on that, on Republicans, to do what's responsible, to protect the full faith and credit of the United States, as has been done 80 times in the past.

We've also been working to do it on our own. We're going to keep working with Leader Schumer to get that done.

Q But you're not going to ask for reconcil- -- Democrats to push on reconciliation, (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to get into additional mechanisms here. We're going to continue. I don't think -- we're not going to, nor should anyone, let Republicans off the hook here, so we're going to continue to press them on it.

Q One of the things that Senator Manchin said today was that the, kind of -- the concern that he has around the 3.5 number is about how it would impact inflation in the economy. And I'm curious what the White House thinks of that concern and what you've done to allay that concern.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we've conveyed privately what we've said publicly and what many, many economists have also conveyed publicly, which is that what these packages will do is they will address -- address inflation and costs over the long term. That's one of the core reasons that people should be supporting them. So, if you are concerned about inflation, that's exactly a reason you should support these packages.

Q And would the President sign a reconciliation bill that does not include negotiating on drug prices?

MS. PSAKI: The President has obviously proposed that. He feels strongly about the need to make drugs -- prescription drugs, I should say, more affordable to the American public. I'm not going to negotiate further from here.

Q One other thing, just on a different topic: Jake Sullivan's conversations in Saudi Arabia. Did rising oil prices come up in those conversations? What was his message to the Saudis about alleviating some of the concerns that people have as they're paying a dollar more for gasoline now than they did a year ago?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, so, I know someone asked about this the other day. And, obviously, the focus of his trip was on Yemen and working with the Saudis on Yemen. And our -- Tim Lenderki -- Lenderking was -- joined him in those meetings, who's our envoy to Yemen, to kind of figure out the path forward.

He was -- obviously, the price of oil is of concern. We have been in touch with OPEC. And I believe it was going to be raised, but I haven't had a chance to get a readout beyond that. I can try to do that for you after the briefing.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. So, putting the topline number aside, Senators Manchin and Sinema have been very opaque about what it is they want and do not want in this reconciliation bill. Without revealing details, does the White House and the President have a clear understanding of what it is each one of them wants?

MS. PSAKI: We've had a lot of private conversations with both of the senators about what their priorities are, as they've said publicly. And I think as Senator Manchin said publicly today, what their priorities are and what that looks like in a final package, that's still an ongoing discussion.

Q Are they asking for the same things? Are the two of them on board with the same (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: I'll let them speak for their priorities and how they line up with each other.

Q Okay. And then to build on what Justin was asking about --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- decoupling these two.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Is the President worried at all about eroding trust with Republicans who signed on to the bipartisan deal after he

reassured them that it would not be conditional on reconciliation?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let's remember what's actually going on on the Hill here. Republicans in the House, led by Kevin McCarthy, are opting to vote against rebuilding roads and railways and bridges, despite the fact that the package was sent over with the support of 69 senators.

So, I think if you're asking about trust or whether people are delivering for the American people, you should direct it at Kevin McCarthy.

Go ahead.

Q I'm asking because the progressives have made so clear that they refuse to vote on infrastructure without a vote on reconciliation first. Why doesn't the President ask them to treat them separately?

MS. PSAKI: To treat -- well, I think the --

Q To treat the two bills separately.

MS. PSAKI: The President has made clear both are his priorities. He's also made clear he wants to get them both across the finish line.

What we're talking about now is the legislative process and how you get the majority of votes to get both of them done. And that's what he's working to negotiate and working to unify the caucus around.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks. And just one more --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- on a separate topic.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Go ahead.

Q The National School Boards Association has sent a letter to the President asking for help from federal law enforcement agencies because of the violence and the threats that they're seeing across the country. Has the President received that request? And are you considering offering that help?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, let me say we take the security of public servants and elected officials across the country very seriously. And, obviously, these threats to school board members is horrible. They're doing their jobs.

Obviously, there are going to be different law enforcement authorities that will be related to each community and -- where this is happening, so we'd certainly refer you to them about any specific threats. And we'd encourage individuals to report any threats they face to local and state law enforcement agencies. And we're continuing to explore what more can be done from across the administration.

But again, a lot of this will be local law enforcement and how they can help ensure these school board members feel protected.

Q Thanks.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. Has the President at all lost control of his party? Depending on which perspective you're looking at this from -- you know, some people say that it appears that progressives are running the show, they're banding together and making their demands. Other people are saying it looks like Joe Manchin is playing president. So, who is in charge?

MS. PSAKI: Well, this is how democracy works. I know it feels foreign because there wasn't much that happened over the last couple of years. But how it works is the American people elect their elected officials, the President of the United States puts forward a bold and ambitious proposal, and then everybody negotiates about it, and they have different points of view. That's how democracy should work. We're in the midst of it right now. We're not trying to paint over how messy it looks from the outside. We know that.

But what -- the good news is, is that there is agreement that -- among most Democrats, if not every single one of them, that we need to get something done; that we need to do more to rebuild our roads and railways and bridges; that we need to cut costs for the American people; we need to address the climate crisis. There's agreement on that.

Now we're in the nitty-gritty details, which is very important, but that's the end stage of this process. And the American people should know that that's what the President is working on.

Q And I want to follow up on Weijia's question. So, if the bipartisan bill fails or is stalled or doesn't happen today, it would appear that these two bills -- the reconciliation and the infrastructure -- are linked. And the President, you know, made statements that Republicans should be able to vote for the bipartisan bill on its merits. He stood in front of the White House with a group of Republicans who negotiated that infrastructure bill. Is there a message that he has to those Republican senators, who voted to pass that bill on its merits, that this bill is somehow not linked with the reconciliation because of what's happening in the House?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we're working towards victory here and a win. If it doesn't pass, it's because it doesn't have enough votes. I think Republicans in the Senate understand that and know how this process works.

But that's what we're working towards now. That's what the President has been making phone calls about. That's what we have his schedule cleared for this afternoon. And I'm not going to make a prediction of what the outcome will look like several hours from now.

Q And then with the Vice President -- and she was a senator as recently as this year --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- why isn't she on the Hill helping to broker this deal?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the Vice President had the CBC over, the CHC last week. She's been making calls herself, just like the President. If it's constructive for her to go to the Hill or for him to go to the Hill, to have members down here, they'll do that.

We're ready and willing. This is our top priority. All hands on deck. But a lot of what's happening right now is discussions at a staff level, a senior staff level to get through these intricate details, and that's where the focus is in this moment.

Go ahead, Kelly.

Q Since we haven't seen the President much publicly this week --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- and you talked about leaving room in his schedule, can you paint more of a picture of what's happening behind the scenes? Are there calls happening from the Oval Office inviting members to the President? Does he have scheduled with

scenes? Are these calls happening from the Oval? Is he inviting guests to the Residence? Does he have a whiteboard with his own whip count? Can you give us a picture of what it looks like (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: (Laughs.) I like that visual. I would say he does not have a whiteboard with a whip count. I can assure you he's more of a paper and pen kind of guy.

But, look, he's been meeting with staff, he's been getting updates from staff as they've been having engagements with the Hill. You all know who the senior members of his team are who are negotiating, whether that's Steve Ricchetti or Louisa Terrell, Brian Deese, Susan Rice.

What he's asked his team to do is -- including the policy members, which people don't always factor this in -- is be available to have conversations with members about questions they have, to help address any parts of it they have suggestions on.

So, he's getting regular updates. People are in and out of the Oval Office providing him updates on their individual conversations. And he's picking up the phone and calling people as needed, whether that's the Speaker or Leader Schumer or other members, to have a conversation about the status, to check on where they are, to follow up on maybe a conversation they may have had with his staff.

These conversations are happening from the Oval Office, but certainly he does some from the Residence; it depends on what time of day it may be.

Q And are you running your own whip count, or are you relying on Hill resources to do that?

MS. PSAKI: We're very closely in touch, as you know, with leadership on the Hill; the President himself is. Of course, we're certainly in touch with members ourselves -- ourselves about where they stand, where they may have concerns, or any hesitations.

Go ahead. I'll come back to you, Terry. I'm sorry. Go ahead.

Q We finally learned today Senator Manchin's position on his topline number. Senator Schumer has been aware of it since late July, and Senator Manchin said that he told the President already this \$1.5 trillion number. Why has the decision been made strategically to pursue Senator Manchin, Senator Sinema, and not try to, within the last couple of weeks, apply more pressure on progressives to take half a loaf and say, "This is low-hanging fruit; it's a \$1.2 trillion infrastructure plan. Let's move on that"? Why was that strategic decision made not to do that?

MS. PSAKI: Both of these are huge priorities to the President. I'd also note that when Senator Manchin was asked -- and he can obviously speak for himself -- but just since I've read the whole transcript here, he also repeatedly referred back to a document that went back to July 28th. I'd remind you all that this is an active negotiation and discussion, and it is incumbent upon members to put out where they stand and where they are. And as we've seen over the past couple days, that's an everchanging process.

So, before you make conclusions about what the end results will be, I would remind you to look at the last several days or even weeks about how these discussions have progressed.

Q But Senator Manchin said today he believes his position is -- it sounded to me like his position was firm. And he also said that if progressives feel that the Congress should spend \$3.5 trillion, that they should convince voters to send more progressives to Washington. That sounded to me like he's saying that, through the end of this Congress, he's not going to agree to \$3.5 trillion.

MS. PSAKI: We could certainly parse Senator Manchin's words, but I am certain he'll go answer questions again, and your colleagues should ask him more questions.

Q But why do you think that this is not -- why do you think that Senator Manchin's position on this is not final?

MS. PSAKI: Because this is an active negotiation, because he was pushed repeatedly during the gaggle that he did on Capitol Hill about where he stood. But again, I'm not here to speak for Senator Manchin; he is -- certainly can speak for himself and what his points of view -- views are. And I certainly encourage you all to keep asking him questions about where he stands.

Go ahead.

Q Back on the deadline that was set at the beginning of the week -- announced at -- this is a big week: Democrats are in charge here at the White House and in both houses of Congress. And they set the deadline; Democrats set the deadline. Now they --

MS. PSAKI: To be clear, they just set the date of a vote.

Q All right. You called it a "deadline." I was just using your words.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Fair. But -- thank you for the clarification. It's -- they set the time of a vote.

Q All right. Democrats set this vote. Now they're going to miss it, fail to make it. Why is it that --

MS. PSAKI: We don't know that. It's only three o'clock.

Q Can you tell us if they're going to vote tonight?

MS. PSAKI: That's what Speaker Pelosi indicated her plan was.

Q All right. My question is: Why isn't it fair to see this as a failure of the President to get his own party to back him and his agenda?

MS. PSAKI: Why isn't it, before we've even had a vote and we don't even know where it sits, a failure of the President?

Q It feels like we're farther away today than we were on Monday.

MS. PSAKI: I don't think the President feels that way, and I don't think members of Congress feel that way.

Q You've talked about progress. Can you explain what progress is? You said it's people talking about where they are.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q That sounds like -- that sounds like an earlier part of the process when you had set a vote for the end of the week.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would point you again to what Speaker Pelosi said earlier today: In the end stages, the later stages of a process -- where we are now -- when you get closer to a vote, a time of a vote being set, that's when the negotiations get serious. That's when people start putting down bottom lines of where they stand. You've seen some people do that publicly. A lot more of it happens behind the scenes. That's what I mean by progress.

You've seen members come down in numbers. You've seen members come up in numbers. That's what we're working on -- to get to an agreed-upon path forward.

Q So there's progress, and it's people behind the scenes saying that -- where their numbers move.

MS. PSAKI: They've also said it publicly.

Q One more. A lot of Democrats are looking at what's happening, and they're saying Senator Manchin and Senator Sinema are holding this President and his agenda hostage. What would you say to that?

MS. PSAKI: I would say we have 50 votes in the Senate -- 50 Democrats in the Senate. So, we need the majority to win. That's how a bill becomes a law.

Q They've got the leverage.

MS. PSAKI: We need all 50 votes in the Senate to move this forward. That's where we stand now.

Go ahead.

Q I just wanted to go back to the debt ceiling for a second.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Democrats control all branches of government right now. Can you assure the American people and the financial markets that the United States will not default on its debt?

MS. PSAKI: That is absolutely what we're trying to accomplish. And I'd remind you that we would have gotten that done had Republicans done what they've done 80 times before -- supporting a bipartisan vote to do something that has been pretty standard in the past -- or if they had allowed Leader Schumer to move forward.

But, absolutely, we're going to do everything to prevent the federal -- us from defaulting --

Q But does the plan involve changing Mitch McConnell's mind -- Leader McConnell's mind in some way? Or is there a plan to just go forward using either reconciliation or --

MS. PSAKI: Well, Leader Schumer has already tried to -- already been working to move things forward. And it's been blocked by Republicans -- not just their vote; an effort to move it forward has been blocked.

Q But there clearly are ways -- I mean, getting rid of the filibuster, for example, for this particular vote would be one way to move forward. And is that something that the President would consider to avoid losing, let's say, 10 percent of the value of the stock market?

MS. PSAKI: I just outlined how concerning we are -- how concerned we are, which you just echoed -- or echoed different components of it. And that's an issue we take incredibly seriously. You've also heard Secretary Yellen on the Hill talking about this. We're not going to let Republicans off the hook. We don't think they should be. This is not a game. This is the faith -- full faith and credit of the United States.

We're working with Leader Schumer on a path forward, but beyond that, I don't have more to preview for you.

Q But you can do it without Republicans if you got rid of the filibuster for this --

MS. PSAKI: We could do it if they let us move forward, and they haven't. So I have no more details on the pa- -- on the legislative process.

Q And just on the reconciliation package, is \$1.5 trillion enough in your spending to cover Biden's priorities -- the President's priorities?

MS. PSAKI: I understand that's a number that's been put out there. It's an active negotiation. I'm not going to weigh in from here on what is or isn't acceptable to the Democratic Caucus.

Go ahead.

Q A couple different topics. So, on immigration, there seems to be a real sense among advocates for immigrants -- people who have been fighting for legalization, for a pathway to citizenship -- there's a real sense of doom; people who described this, yesterday, even crying about the latest parliamentary ruling.

Do you -- what does the President -- you know, what would the President say or what does the President say if that -- if he is unable to move forward on any of the, sort of, big, sweeping promises that he made as a candidate to get -- to finally be the President to get something done on immigration?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we don't accept that. We're nine months into his presidency. And we share the disappointment. Obviously, as you know and you touched on, the parliamentarian ruled twice, in different ways, that it could be included in the reconciliation package -- or components, I should say, of immigration reform could not be included in the reconciliation practice -- process. Sorry, package.

That's disappointing to the President as well. So, clearly, now we need to figure out what the vehicle forward is.

I would say the President's plan is about certainly protecting DREAMers, farm workers, and others. It's also about investing in border security, making sure it makes sense and we're investing in it in a way that makes sense, and creating an asylum processing system that is actually functional, which I think we all agree it's not.

So there are several components of what he's proposed, and, certainly, we share the disappointment of many advocates that this wasn't included and the desire to find a vehicle to move it forward.

Q On one other separate topic: There have been a number of issues in the last, say, several weeks in which advocates -- allies of the President are describing him as "Trump-like." Most -- less in terms of his personality and sort of tone and tenor, obviously, but in terms of policy. Even today, a representative of the Cuban government describing the frustration with the President continuing to maintain Trump-era policies vis-à-vis Cuba.

Does the -- what's the President's reaction? And does he accept that in some areas of policy he is, you know, in agreement with the former President?

MS. PSAKI: So, just for the sake of argument here -- not argument, but discussion -- beyond the representative of the Cuban government who --

Q Afghanistan, immigration --

MS. PSAKI: Well, but who? Who are we talking about here?

Q Who --

MS. PSAKI: Who is saying that the President is like Trump?

Q Oh, I mean there -- there -- I mean, I could find you quotes. We have -- there have been quotes in our paper and quotes in lots of -- lots of folks have, depending on the issue, whether they are immigration advocates or, you know, folks in the Afghanistan -- who sort of watch Afghanistan. There have been numerous on-the-record descriptions of the President embracing -- and it's actually, in some ways, just a factual thing, right?

MS. PSAKI: But like on what policy?

Q Like the President has --

MS. PSAKI: On what policy? Sorry, I didn't -- you can -- you can name people but -- or what specific policies.

Q Well, I mean, for example, Afghanistan would have been the maintaining of the former President's decision to withdraw troops. On immigration, it's in maintaining Title 42 and keeping Title 42 in place. I mean they're --

Q Sub- --

Q Hm?

Q Submarines.

Q The submarine -- yeah. (Laughter.)

MS. PSAKI: Which one?

Q The submarine -- I'm just --

Q Yeah, the --

Q AUKUS.

Q The President was --

Q AUKUS.

Q -- yeah -- was compared to Trump --

Q -- to Trump. Well, the -- that's the French -- the French Foreign Minister compared him to Trump, in terms of how he handled the AUKUS negotiations.

MS. PSAKI: So, look, I'd take each one of these: On Afghanistan, the former President struck a deal without the Afghan government that, we heard the military convey yesterday, led to the demoralization of the Afghan Security Forces and the Afghan government, where he also released 5,000 Taliban fighters into Afghanistan.

I would say the President took a pretty different approach than that in ending a war that the former President didn't end -- something the American people strongly support.

As it relates to AUKUS, I'm not even sure what that's referring to, in terms of what they're comparing. The President worked with key partners -- Australia and the United Kingdom -- to come to an agreement that would help provide security in an important part of the world -- in the Indo-Pacific -- a priority that, frankly, getting out of the war in Afghanistan leaves space for us to spend more time addressing.

What was the last one? Immigration?

Q Immigration, Title 42, tariffs on China. I mean, there's --

MS. PSAKI: Title 42 is a public health -- is a public health requirement, a public health -- because we're in the middle of a pandemic, which, by the way --

Q The President and his allies --

MS. PSAKI: -- we would have made progress on had the former President actually addressed --

Q Right, but the --

MS. PSAKI: -- the pandemic and not suggested people inject bleach.

So, I think we're in a bit of a different place. I'm happy to discuss more examples. I think it's -- people would be pretty hard pressed to argue that the President has taken any aspect of the former President's playbook and used it as a model of his own.

Q Okay. Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Senator Manchin has also said that he wants to means test as much as possible of this reconciliation package. Without getting into or speaking for the senator, as you've said, what is the White House's position on, I guess, means testing in this package?

MS. PSAKI: Well, you can call it whatever you want. Sometimes means -- when you say "means testing" -- not you, but when -- when it's said, it sometimes has it not the right connotation or the wrong connotation.

The President's proposals, many of them have been targeted at the middle class, as have these proposals and these initiatives, which means there's a cap on income through which you can benefit. That's what -- you can call it whatever you want, if you call it "means testing." The President is very open to targeting, by income, many of his proposals. And that's something that you can see throughout many components of his agenda that have been proposed and many that have passed to date.

Q Does the White House believe that you all are currently in alignment with Manchin on what those thresholds would look like or --

MS. PSAKI: It's an ongoing discussion. But, again, our objective is to -- is to target and focus on bringing relief to the middle class. That's what the President wants to see this agenda accomplish.

Q In an op-ed for USA Today this morning, Senator Bernie Sanders defended the \$3.5 trillion price tag, asking, "Please tell me what [where] we should cut." This came out before Senator Manchin gave his line in the sand.

Does -- without speaking for either senator, does the White House believe that there's any provisions that, if we are talking about getting somewhere between 3.5 and 1.5, that are absolutely -- you all cannot stomach not having them in the final package?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to put anything on the table here. It's clear, as numbers come down, which they will, that there will be cuts to different components. That's just the nature of the totals here. But we'll leave those conversations private. I know you're eager [sic] -- eager to know more, and hopefully we'll have more to share soon.

Q And then just finally -- just one more point. As you all have said from here, the public -- public polling has consistently found that many parts of this -- of both packages are very supported by the American people. The American people are also very consistently pessimistic about action in Washington.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Ahead of what we're going to be seeing, whichever way this vote goes tonight, what is your message to the public as they look at the ongoing situation in Washington about -- what is your message to the American people as they look at, as you've said, a messy situation, the chaos of democracy?

MS. PSAKI: We hope we can prove them wrong.

Q Okay.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead, Karen.

Q Thanks, Jen. I know "hour by hour" is kind of the phrase of the day.

MS. PSAKI: (Laughs.) Yeah.

Q But given that, can we expect to hear from the President today? Or what would have to happen for us to hear from the President today?

MS. PSAKI: We'll see. I can't make a prediction for you now, but it is certainly possible. It's also possible he has more meetings. He'll certainly make more phone calls, possibly moves. But I don't have anything to predict for you at this point in time.

Q And, last night, he went to the congressional baseball game. Did he go specifically to do some arm twisting or lobbying on infrastructure? And he spent some time with Republican lawmakers -- something he really hasn't done here at the White House. Can you give us a sense of what he talked about with those Republican lawmakers? What was the interaction like, the tone of those conversations?

MS. PSAKI: I think you're undervaluing his baseball prowess -- (laughter) -- and history, which he was honored for last night.

No, look, I think what the President -- and I saw him this morning; he was reflecting on how it was -- and I think this is a tradition -- the Congressional Baseball Game. You know, it's something that has been around for some time, where Democrats and Republicans go participate in America's -- one of America's favorite pastimes.

And you saw -- I think you all saw in photos, but for people who didn't see -- he visited with some Republicans down in their area -- dugout?

Q Dugout.

MS. PSAKI: I don't even know it's called. (Laughter.) Okay, dugout. Help me out here. Thank you. He visited -- (laughs) -- with some -- my husband is going to be really mad about that.

He visited with some Republicans. You know, he wasn't -- it wasn't meant to be a negotiation; it was a discussion about, you know, how things are going and work we're all committed to and just saying hello to them. And sometimes, you know, that's important and powerful too at a time where there's been so much division, where there's a view from many in the public -- as per the question earlier -- that people can't work together, can't get things done.

And this was an opportunity to have a moment to visit with, to see people that you've known be -- you've known a long time, to meet new people, and to move beyond partisanship to celebrate one of America's favorite pastimes.

Q Did he have a response to you about getting booed last night? Any reaction to that?

MS. PSAKI: He's been in public life long enough to know there's going to be some yays and jeers in most big, public places.

Go ahead.

Q Can I just follow up on that? Is -- in some ways, does his visit and the rituals of getting together sort of prove the point that the face time doesn't work? I mean, you still -- you referred to Leader McConnell and the Republican Party not willing to raise the debt limit. He's had plenty of face time with Leader McConnell for decades. Maybe it just doesn't matter and people are going to do what their political interests or what they believe their political interests tells them to do?

MS. PSAKI: Well, this is how the President views it: You're going to have strong disagreements, as he does with Senator McConnell about how he's approached the debt limit. You're also going to have areas where you may come to agreement on, as they do on infrastructure and the importance of rebuilding our roads, our railways, and our bridges. And it's important to maintain lines of communication and discussion to figure out where you can work together.

That's also how he views and approaches diplomacy. We can call out and -- publicly and argue strongly privately issues we have with foreign governments. But we also sometimes still look for ways -- most of the time -- for ways to work together.

That's been his approach. I would say that given the infrastructure bill passed with 69 votes, that's evidence of it working.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. You mentioned at the top that on September 17th the President signed an executive order authorizing sanctions to be used against those undermining peace in Ethiopia.

But right now, it doesn't seem the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Abiy Ahmed, is interested in peace. He refused to meet with Samantha Power when she was there. He has -- he is expelling U.N. staff from the country. He's taken other steps that prove that he has no interest in peace.

Why not take the sanction now? Why not impose the sanction now, or take more drastic action against not just him but also the President of Eritrea, who still have troops inside Ethiopia?

MS. PSAKI: Well, absent clear and concrete changes, we will. We're preparing to take aggressive action under this executive order to impose targeted sanctions against a range of individuals and entities. What we're communicating to the parties on the ground is that we must see meaningful steps within weeks to initiate discussions to achieve a negotiated ceasefire, allow in an unhindered humanitarian access, and ensure respect for human rights. Absent significant progress, we'll take action. And we have the methods to do that. That's why I rec- -- talked about the executive order.

Q And then on Guinea, we've had so many coups in Africa. The President of Guinea has been overthrown. The President of Mali has been overthrown. And we just had the Prime Minister of Sudan who just survived a coup attempt. And the President promised to defend democracy around the world. Is he failing in that promise?

MS. PSAKI: He doesn't expect that to be accomplished in nine months. He expects that to be accomplished over the course of time for advocating for democracy, for human rights, for imposing steps when warranted, and -- as we are considering right now in Ethiopia -- and obviously by having a strong national security team that can convey this on his behalf when he cannot.

Go ahead.

Q I just have a question on Africa.

Q Thanks, Jen. On --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead. I'll come back to you next.

Q Thanks, Jen. Just to follow up on Mike's question on what the Cuban foreign minister said. Just to be specific, he said, "It's a pity that President Biden couldn't implement his own policy toward Cuba." And I just wondered if you had a specific response.

MS. PSAKI: I don't.

Q And there's a U.S. delegation -- top officials going to Port-au-Prince. What's the goal of that visit?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, I have some details on this, including who is going. So, let's see. So, what they're doing -- one, we feel it's pretty pivotal to have high-level officials from here engaged in traveling back and forth to Port-au-Prince to have discussions with actors across the political spectrum to see what we can do to help support dialogue and development for the Haitian people.

We know it's clearly a profoundly challenging time on the ground, and it's crucial that we meet with a range of stakeholders to help move this process forward or help support the process moving forward in a way that's in the interest of the Haitian people. So, this is really an effort to be engaged, to be on the ground.

I can tell you -- and you may know this already -- that our newly confirmed Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere, Brian Nichols, is on this as a part of this delegation; our NSC Senior Director for the Western Hemisphere, Juan Gonzales, are there. They're meeting with civil society groups, political stakeholders, the Haitian government. And they're, of course, as I noted, discussing a Haitian-led process charting the path to democratic elections.

But that's the focus, as well as discussing how we can continue to help provide support for the migration response, security, recovery from the earthquake, and the COVID pandemic.

Q Jen, last question.

Q Secretary Mayorkas had said he expected the results of an investigation on the Border Patrol officers --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- on horseback by the end of this week. What's the status of that investigation?

MS. PSAKI: I know he said that; as I understand, it's still on track. But I would really point you to the Department of Homeland Security on any update.

Brian, why don't we go to you last?

Q Yeah, thank you.

Q Oh, you said --

Q Thank you very much. And I appreciate it. I'm -- I wanted to ask what the President's reaction is to Democratic lawmakers calling on him to lean more on Senator Manchin and Senator Sinema. What is the President's reaction to that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, first, the President's reaction is -- he's been in the -- he was in the Senate for 36 years. He knows, as does Speaker Pelosi, Leader Schumer, what it takes at this point in negotiations. They've probably done this more, and more successfully, than any combinations of Democratic leaders in history.

And his approach has been: Yes, of course, it's listening. Yes, of course, it's conveying viewpoints and having sometimes, you know, direct and candid discussions, but he knows how to do this.

And a lot of people who are throwing stones aren't a part of these negotiations. They're one on one. So, I think they should leave it to him and others to get them done.

Q But there are members of his party that want him to be more actively involved, and have come out publicly and said, "We want to see the President more actively involved." What's his response to that?

MS. PSAKI: I would say that -- as I would point to something Congresswoman Jayapal said yesterday, "Right now, it's not a secret about what is the holdup." The holdup is that we need to get 50 votes in the Senate to move the infrastructure, to move the reconciliation package forward, in order for members of the Progressive Caucus in the house to feel comfortable that there's a path forward.

As many of them have conveyed, the President's role and work in communicating with Senator Manchin and Senator Sinema to help get that done is probably one of the most constructive roles he can play. And that's what he's been focused on over the last few days.

Q My follow-up question, Jen?

MS. PSAKI: Thanks so much, everyone.

Okay, last one, because I promised you. Go ahead.

Q Thank you. Jen, the President of Angola -- President João Lourenço -- was in D.C. last week, and he met with Jake Sullivan and Madam Speaker of the House. And I just want to check with you if the President made any comment about this visit, because Jake Sullivan, on the day that he met my president, he said he would brief the President on that day. So, I don't -- I'm trying to check with you if you heard any comments from the President (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any additional comment. I think we put a readout out about Jake Sullivan's meeting, but I don't have any additional comments.

Thanks so much, everyone.

3:19 P.M. EDT

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Subject: [EXTERNAL] Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, September 30, 2021
To: Iverson, Dena (PAO)
Sent: September 30, 2021 5:59 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 30, 2021

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, September 30, 2021

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

2:34 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Okay. Welcome back, Dr. Harper.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. I'm breaking my streak. I do have some items at the top for all of you. Lots going on in the world.

The U.S. government condemns in the strongest possible terms the government of Ethiopia's unprecedented action to expel the leadership of all of the United Nations organizations involved in ongoing humanitarian operations. We agree with U.N. leaders: This is a stain on our collective conscience and it must stop.

The action follows the release of reports warning that hundreds of thousands of people are starving to death in northern Ethiopia. We're deeply concerned that this action continues a pattern by the Ethiopian government of obstructing the delivery of food, medicine, and other lifesaving supplies that most -- to those most in need.

We call on the U.N. Security Council and members of the international community to take urgent action to make clear to the government of Ethiopia that impeding humanitarian operations and depriving your own citizens of the basic means of survival is unacceptable.

President Biden signed an executive order, earlier this month, enabling the U.S. government to impose financial sanctions

on those prolonging the conflict in northern Ethiopia. We will not hesitate to use this or any other tool at our disposal to respond quickly and decisively to those who obstruct humanitarian assistance to the people of Ethiopia.

One more items -- one more item. Some news from -- out of the First Lady's office: Today, Joining Forces -- the White House initiative led by the First Lady to support military families -- and the National Security Council released a White House report, signed by the President and Secretaries of 15 executive departments, which outlines the first round of administration-wide commitments and proposals to supporting military and veteran families, caregivers, and survivors.

In May of 2021, the Office of the First Lady and the National Security Council launched a Joining Forces Interagency Policy Committee with representatives from across the executive agencies to work collaboratively on priorities related to the families of service members and veterans, caregivers, and survivors.

This report details more than 800 -- 80, sorry -- specific commitments and proposals from across the administration and is the product of the Interagency Policy Committee's months of work.

Going forward, this committee will continue to advance these priorities, including those outlined in the report, through cross-agency working groups and will report results and updated plans annually.

Jonathan, why don't you kick us off.

Q Thank you, Jen. A few -- all on the dealings at Capitol Hill right now. Senator Manchin told reporters a short time ago that he told President Biden that \$1.5 trillion would be as high as he was willing to go for the reconciliation package. What was the President's reaction to that? Is that an acceptable number?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say, as we've said many times, we're not going to outline private negotiations or private discussions, and we'll let the senators speak for that, as Senator Manchin did earlier today. The way the President sees it is that this is an ongoing discussion, an ongoing negotiation.

Here's what we know: We know that timelines help make progress. We've seen that play out over the course of the last couple of days. We know that compromise is inevitable. We've also seen that play out over the last couple of days. And right now, we're clearly in the thick of it.

I'd also note that during his -- during Senator Manchin's -- and obviously, I'm not his spokesperson; he can certainly speak for himself -- but during his Q&A he did on the Hill today, he also referenced the fact that he -- that there was a document from a couple of months ago. And I'll let him and Senator -- Leader Schumer speak to that. And he was repeatedly pushed and asked, "Would you go higher than 1.5? Would you go higher than 1.5?" I will leave it to all of you to determine if he answered that question.

But this is an ongoing discussion, an ongoing negotiation. And as I said yesterday, that's going to require all sides giving a little, and we're in the midst of that right now.

Q So on that -- so, key Democratic House leaders have said they will, quote, "stay here all weekend" to work to get a deal. Does the President plan to do the same? Will he be at the White House working this weekend, having visitors, calling and hosting congressional lawmakers?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as Speaker Pelosi said earlier -- and we're following the same motto -- we're taking it hour by hour here and making a decision and determination about what's most needed.

So, as it relates to what's even going to happen this afternoon, we're open; he's available. He's been making calls this morning. He's open to having visitors. He's open to going places. But we're going to make those decisions hour by hour.

So, the weekend is a little bit away, but I will tell you that this is the President's top priority right now: getting relief to the

American people; making sure we're lowering costs for the American people; we're addressing the climate crisis; we're rebuilding our roads, rails, and bridges. We've made progress, and we're still at work at it.

Q All right. And last one from me. One of the President's central promises when he was elected was to restore Americans' ability to be confident in their government again, to believe in institutions again. What is the White House's message to Americans right now who look at this and see a mess? Nearly a government shutdown, the debt ceiling is unclear, legislation not being passed, at least not yet, even though Democrats control all the bodies of government. And those Americans don't feel that they can be confident in government.

What's the White House's response?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say: The President, the Speaker of the House, and the Leader have more experience getting legislation across the finish line than any group of Democrat -- Democratic leaders in history.

We're in the middle of it right now. It's messy, this sausage-making, on Capitol Hill. Policymaking is messy. There's negotiations. They all have representatives who are advocating for their points of view. That's democracy in action.

What I can tell them is that we're on the path to keep the government open. You just saw that pass the Senate. It was going over to the House. That's not just keeping the government open, that's getting relief to make sure we can -- we can take care of refugees, people who fought by our side in Afghanistan; that's to make sure we get relief to the Gulf Coast -- additional relief to the Gulf Coast. All important priorities.

And we would also tell them that the President is going to stop at -- he's going to use every lever at his disposal to fight to get this legislation passed -- these two pieces of legislation -- that will have a historic -- make historic investments. And he's doing it because he wants to have an impact on their lives.

But these type of packages, not a lot of precedent for them, but he's going to work at it. He's going to get it done. That's what he would tell them.

Go ahead.

Q Does the President see any strategic value in a vote failing on the House floor?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as Speaker Pelosi said earlier today, we're on a path to win. I don't want to even consider any other options than that. We're in it to win it. The President is also in it to win it. That's what we're working toward. It's only 2:40 right now; lots of time left in the day. And he's going to continue to engage -- stay closely engaged with her about the path forward.

Q You've repeatedly referred to this week -- to this moment as an "inflection point." How is the President viewing this moment, given where his caucuses are and where his members are?

MS. PSAKI: This moment as in "this moment" -- 2:40 p.m. this afternoon -- or just today?

Q As in it's deadline day for an infrastructure bill; he doesn't have the votes. One member of the United States Senate is about \$2 trillion below his topline number, and there's no clear way to bridge those gaps.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think the President views this as the last several days and even longer than that. His view is we've made some progress. You've seen some members come down. You've seen some members come up. You've seen active negotiations. He's obviously been hard at work at them himself.

And what we clearly see is an agreement about the need to get this done, whether it's the infrastructure bill or the reconciliation practice -- package, which has key priorities for the President -- key priorities. I think the Speaker referred

to it earlier today as the cause of her -- as her public li- -- as her time in public life. That's a bit of a paraphrase. I'll leave you to her words.

So, look, he sees this moment -- he knew that as we got closer to self-imposed timelines, which are important -- often these timelines can help make progress; we've seen progress made -- that more members would be out there advocating for what was important to them. That's happening.

We saw -- we would hopefully see more willingness to compromise; that's happening too. We're hard at work. And he's been through this before, so he's not too thrown off his game on it.

Q And then just one quick last one. Do you guys see a possibility of some type of framework agreement that could unlock the infrastructure vote today?

MS. PSAKI: That's what we're working towards.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. You talked about "self-imposed timelines" as opposed to the other real timelines for debt ceiling and the CR. The progressives don't seem to feel any sense of urgency about passing infrastructure, and the moderates, like Manchin, don't seem to feel any urgency about passing reconciliation. The only Democrat that I can think of who really has a sense of urgency is Terry McAuliffe.

Do you feel it -- does the President want this done in a certain amount of time, or does he also feel that this could play out over weeks and months and still come to the conclusion that he wants?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as I said a little bit earlier, we know -- and the President knows from his time in public office -- that timelines can help make progress. That's often how legislating happens on the Hill. And as the Speaker --

Q These ones aren't.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we would -- we would disagree with that. You've seen a lot of members out there advocating for their viewpoints, being very vocal about what they want to see; some coming up, some coming down. That's a sense of progress. And we're working at it hour by hour here.

Q But does he have -- does he feel that he needs it done by a certain time, like the end of the year?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to set new deadlines here for you. Obviously, we're trying to get it done now. We're working on it as of right now, today, and that's what our focus is on in this moment.

Go ahead. I'll go back to you, Weijia. Go ahead.

Q It's all right.

Q To follow up a little on what Phil was asking --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- what does the President want and what is he asking members of Congress to do on this infrastructure vote tonight? Is he calling progressives, and Republicans even, asking them to vote for it? Does he definitely want this vote tonight? Or is this all still this murky -- sort of trying to link these two things together and hope something emerges out of that?

MS. PSAKI: There's nothing really murky about what's going on here. I mean, we understand what progressive members

want. Right? They've been out there vocally talking to all of you about what they want.

It's clear we also need their votes in order to pass an infrastructure bill. They want to have a clear path forward on a reconciliation package. The President wants both pieces of legislation to pass. That's what he wants, bottom line. He's also going to work with the Speaker and the Leader to get that done.

So, what he's been spending his time on over the last couple of days is that -- having conversations with Senator Manchin, Senator Sinema, and others who have been very vocal about the fact that they're not quite there yet. And his objective is to try to get them there because that's what members of the Progressive Caucus are looking for in order to support an infrastructure bill, many compo- -- of components of which they support.

Q I guess, to put a finer point on it: If your choice is between a vote tonight that fails but sort of puts everybody on the record, or pulling the vote tonight and continuing deliberations despite it potentially upsetting moderates who feel like they've been promised this vote, what does the President prefer?

MS. PSAKI: We're working towards winning a vote tonight. We have several hours left in the day.

Q All right. Last one. What's the plan on the debt ceiling? I mean, Republicans have sort of made clear that they're not going to back any efforts. So it would seem at this point that Democrats' only hope here is to turn towards a reconciliation process on the debt ceiling.

I understand that you've made the point many times that Mitch McConnell is being hypocritical on this, that Republicans should support it, but it does seem now that the votes are on the table, that you're kind of pursuing this political point at the potential risk of default for the U.S. economy.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think that's a bit of a shorthand of what's happening, which I understand; it's a bit of a complicated thing.

But first, since you gave me the opportunity, it's not just Senator McConnell; Republicans are playing politics with an economic catastrophe, and they're treating a calamity for working families like a D.C. game. There are huge impacts here.

You touched on the fact, but let me give the public a little sense of that: an instant recession, 6 million jobs lost, \$15 trillion in savings wiped out, Social Security checks and payments to our troops blocked. Those are real impacts.

Republicans in Congress are treating this like a game. Let me give you some examples. Senator Rick Scott -- and this is a real quote, I will note: "This is going to be a...ball. I'm going to have so much fun." That's about the debt limit.

Senator Kevin Kramer: "It's sort of fun to watch."

And Senator Cornyn said yesterday that Republicans would use every tool at their disposal to slow Democrats from doing this on their own.

What we're trying to do right now is do it on their own -- do it on our own. That is what Leader Schumer is working to proceed -- working to move forward on.

And, obviously, as you know, Republicans have blocked that effort. So, of course, we are going to continue to press. We're not going to let up on that, on Republicans, to do what's responsible, to protect the full faith and credit of the United States, as has been done 80 times in the past.

We've also been working to do it on our own. We're going to keep working with Leader Schumer to get that done.

Q But you're not going to ask for reconcil- -- Democrats to push on reconciliation, (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to get into additional mechanisms here. We're going to continue. I don't think -- we're not going to, nor should anyone, let Republicans off the hook here, so we're going to continue to press them on it.

Q One of the things that Senator Manchin said today was that the, kind of -- the concern that he has around the 3.5 number is about how it would impact inflation in the economy. And I'm curious what the White House thinks of that concern and what you've done to allay that concern.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we've conveyed privately what we've said publicly and what many, many economists have also conveyed publicly, which is that what these packages will do is they will address -- address inflation and costs over the long term. That's one of the core reasons that people should be supporting them. So, if you are concerned about inflation, that's exactly a reason you should support these packages.

Q And would the President sign a reconciliation bill that does not include negotiating on drug prices?

MS. PSAKI: The President has obviously proposed that. He feels strongly about the need to make drugs -- prescription drugs, I should say, more affordable to the American public. I'm not going to negotiate further from here.

Q One other thing, just on a different topic: Jake Sullivan's conversations in Saudi Arabia. Did rising oil prices come up in those conversations? What was his message to the Saudis about alleviating some of the concerns that people have as they're paying a dollar more for gasoline now than they did a year ago?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, so, I know someone asked about this the other day. And, obviously, the focus of his trip was on Yemen and working with the Saudis on Yemen. And our -- Tim Lenderki -- Lenderking was -- joined him in those meetings, who's our envoy to Yemen, to kind of figure out the path forward.

He was -- obviously, the price of oil is of concern. We have been in touch with OPEC. And I believe it was going to be raised, but I haven't had a chance to get a readout beyond that. I can try to do that for you after the briefing.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. So, putting the topline number aside, Senators Manchin and Sinema have been very opaque about what it is they want and do not want in this reconciliation bill. Without revealing details, does the White House and the President have a clear understanding of what it is each one of them wants?

MS. PSAKI: We've had a lot of private conversations with both of the senators about what their priorities are, as they've said publicly. And I think as Senator Manchin said publicly today, what their priorities are and what that looks like in a final package, that's still an ongoing discussion.

Q Are they asking for the same things? Are the two of them on board with the same (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: I'll let them speak for their priorities and how they line up with each other.

Q Okay. And then to build on what Justin was asking about --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- decoupling these two.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Is the President worried at all about eroding trust with Republicans who signed on to the bipartisan deal after he

reassured them that it would not be conditional on reconciliation?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let's remember what's actually going on on the Hill here. Republicans in the House, led by Kevin McCarthy, are opting to vote against rebuilding roads and railways and bridges, despite the fact that the package was sent over with the support of 69 senators.

So, I think if you're asking about trust or whether people are delivering for the American people, you should direct it at Kevin McCarthy.

Go ahead.

Q I'm asking because the progressives have made so clear that they refuse to vote on infrastructure without a vote on reconciliation first. Why doesn't the President ask them to treat them separately?

MS. PSAKI: To treat -- well, I think the --

Q To treat the two bills separately.

MS. PSAKI: The President has made clear both are his priorities. He's also made clear he wants to get them both across the finish line.

What we're talking about now is the legislative process and how you get the majority of votes to get both of them done. And that's what he's working to negotiate and working to unify the caucus around.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks. And just one more --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- on a separate topic.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Go ahead.

Q The National School Boards Association has sent a letter to the President asking for help from federal law enforcement agencies because of the violence and the threats that they're seeing across the country. Has the President received that request? And are you considering offering that help?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, let me say we take the security of public servants and elected officials across the country very seriously. And, obviously, these threats to school board members is horrible. They're doing their jobs.

Obviously, there are going to be different law enforcement authorities that will be related to each community and -- where this is happening, so we'd certainly refer you to them about any specific threats. And we'd encourage individuals to report any threats they face to local and state law enforcement agencies. And we're continuing to explore what more can be done from across the administration.

But again, a lot of this will be local law enforcement and how they can help ensure these school board members feel protected.

Q Thanks.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. Has the President at all lost control of his party? Depending on which perspective you're looking at this from -- you know, some people say that it appears that progressives are running the show, they're banding together and making their demands. Other people are saying it looks like Joe Manchin is playing president. So, who is in charge?

MS. PSAKI: Well, this is how democracy works. I know it feels foreign because there wasn't much that happened over the last couple of years. But how it works is the American people elect their elected officials, the President of the United States puts forward a bold and ambitious proposal, and then everybody negotiates about it, and they have different points of view. That's how democracy should work. We're in the midst of it right now. We're not trying to paint over how messy it looks from the outside. We know that.

But what -- the good news is, is that there is agreement that -- among most Democrats, if not every single one of them, that we need to get something done; that we need to do more to rebuild our roads and railways and bridges; that we need to cut costs for the American people; we need to address the climate crisis. There's agreement on that.

Now we're in the nitty-gritty details, which is very important, but that's the end stage of this process. And the American people should know that that's what the President is working on.

Q And I want to follow up on Weijia's question. So, if the bipartisan bill fails or is stalled or doesn't happen today, it would appear that these two bills -- the reconciliation and the infrastructure -- are linked. And the President, you know, made statements that Republicans should be able to vote for the bipartisan bill on its merits. He stood in front of the White House with a group of Republicans who negotiated that infrastructure bill. Is there a message that he has to those Republican senators, who voted to pass that bill on its merits, that this bill is somehow not linked with the reconciliation because of what's happening in the House?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we're working towards victory here and a win. If it doesn't pass, it's because it doesn't have enough votes. I think Republicans in the Senate understand that and know how this process works.

But that's what we're working towards now. That's what the President has been making phone calls about. That's what we have his schedule cleared for this afternoon. And I'm not going to make a prediction of what the outcome will look like several hours from now.

Q And then with the Vice President -- and she was a senator as recently as this year --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- why isn't she on the Hill helping to broker this deal?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the Vice President had the CBC over, the CHC last week. She's been making calls herself, just like the President. If it's constructive for her to go to the Hill or for him to go to the Hill, to have members down here, they'll do that.

We're ready and willing. This is our top priority. All hands on deck. But a lot of what's happening right now is discussions at a staff level, a senior staff level to get through these intricate details, and that's where the focus is in this moment.

Go ahead, Kelly.

Q Since we haven't seen the President much publicly this week --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- and you talked about leaving room in his schedule, can you paint more of a picture of what's happening behind the scenes? Are there calls happening from the Oval? Is he inviting members to the Residence? Does he have a scheduled with

scenes? Are these calls happening from the Oval? Is he inviting guests to the Residence? Does he have a whiteboard with his own whip count? Can you give us a picture of what it looks like (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: (Laughs.) I like that visual. I would say he does not have a whiteboard with a whip count. I can assure you he's more of a paper and pen kind of guy.

But, look, he's been meeting with staff, he's been getting updates from staff as they've been having engagements with the Hill. You all know who the senior members of his team are who are negotiating, whether that's Steve Ricchetti or Louisa Terrell, Brian Deese, Susan Rice.

What he's asked his team to do is -- including the policy members, which people don't always factor this in -- is be available to have conversations with members about questions they have, to help address any parts of it they have suggestions on.

So, he's getting regular updates. People are in and out of the Oval Office providing him updates on their individual conversations. And he's picking up the phone and calling people as needed, whether that's the Speaker or Leader Schumer or other members, to have a conversation about the status, to check on where they are, to follow up on maybe a conversation they may have had with his staff.

These conversations are happening from the Oval Office, but certainly he does some from the Residence; it depends on what time of day it may be.

Q And are you running your own whip count, or are you relying on Hill resources to do that?

MS. PSAKI: We're very closely in touch, as you know, with leadership on the Hill; the President himself is. Of course, we're certainly in touch with members ourselves -- ourselves about where they stand, where they may have concerns, or any hesitations.

Go ahead. I'll come back to you, Terry. I'm sorry. Go ahead.

Q We finally learned today Senator Manchin's position on his topline number. Senator Schumer has been aware of it since late July, and Senator Manchin said that he told the President already this \$1.5 trillion number. Why has the decision been made strategically to pursue Senator Manchin, Senator Sinema, and not try to, within the last couple of weeks, apply more pressure on progressives to take half a loaf and say, "This is low-hanging fruit; it's a \$1.2 trillion infrastructure plan. Let's move on that"? Why was that strategic decision made not to do that?

MS. PSAKI: Both of these are huge priorities to the President. I'd also note that when Senator Manchin was asked -- and he can obviously speak for himself -- but just since I've read the whole transcript here, he also repeatedly referred back to a document that went back to July 28th. I'd remind you all that this is an active negotiation and discussion, and it is incumbent upon members to put out where they stand and where they are. And as we've seen over the past couple days, that's an everchanging process.

So, before you make conclusions about what the end results will be, I would remind you to look at the last several days or even weeks about how these discussions have progressed.

Q But Senator Manchin said today he believes his position is -- it sounded to me like his position was firm. And he also said that if progressives feel that the Congress should spend \$3.5 trillion, that they should convince voters to send more progressives to Washington. That sounded to me like he's saying that, through the end of this Congress, he's not going to agree to \$3.5 trillion.

MS. PSAKI: We could certainly parse Senator Manchin's words, but I am certain he'll go answer questions again, and your colleagues should ask him more questions.

Q But why do you think that this is not -- why do you think that Senator Manchin's position on this is not final?

MS. PSAKI: Because this is an active negotiation, because he was pushed repeatedly during the gaggle that he did on Capitol Hill about where he stood. But again, I'm not here to speak for Senator Manchin; he is -- certainly can speak for himself and what his points of view -- views are. And I certainly encourage you all to keep asking him questions about where he stands.

Go ahead.

Q Back on the deadline that was set at the beginning of the week -- announced at -- this is a big week: Democrats are in charge here at the White House and in both houses of Congress. And they set the deadline; Democrats set the deadline. Now they --

MS. PSAKI: To be clear, they just set the date of a vote.

Q All right. You called it a "deadline." I was just using your words.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Fair. But -- thank you for the clarification. It's -- they set the time of a vote.

Q All right. Democrats set this vote. Now they're going to miss it, fail to make it. Why is it that --

MS. PSAKI: We don't know that. It's only three o'clock.

Q Can you tell us if they're going to vote tonight?

MS. PSAKI: That's what Speaker Pelosi indicated her plan was.

Q All right. My question is: Why isn't it fair to see this as a failure of the President to get his own party to back him and his agenda?

MS. PSAKI: Why isn't it, before we've even had a vote and we don't even know where it sits, a failure of the President?

Q It feels like we're farther away today than we were on Monday.

MS. PSAKI: I don't think the President feels that way, and I don't think members of Congress feel that way.

Q You've talked about progress. Can you explain what progress is? You said it's people talking about where they are.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q That sounds like -- that sounds like an earlier part of the process when you had set a vote for the end of the week.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would point you again to what Speaker Pelosi said earlier today: In the end stages, the later stages of a process -- where we are now -- when you get closer to a vote, a time of a vote being set, that's when the negotiations get serious. That's when people start putting down bottom lines of where they stand. You've seen some people do that publicly. A lot more of it happens behind the scenes. That's what I mean by progress.

You've seen members come down in numbers. You've seen members come up in numbers. That's what we're working on -- to get to an agreed-upon path forward.

Q So there's progress, and it's people behind the scenes saying that -- where their numbers move.

MS. PSAKI: They've also said it publicly.

Q One more. A lot of Democrats are looking at what's happening, and they're saying Senator Manchin and Senator Sinema are holding this President and his agenda hostage. What would you say to that?

MS. PSAKI: I would say we have 50 votes in the Senate -- 50 Democrats in the Senate. So, we need the majority to win. That's how a bill becomes a law.

Q They've got the leverage.

MS. PSAKI: We need all 50 votes in the Senate to move this forward. That's where we stand now.

Go ahead.

Q I just wanted to go back to the debt ceiling for a second.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Democrats control all branches of government right now. Can you assure the American people and the financial markets that the United States will not default on its debt?

MS. PSAKI: That is absolutely what we're trying to accomplish. And I'd remind you that we would have gotten that done had Republicans done what they've done 80 times before -- supporting a bipartisan vote to do something that has been pretty standard in the past -- or if they had allowed Leader Schumer to move forward.

But, absolutely, we're going to do everything to prevent the federal -- us from defaulting --

Q But does the plan involve changing Mitch McConnell's mind -- Leader McConnell's mind in some way? Or is there a plan to just go forward using either reconciliation or --

MS. PSAKI: Well, Leader Schumer has already tried to -- already been working to move things forward. And it's been blocked by Republicans -- not just their vote; an effort to move it forward has been blocked.

Q But there clearly are ways -- I mean, getting rid of the filibuster, for example, for this particular vote would be one way to move forward. And is that something that the President would consider to avoid losing, let's say, 10 percent of the value of the stock market?

MS. PSAKI: I just outlined how concerning we are -- how concerned we are, which you just echoed -- or echoed different components of it. And that's an issue we take incredibly seriously. You've also heard Secretary Yellen on the Hill talking about this. We're not going to let Republicans off the hook. We don't think they should be. This is not a game. This is the faith -- full faith and credit of the United States.

We're working with Leader Schumer on a path forward, but beyond that, I don't have more to preview for you.

Q But you can do it without Republicans if you got rid of the filibuster for this --

MS. PSAKI: We could do it if they let us move forward, and they haven't. So I have no more details on the pa- -- on the legislative process.

Q And just on the reconciliation package, is \$1.5 trillion enough in your spending to cover Biden's priorities -- the President's priorities?

MS. PSAKI: I understand that's a number that's been put out there. It's an active negotiation. I'm not going to weigh in from here on what is or isn't acceptable to the Democratic Caucus.

Go ahead.

Q A couple different topics. So, on immigration, there seems to be a real sense among advocates for immigrants -- people who have been fighting for legalization, for a pathway to citizenship -- there's a real sense of doom; people who described this, yesterday, even crying about the latest parliamentary ruling.

Do you -- what does the President -- you know, what would the President say or what does the President say if that -- if he is unable to move forward on any of the, sort of, big, sweeping promises that he made as a candidate to get -- to finally be the President to get something done on immigration?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we don't accept that. We're nine months into his presidency. And we share the disappointment. Obviously, as you know and you touched on, the parliamentarian ruled twice, in different ways, that it could be included in the reconciliation package -- or components, I should say, of immigration reform could not be included in the reconciliation practice -- process. Sorry, package.

That's disappointing to the President as well. So, clearly, now we need to figure out what the vehicle forward is.

I would say the President's plan is about certainly protecting DREAMers, farm workers, and others. It's also about investing in border security, making sure it makes sense and we're investing in it in a way that makes sense, and creating an asylum processing system that is actually functional, which I think we all agree it's not.

So there are several components of what he's proposed, and, certainly, we share the disappointment of many advocates that this wasn't included and the desire to find a vehicle to move it forward.

Q On one other separate topic: There have been a number of issues in the last, say, several weeks in which advocates -- allies of the President are describing him as "Trump-like." Most -- less in terms of his personality and sort of tone and tenor, obviously, but in terms of policy. Even today, a representative of the Cuban government describing the frustration with the President continuing to maintain Trump-era policies vis-à-vis Cuba.

Does the -- what's the President's reaction? And does he accept that in some areas of policy he is, you know, in agreement with the former President?

MS. PSAKI: So, just for the sake of argument here -- not argument, but discussion -- beyond the representative of the Cuban government who --

Q Afghanistan, immigration --

MS. PSAKI: Well, but who? Who are we talking about here?

Q Who --

MS. PSAKI: Who is saying that the President is like Trump?

Q Oh, I mean there -- there -- I mean, I could find you quotes. We have -- there have been quotes in our paper and quotes in lots of -- lots of folks have, depending on the issue, whether they are immigration advocates or, you know, folks in the Afghanistan -- who sort of watch Afghanistan. There have been numerous on-the-record descriptions of the President embracing -- and it's actually, in some ways, just a factual thing, right?

MS. PSAKI: But like on what policy?

Q Like the President has --

MS. PSAKI: On what policy? Sorry, I didn't -- you can -- you can name people but -- or what specific policies.

Q Well, I mean, for example, Afghanistan would have been the maintaining of the former President's decision to withdraw troops. On immigration, it's in maintaining Title 42 and keeping Title 42 in place. I mean they're --

Q Sub- --

Q Hm?

Q Submarines.

Q The submarine -- yeah. (Laughter.)

MS. PSAKI: Which one?

Q The submarine -- I'm just --

Q Yeah, the --

Q AUKUS.

Q The President was --

Q AUKUS.

Q -- yeah -- was compared to Trump --

Q -- to Trump. Well, the -- that's the French -- the French Foreign Minister compared him to Trump, in terms of how he handled the AUKUS negotiations.

MS. PSAKI: So, look, I'd take each one of these: On Afghanistan, the former President struck a deal without the Afghan government that, we heard the military convey yesterday, led to the demoralization of the Afghan Security Forces and the Afghan government, where he also released 5,000 Taliban fighters into Afghanistan.

I would say the President took a pretty different approach than that in ending a war that the former President didn't end -- something the American people strongly support.

As it relates to AUKUS, I'm not even sure what that's referring to, in terms of what they're comparing. The President worked with key partners -- Australia and the United Kingdom -- to come to an agreement that would help provide security in an important part of the world -- in the Indo-Pacific -- a priority that, frankly, getting out of the war in Afghanistan leaves space for us to spend more time addressing.

What was the last one? Immigration?

Q Immigration, Title 42, tariffs on China. I mean, there's --

MS. PSAKI: Title 42 is a public health -- is a public health requirement, a public health -- because we're in the middle of a pandemic, which, by the way --

Q The President and his allies --

MS. PSAKI: -- we would have made progress on had the former President actually addressed --

Q Right, but the --

MS. PSAKI: -- the pandemic and not suggested people inject bleach.

So, I think we're in a bit of a different place. I'm happy to discuss more examples. I think it's -- people would be pretty hard pressed to argue that the President has taken any aspect of the former President's playbook and used it as a model of his own.

Q Okay. Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Senator Manchin has also said that he wants to means test as much as possible of this reconciliation package. Without getting into or speaking for the senator, as you've said, what is the White House's position on, I guess, means testing in this package?

MS. PSAKI: Well, you can call it whatever you want. Sometimes means -- when you say "means testing" -- not you, but when -- when it's said, it sometimes has it not the right connotation or the wrong connotation.

The President's proposals, many of them have been targeted at the middle class, as have these proposals and these initiatives, which means there's a cap on income through which you can benefit. That's what -- you can call it whatever you want, if you call it "means testing." The President is very open to targeting, by income, many of his proposals. And that's something that you can see throughout many components of his agenda that have been proposed and many that have passed to date.

Q Does the White House believe that you all are currently in alignment with Manchin on what those thresholds would look like or --

MS. PSAKI: It's an ongoing discussion. But, again, our objective is to -- is to target and focus on bringing relief to the middle class. That's what the President wants to see this agenda accomplish.

Q In an op-ed for USA Today this morning, Senator Bernie Sanders defended the \$3.5 trillion price tag, asking, "Please tell me what [where] we should cut." This came out before Senator Manchin gave his line in the sand.

Does -- without speaking for either senator, does the White House believe that there's any provisions that, if we are talking about getting somewhere between 3.5 and 1.5, that are absolutely -- you all cannot stomach not having them in the final package?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to put anything on the table here. It's clear, as numbers come down, which they will, that there will be cuts to different components. That's just the nature of the totals here. But we'll leave those conversations private. I know you're eager [sic] -- eager to know more, and hopefully we'll have more to share soon.

Q And then just finally -- just one more point. As you all have said from here, the public -- public polling has consistently found that many parts of this -- of both packages are very supported by the American people. The American people are also very consistently pessimistic about action in Washington.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Ahead of what we're going to be seeing, whichever way this vote goes tonight, what is your message to the public as they look at the ongoing situation in Washington about -- what is your message to the American people as they look at, as you've said, a messy situation, the chaos of democracy?

MS. PSAKI: We hope we can prove them wrong.

Q Okay.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead, Karen.

Q Thanks, Jen. I know "hour by hour" is kind of the phrase of the day.

MS. PSAKI: (Laughs.) Yeah.

Q But given that, can we expect to hear from the President today? Or what would have to happen for us to hear from the President today?

MS. PSAKI: We'll see. I can't make a prediction for you now, but it is certainly possible. It's also possible he has more meetings. He'll certainly make more phone calls, possibly moves. But I don't have anything to predict for you at this point in time.

Q And, last night, he went to the congressional baseball game. Did he go specifically to do some arm twisting or lobbying on infrastructure? And he spent some time with Republican lawmakers -- something he really hasn't done here at the White House. Can you give us a sense of what he talked about with those Republican lawmakers? What was the interaction like, the tone of those conversations?

MS. PSAKI: I think you're undervaluing his baseball prowess -- (laughter) -- and history, which he was honored for last night.

No, look, I think what the President -- and I saw him this morning; he was reflecting on how it was -- and I think this is a tradition -- the Congressional Baseball Game. You know, it's something that has been around for some time, where Democrats and Republicans go participate in America's -- one of America's favorite pastimes.

And you saw -- I think you all saw in photos, but for people who didn't see -- he visited with some Republicans down in their area -- dugout?

Q Dugout.

MS. PSAKI: I don't even know it's called. (Laughter.) Okay, dugout. Help me out here. Thank you. He visited -- (laughs) -- with some -- my husband is going to be really mad about that.

He visited with some Republicans. You know, he wasn't -- it wasn't meant to be a negotiation; it was a discussion about, you know, how things are going and work we're all committed to and just saying hello to them. And sometimes, you know, that's important and powerful too at a time where there's been so much division, where there's a view from many in the public -- as per the question earlier -- that people can't work together, can't get things done.

And this was an opportunity to have a moment to visit with, to see people that you've known be -- you've known a long time, to meet new people, and to move beyond partisanship to celebrate one of America's favorite pastimes.

Q Did he have a response to you about getting booed last night? Any reaction to that?

MS. PSAKI: He's been in public life long enough to know there's going to be some yays and jeers in most big, public places.

Go ahead.

Q Can I just follow up on that? Is -- in some ways, does his visit and the rituals of getting together sort of prove the point that the face time doesn't work? I mean, you still -- you referred to Leader McConnell and the Republican Party not willing to raise the debt limit. He's had plenty of face time with Leader McConnell for decades. Maybe it just doesn't matter and people are going to do what their political interests or what they believe their political interests tells them to do?

MS. PSAKI: Well, this is how the President views it: You're going to have strong disagreements, as he does with Senator McConnell about how he's approached the debt limit. You're also going to have areas where you may come to agreement on, as they do on infrastructure and the importance of rebuilding our roads, our railways, and our bridges. And it's important to maintain lines of communication and discussion to figure out where you can work together.

That's also how he views and approaches diplomacy. We can call out and -- publicly and argue strongly privately issues we have with foreign governments. But we also sometimes still look for ways -- most of the time -- for ways to work together.

That's been his approach. I would say that given the infrastructure bill passed with 69 votes, that's evidence of it working.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. You mentioned at the top that on September 17th the President signed an executive order authorizing sanctions to be used against those undermining peace in Ethiopia.

But right now, it doesn't seem the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Abiy Ahmed, is interested in peace. He refused to meet with Samantha Power when she was there. He has -- he is expelling U.N. staff from the country. He's taken other steps that prove that he has no interest in peace.

Why not take the sanction now? Why not impose the sanction now, or take more drastic action against not just him but also the President of Eritrea, who still have troops inside Ethiopia?

MS. PSAKI: Well, absent clear and concrete changes, we will. We're preparing to take aggressive action under this executive order to impose targeted sanctions against a range of individuals and entities. What we're communicating to the parties on the ground is that we must see meaningful steps within weeks to initiate discussions to achieve a negotiated ceasefire, allow in an unhindered humanitarian access, and ensure respect for human rights. Absent significant progress, we'll take action. And we have the methods to do that. That's why I rec- -- talked about the executive order.

Q And then on Guinea, we've had so many coups in Africa. The President of Guinea has been overthrown. The President of Mali has been overthrown. And we just had the Prime Minister of Sudan who just survived a coup attempt. And the President promised to defend democracy around the world. Is he failing in that promise?

MS. PSAKI: He doesn't expect that to be accomplished in nine months. He expects that to be accomplished over the course of time for advocating for democracy, for human rights, for imposing steps when warranted, and -- as we are considering right now in Ethiopia -- and obviously by having a strong national security team that can convey this on his behalf when he cannot.

Go ahead.

Q I just have a question on Africa.

Q Thanks, Jen. On --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead. I'll come back to you next.

Q Thanks, Jen. Just to follow up on Mike's question on what the Cuban foreign minister said. Just to be specific, he said, "It's a pity that President Biden couldn't implement his own policy toward Cuba." And I just wondered if you had a specific response.

MS. PSAKI: I don't.

Q And there's a U.S. delegation -- top officials going to Port-au-Prince. What's the goal of that visit?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, I have some details on this, including who is going. So, let's see. So, what they're doing -- one, we feel it's pretty pivotal to have high-level officials from here engaged in traveling back and forth to Port-au-Prince to have discussions with actors across the political spectrum to see what we can do to help support dialogue and development for the Haitian people.

We know it's clearly a profoundly challenging time on the ground, and it's crucial that we meet with a range of stakeholders to help move this process forward or help support the process moving forward in a way that's in the interest of the Haitian people. So, this is really an effort to be engaged, to be on the ground.

I can tell you -- and you may know this already -- that our newly confirmed Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere, Brian Nichols, is on this as a part of this delegation; our NSC Senior Director for the Western Hemisphere, Juan Gonzales, are there. They're meeting with civil society groups, political stakeholders, the Haitian government. And they're, of course, as I noted, discussing a Haitian-led process charting the path to democratic elections.

But that's the focus, as well as discussing how we can continue to help provide support for the migration response, security, recovery from the earthquake, and the COVID pandemic.

Q Jen, last question.

Q Secretary Mayorkas had said he expected the results of an investigation on the Border Patrol officers --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- on horseback by the end of this week. What's the status of that investigation?

MS. PSAKI: I know he said that; as I understand, it's still on track. But I would really point you to the Department of Homeland Security on any update.

Brian, why don't we go to you last?

Q Yeah, thank you.

Q Oh, you said --

Q Thank you very much. And I appreciate it. I'm -- I wanted to ask what the President's reaction is to Democratic lawmakers calling on him to lean more on Senator Manchin and Senator Sinema. What is the President's reaction to that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, first, the President's reaction is -- he's been in the -- he was in the Senate for 36 years. He knows, as does Speaker Pelosi, Leader Schumer, what it takes at this point in negotiations. They've probably done this more, and more successfully, than any combinations of Democratic leaders in history.

And his approach has been: Yes, of course, it's listening. Yes, of course, it's conveying viewpoints and having sometimes, you know, direct and candid discussions, but he knows how to do this.

And a lot of people who are throwing stones aren't a part of these negotiations. They're one on one. So, I think they should leave it to him and others to get them done.

Q But there are members of his party that want him to be more actively involved, and have come out publicly and said, "We want to see the President more actively involved." What's his response to that?

MS. PSAKI: I would say that -- as I would point to something Congresswoman Jayapal said yesterday, "Right now, it's not a secret about what is the holdup." The holdup is that we need to get 50 votes in the Senate to move the infrastructure, to move the reconciliation package forward, in order for members of the Progressive Caucus in the house to feel comfortable that there's a path forward.

As many of them have conveyed, the President's role and work in communicating with Senator Manchin and Senator Sinema to help get that done is probably one of the most constructive roles he can play. And that's what he's been focused on over the last few days.

Q My follow-up question, Jen?

MS. PSAKI: Thanks so much, everyone.

Okay, last one, because I promised you. Go ahead.

Q Thank you. Jen, the President of Angola -- President João Lourenço -- was in D.C. last week, and he met with Jake Sullivan and Madam Speaker of the House. And I just want to check with you if the President made any comment about this visit, because Jake Sullivan, on the day that he met my president, he said he would brief the President on that day. So, I don't -- I'm trying to check with you if you heard any comments from the President (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any additional comment. I think we put a readout out about Jake Sullivan's meeting, but I don't have any additional comments.

Thanks so much, everyone.

3:19 P.M. EDT

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To: Pietranton, Kelsey (PAO)
Sent: September 30, 2021 5:59 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 30, 2021

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, September 30, 2021

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

2:34 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Okay. Welcome back, Dr. Harper.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. I'm breaking my streak. I do have some items at the top for all of you. Lots going on in the world.

The U.S. government condemns in the strongest possible terms the government of Ethiopia's unprecedented action to expel the leadership of all of the United Nations organizations involved in ongoing humanitarian operations. We agree with U.N. leaders: This is a stain on our collective conscience and it must stop.

The action follows the release of reports warning that hundreds of thousands of people are starving to death in northern Ethiopia. We're deeply concerned that this action continues a pattern by the Ethiopian government of obstructing the delivery of food, medicine, and other lifesaving supplies that most -- to those most in need.

We call on the U.N. Security Council and members of the international community to take urgent action to make clear to the government of Ethiopia that impeding humanitarian operations and depriving your own citizens of the basic means of survival is unacceptable.

President Biden signed an executive order, earlier this month, enabling the U.S. government to impose financial sanctions

on those prolonging the conflict in northern Ethiopia. We will not hesitate to use this or any other tool at our disposal to respond quickly and decisively to those who obstruct humanitarian assistance to the people of Ethiopia.

One more items -- one more item. Some news from -- out of the First Lady's office: Today, Joining Forces -- the White House initiative led by the First Lady to support military families -- and the National Security Council released a White House report, signed by the President and Secretaries of 15 executive departments, which outlines the first round of administration-wide commitments and proposals to supporting military and veteran families, caregivers, and survivors.

In May of 2021, the Office of the First Lady and the National Security Council launched a Joining Forces Interagency Policy Committee with representatives from across the executive agencies to work collaboratively on priorities related to the families of service members and veterans, caregivers, and survivors.

This report details more than 800 -- 80, sorry -- specific commitments and proposals from across the administration and is the product of the Interagency Policy Committee's months of work.

Going forward, this committee will continue to advance these priorities, including those outlined in the report, through cross-agency working groups and will report results and updated plans annually.

Jonathan, why don't you kick us off.

Q Thank you, Jen. A few -- all on the dealings at Capitol Hill right now. Senator Manchin told reporters a short time ago that he told President Biden that \$1.5 trillion would be as high as he was willing to go for the reconciliation package. What was the President's reaction to that? Is that an acceptable number?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say, as we've said many times, we're not going to outline private negotiations or private discussions, and we'll let the senators speak for that, as Senator Manchin did earlier today. The way the President sees it is that this is an ongoing discussion, an ongoing negotiation.

Here's what we know: We know that timelines help make progress. We've seen that play out over the course of the last couple of days. We know that compromise is inevitable. We've also seen that play out over the last couple of days. And right now, we're clearly in the thick of it.

I'd also note that during his -- during Senator Manchin's -- and obviously, I'm not his spokesperson; he can certainly speak for himself -- but during his Q&A he did on the Hill today, he also referenced the fact that he -- that there was a document from a couple of months ago. And I'll let him and Senator -- Leader Schumer speak to that. And he was repeatedly pushed and asked, "Would you go higher than 1.5? Would you go higher than 1.5?" I will leave it to all of you to determine if he answered that question.

But this is an ongoing discussion, an ongoing negotiation. And as I said yesterday, that's going to require all sides giving a little, and we're in the midst of that right now.

Q So on that -- so, key Democratic House leaders have said they will, quote, "stay here all weekend" to work to get a deal. Does the President plan to do the same? Will he be at the White House working this weekend, having visitors, calling and hosting congressional lawmakers?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as Speaker Pelosi said earlier -- and we're following the same motto -- we're taking it hour by hour here and making a decision and determination about what's most needed.

So, as it relates to what's even going to happen this afternoon, we're open; he's available. He's been making calls this morning. He's open to having visitors. He's open to going places. But we're going to make those decisions hour by hour.

So, the weekend is a little bit away, but I will tell you that this is the President's top priority right now: getting relief to the

American people; making sure we're lowering costs for the American people; we're addressing the climate crisis; we're rebuilding our roads, rails, and bridges. We've made progress, and we're still at work at it.

Q All right. And last one from me. One of the President's central promises when he was elected was to restore Americans' ability to be confident in their government again, to believe in institutions again. What is the White House's message to Americans right now who look at this and see a mess? Nearly a government shutdown, the debt ceiling is unclear, legislation not being passed, at least not yet, even though Democrats control all the bodies of government. And those Americans don't feel that they can be confident in government.

What's the White House's response?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say: The President, the Speaker of the House, and the Leader have more experience getting legislation across the finish line than any group of Democrat -- Democratic leaders in history.

We're in the middle of it right now. It's messy, this sausage-making, on Capitol Hill. Policymaking is messy. There's negotiations. They all have representatives who are advocating for their points of view. That's democracy in action.

What I can tell them is that we're on the path to keep the government open. You just saw that pass the Senate. It was going over to the House. That's not just keeping the government open, that's getting relief to make sure we can -- we can take care of refugees, people who fought by our side in Afghanistan; that's to make sure we get relief to the Gulf Coast -- additional relief to the Gulf Coast. All important priorities.

And we would also tell them that the President is going to stop at -- he's going to use every lever at his disposal to fight to get this legislation passed -- these two pieces of legislation -- that will have a historic -- make historic investments. And he's doing it because he wants to have an impact on their lives.

But these type of packages, not a lot of precedent for them, but he's going to work at it. He's going to get it done. That's what he would tell them.

Go ahead.

Q Does the President see any strategic value in a vote failing on the House floor?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as Speaker Pelosi said earlier today, we're on a path to win. I don't want to even consider any other options than that. We're in it to win it. The President is also in it to win it. That's what we're working toward. It's only 2:40 right now; lots of time left in the day. And he's going to continue to engage -- stay closely engaged with her about the path forward.

Q You've repeatedly referred to this week -- to this moment as an "inflection point." How is the President viewing this moment, given where his caucuses are and where his members are?

MS. PSAKI: This moment as in "this moment" -- 2:40 p.m. this afternoon -- or just today?

Q As in it's deadline day for an infrastructure bill; he doesn't have the votes. One member of the United States Senate is about \$2 trillion below his topline number, and there's no clear way to bridge those gaps.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think the President views this as the last several days and even longer than that. His view is we've made some progress. You've seen some members come down. You've seen some members come up. You've seen active negotiations. He's obviously been hard at work at them himself.

And what we clearly see is an agreement about the need to get this done, whether it's the infrastructure bill or the reconciliation practice -- package, which has key priorities for the President -- key priorities. I think the Speaker referred

to it earlier today as the cause of her -- as her public li- -- as her time in public life. That's a bit of a paraphrase. I'll leave you to her words.

So, look, he sees this moment -- he knew that as we got closer to self-imposed timelines, which are important -- often these timelines can help make progress; we've seen progress made -- that more members would be out there advocating for what was important to them. That's happening.

We saw -- we would hopefully see more willingness to compromise; that's happening too. We're hard at work. And he's been through this before, so he's not too thrown off his game on it.

Q And then just one quick last one. Do you guys see a possibility of some type of framework agreement that could unlock the infrastructure vote today?

MS. PSAKI: That's what we're working towards.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. You talked about "self-imposed timelines" as opposed to the other real timelines for debt ceiling and the CR. The progressives don't seem to feel any sense of urgency about passing infrastructure, and the moderates, like Manchin, don't seem to feel any urgency about passing reconciliation. The only Democrat that I can think of who really has a sense of urgency is Terry McAuliffe.

Do you feel it -- does the President want this done in a certain amount of time, or does he also feel that this could play out over weeks and months and still come to the conclusion that he wants?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as I said a little bit earlier, we know -- and the President knows from his time in public office -- that timelines can help make progress. That's often how legislating happens on the Hill. And as the Speaker --

Q These ones aren't.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we would -- we would disagree with that. You've seen a lot of members out there advocating for their viewpoints, being very vocal about what they want to see; some coming up, some coming down. That's a sense of progress. And we're working at it hour by hour here.

Q But does he have -- does he feel that he needs it done by a certain time, like the end of the year?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to set new deadlines here for you. Obviously, we're trying to get it done now. We're working on it as of right now, today, and that's what our focus is on in this moment.

Go ahead. I'll go back to you, Weijia. Go ahead.

Q It's all right.

Q To follow up a little on what Phil was asking --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- what does the President want and what is he asking members of Congress to do on this infrastructure vote tonight? Is he calling progressives, and Republicans even, asking them to vote for it? Does he definitely want this vote tonight? Or is this all still this murky -- sort of trying to link these two things together and hope something emerges out of that?

MS. PSAKI: There's nothing really murky about what's going on here. I mean, we understand what progressive members

want. Right? They've been out there vocally talking to all of you about what they want.

It's clear we also need their votes in order to pass an infrastructure bill. They want to have a clear path forward on a reconciliation package. The President wants both pieces of legislation to pass. That's what he wants, bottom line. He's also going to work with the Speaker and the Leader to get that done.

So, what he's been spending his time on over the last couple of days is that -- having conversations with Senator Manchin, Senator Sinema, and others who have been very vocal about the fact that they're not quite there yet. And his objective is to try to get them there because that's what members of the Progressive Caucus are looking for in order to support an infrastructure bill, many compo- -- of components of which they support.

Q I guess, to put a finer point on it: If your choice is between a vote tonight that fails but sort of puts everybody on the record, or pulling the vote tonight and continuing deliberations despite it potentially upsetting moderates who feel like they've been promised this vote, what does the President prefer?

MS. PSAKI: We're working towards winning a vote tonight. We have several hours left in the day.

Q All right. Last one. What's the plan on the debt ceiling? I mean, Republicans have sort of made clear that they're not going to back any efforts. So it would seem at this point that Democrats' only hope here is to turn towards a reconciliation process on the debt ceiling.

I understand that you've made the point many times that Mitch McConnell is being hypocritical on this, that Republicans should support it, but it does seem now that the votes are on the table, that you're kind of pursuing this political point at the potential risk of default for the U.S. economy.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think that's a bit of a shorthand of what's happening, which I understand; it's a bit of a complicated thing.

But first, since you gave me the opportunity, it's not just Senator McConnell; Republicans are playing politics with an economic catastrophe, and they're treating a calamity for working families like a D.C. game. There are huge impacts here.

You touched on the fact, but let me give the public a little sense of that: an instant recession, 6 million jobs lost, \$15 trillion in savings wiped out, Social Security checks and payments to our troops blocked. Those are real impacts.

Republicans in Congress are treating this like a game. Let me give you some examples. Senator Rick Scott -- and this is a real quote, I will note: "This is going to be a...ball. I'm going to have so much fun." That's about the debt limit.

Senator Kevin Kramer: "It's sort of fun to watch."

And Senator Cornyn said yesterday that Republicans would use every tool at their disposal to slow Democrats from doing this on their own.

What we're trying to do right now is do it on their own -- do it on our own. That is what Leader Schumer is working to proceed -- working to move forward on.

And, obviously, as you know, Republicans have blocked that effort. So, of course, we are going to continue to press. We're not going to let up on that, on Republicans, to do what's responsible, to protect the full faith and credit of the United States, as has been done 80 times in the past.

We've also been working to do it on our own. We're going to keep working with Leader Schumer to get that done.

Q But you're not going to ask for reconcil- -- Democrats to push on reconciliation, (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to get into additional mechanisms here. We're going to continue. I don't think -- we're not going to, nor should anyone, let Republicans off the hook here, so we're going to continue to press them on it.

Q One of the things that Senator Manchin said today was that the, kind of -- the concern that he has around the 3.5 number is about how it would impact inflation in the economy. And I'm curious what the White House thinks of that concern and what you've done to allay that concern.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we've conveyed privately what we've said publicly and what many, many economists have also conveyed publicly, which is that what these packages will do is they will address -- address inflation and costs over the long term. That's one of the core reasons that people should be supporting them. So, if you are concerned about inflation, that's exactly a reason you should support these packages.

Q And would the President sign a reconciliation bill that does not include negotiating on drug prices?

MS. PSAKI: The President has obviously proposed that. He feels strongly about the need to make drugs -- prescription drugs, I should say, more affordable to the American public. I'm not going to negotiate further from here.

Q One other thing, just on a different topic: Jake Sullivan's conversations in Saudi Arabia. Did rising oil prices come up in those conversations? What was his message to the Saudis about alleviating some of the concerns that people have as they're paying a dollar more for gasoline now than they did a year ago?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, so, I know someone asked about this the other day. And, obviously, the focus of his trip was on Yemen and working with the Saudis on Yemen. And our -- Tim Lenderki -- Lenderking was -- joined him in those meetings, who's our envoy to Yemen, to kind of figure out the path forward.

He was -- obviously, the price of oil is of concern. We have been in touch with OPEC. And I believe it was going to be raised, but I haven't had a chance to get a readout beyond that. I can try to do that for you after the briefing.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. So, putting the topline number aside, Senators Manchin and Sinema have been very opaque about what it is they want and do not want in this reconciliation bill. Without revealing details, does the White House and the President have a clear understanding of what it is each one of them wants?

MS. PSAKI: We've had a lot of private conversations with both of the senators about what their priorities are, as they've said publicly. And I think as Senator Manchin said publicly today, what their priorities are and what that looks like in a final package, that's still an ongoing discussion.

Q Are they asking for the same things? Are the two of them on board with the same (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: I'll let them speak for their priorities and how they line up with each other.

Q Okay. And then to build on what Justin was asking about --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- decoupling these two.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Is the President worried at all about eroding trust with Republicans who signed on to the bipartisan deal after he

reassured them that it would not be conditional on reconciliation?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let's remember what's actually going on on the Hill here. Republicans in the House, led by Kevin McCarthy, are opting to vote against rebuilding roads and railways and bridges, despite the fact that the package was sent over with the support of 69 senators.

So, I think if you're asking about trust or whether people are delivering for the American people, you should direct it at Kevin McCarthy.

Go ahead.

Q I'm asking because the progressives have made so clear that they refuse to vote on infrastructure without a vote on reconciliation first. Why doesn't the President ask them to treat them separately?

MS. PSAKI: To treat -- well, I think the --

Q To treat the two bills separately.

MS. PSAKI: The President has made clear both are his priorities. He's also made clear he wants to get them both across the finish line.

What we're talking about now is the legislative process and how you get the majority of votes to get both of them done. And that's what he's working to negotiate and working to unify the caucus around.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks. And just one more --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- on a separate topic.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Go ahead.

Q The National School Boards Association has sent a letter to the President asking for help from federal law enforcement agencies because of the violence and the threats that they're seeing across the country. Has the President received that request? And are you considering offering that help?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, let me say we take the security of public servants and elected officials across the country very seriously. And, obviously, these threats to school board members is horrible. They're doing their jobs.

Obviously, there are going to be different law enforcement authorities that will be related to each community and -- where this is happening, so we'd certainly refer you to them about any specific threats. And we'd encourage individuals to report any threats they face to local and state law enforcement agencies. And we're continuing to explore what more can be done from across the administration.

But again, a lot of this will be local law enforcement and how they can help ensure these school board members feel protected.

Q Thanks.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. Has the President at all lost control of his party? Depending on which perspective you're looking at this from -- you know, some people say that it appears that progressives are running the show, they're banding together and making their demands. Other people are saying it looks like Joe Manchin is playing president. So, who is in charge?

MS. PSAKI: Well, this is how democracy works. I know it feels foreign because there wasn't much that happened over the last couple of years. But how it works is the American people elect their elected officials, the President of the United States puts forward a bold and ambitious proposal, and then everybody negotiates about it, and they have different points of view. That's how democracy should work. We're in the midst of it right now. We're not trying to paint over how messy it looks from the outside. We know that.

But what -- the good news is, is that there is agreement that -- among most Democrats, if not every single one of them, that we need to get something done; that we need to do more to rebuild our roads and railways and bridges; that we need to cut costs for the American people; we need to address the climate crisis. There's agreement on that.

Now we're in the nitty-gritty details, which is very important, but that's the end stage of this process. And the American people should know that that's what the President is working on.

Q And I want to follow up on Weijia's question. So, if the bipartisan bill fails or is stalled or doesn't happen today, it would appear that these two bills -- the reconciliation and the infrastructure -- are linked. And the President, you know, made statements that Republicans should be able to vote for the bipartisan bill on its merits. He stood in front of the White House with a group of Republicans who negotiated that infrastructure bill. Is there a message that he has to those Republican senators, who voted to pass that bill on its merits, that this bill is somehow not linked with the reconciliation because of what's happening in the House?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we're working towards victory here and a win. If it doesn't pass, it's because it doesn't have enough votes. I think Republicans in the Senate understand that and know how this process works.

But that's what we're working towards now. That's what the President has been making phone calls about. That's what we have his schedule cleared for this afternoon. And I'm not going to make a prediction of what the outcome will look like several hours from now.

Q And then with the Vice President -- and she was a senator as recently as this year --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- why isn't she on the Hill helping to broker this deal?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the Vice President had the CBC over, the CHC last week. She's been making calls herself, just like the President. If it's constructive for her to go to the Hill or for him to go to the Hill, to have members down here, they'll do that.

We're ready and willing. This is our top priority. All hands on deck. But a lot of what's happening right now is discussions at a staff level, a senior staff level to get through these intricate details, and that's where the focus is in this moment.

Go ahead, Kelly.

Q Since we haven't seen the President much publicly this week --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- and you talked about leaving room in his schedule, can you paint more of a picture of what's happening behind the scenes? Are there calls happening from the Oval? Is he inviting members to the Residence? Does he have a scheduled meeting with

scenes? Are these calls happening from the Oval? Is he inviting guests to the Residence? Does he have a whiteboard with his own whip count? Can you give us a picture of what it looks like (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: (Laughs.) I like that visual. I would say he does not have a whiteboard with a whip count. I can assure you he's more of a paper and pen kind of guy.

But, look, he's been meeting with staff, he's been getting updates from staff as they've been having engagements with the Hill. You all know who the senior members of his team are who are negotiating, whether that's Steve Ricchetti or Louisa Terrell, Brian Deese, Susan Rice.

What he's asked his team to do is -- including the policy members, which people don't always factor this in -- is be available to have conversations with members about questions they have, to help address any parts of it they have suggestions on.

So, he's getting regular updates. People are in and out of the Oval Office providing him updates on their individual conversations. And he's picking up the phone and calling people as needed, whether that's the Speaker or Leader Schumer or other members, to have a conversation about the status, to check on where they are, to follow up on maybe a conversation they may have had with his staff.

These conversations are happening from the Oval Office, but certainly he does some from the Residence; it depends on what time of day it may be.

Q And are you running your own whip count, or are you relying on Hill resources to do that?

MS. PSAKI: We're very closely in touch, as you know, with leadership on the Hill; the President himself is. Of course, we're certainly in touch with members ourselves -- ourselves about where they stand, where they may have concerns, or any hesitations.

Go ahead. I'll come back to you, Terry. I'm sorry. Go ahead.

Q We finally learned today Senator Manchin's position on his topline number. Senator Schumer has been aware of it since late July, and Senator Manchin said that he told the President already this \$1.5 trillion number. Why has the decision been made strategically to pursue Senator Manchin, Senator Sinema, and not try to, within the last couple of weeks, apply more pressure on progressives to take half a loaf and say, "This is low-hanging fruit; it's a \$1.2 trillion infrastructure plan. Let's move on that"? Why was that strategic decision made not to do that?

MS. PSAKI: Both of these are huge priorities to the President. I'd also note that when Senator Manchin was asked -- and he can obviously speak for himself -- but just since I've read the whole transcript here, he also repeatedly referred back to a document that went back to July 28th. I'd remind you all that this is an active negotiation and discussion, and it is incumbent upon members to put out where they stand and where they are. And as we've seen over the past couple days, that's an everchanging process.

So, before you make conclusions about what the end results will be, I would remind you to look at the last several days or even weeks about how these discussions have progressed.

Q But Senator Manchin said today he believes his position is -- it sounded to me like his position was firm. And he also said that if progressives feel that the Congress should spend \$3.5 trillion, that they should convince voters to send more progressives to Washington. That sounded to me like he's saying that, through the end of this Congress, he's not going to agree to \$3.5 trillion.

MS. PSAKI: We could certainly parse Senator Manchin's words, but I am certain he'll go answer questions again, and your colleagues should ask him more questions.

Q But why do you think that this is not -- why do you think that Senator Manchin's position on this is not final?

MS. PSAKI: Because this is an active negotiation, because he was pushed repeatedly during the gaggle that he did on Capitol Hill about where he stood. But again, I'm not here to speak for Senator Manchin; he is -- certainly can speak for himself and what his points of view -- views are. And I certainly encourage you all to keep asking him questions about where he stands.

Go ahead.

Q Back on the deadline that was set at the beginning of the week -- announced at -- this is a big week: Democrats are in charge here at the White House and in both houses of Congress. And they set the deadline; Democrats set the deadline. Now they --

MS. PSAKI: To be clear, they just set the date of a vote.

Q All right. You called it a "deadline." I was just using your words.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Fair. But -- thank you for the clarification. It's -- they set the time of a vote.

Q All right. Democrats set this vote. Now they're going to miss it, fail to make it. Why is it that --

MS. PSAKI: We don't know that. It's only three o'clock.

Q Can you tell us if they're going to vote tonight?

MS. PSAKI: That's what Speaker Pelosi indicated her plan was.

Q All right. My question is: Why isn't it fair to see this as a failure of the President to get his own party to back him and his agenda?

MS. PSAKI: Why isn't it, before we've even had a vote and we don't even know where it sits, a failure of the President?

Q It feels like we're farther away today than we were on Monday.

MS. PSAKI: I don't think the President feels that way, and I don't think members of Congress feel that way.

Q You've talked about progress. Can you explain what progress is? You said it's people talking about where they are.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q That sounds like -- that sounds like an earlier part of the process when you had set a vote for the end of the week.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would point you again to what Speaker Pelosi said earlier today: In the end stages, the later stages of a process -- where we are now -- when you get closer to a vote, a time of a vote being set, that's when the negotiations get serious. That's when people start putting down bottom lines of where they stand. You've seen some people do that publicly. A lot more of it happens behind the scenes. That's what I mean by progress.

You've seen members come down in numbers. You've seen members come up in numbers. That's what we're working on -- to get to an agreed-upon path forward.

Q So there's progress, and it's people behind the scenes saying that -- where their numbers move.

MS. PSAKI: They've also said it publicly.

Q One more. A lot of Democrats are looking at what's happening, and they're saying Senator Manchin and Senator Sinema are holding this President and his agenda hostage. What would you say to that?

MS. PSAKI: I would say we have 50 votes in the Senate -- 50 Democrats in the Senate. So, we need the majority to win. That's how a bill becomes a law.

Q They've got the leverage.

MS. PSAKI: We need all 50 votes in the Senate to move this forward. That's where we stand now.

Go ahead.

Q I just wanted to go back to the debt ceiling for a second.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Democrats control all branches of government right now. Can you assure the American people and the financial markets that the United States will not default on its debt?

MS. PSAKI: That is absolutely what we're trying to accomplish. And I'd remind you that we would have gotten that done had Republicans done what they've done 80 times before -- supporting a bipartisan vote to do something that has been pretty standard in the past -- or if they had allowed Leader Schumer to move forward.

But, absolutely, we're going to do everything to prevent the federal -- us from defaulting --

Q But does the plan involve changing Mitch McConnell's mind -- Leader McConnell's mind in some way? Or is there a plan to just go forward using either reconciliation or --

MS. PSAKI: Well, Leader Schumer has already tried to -- already been working to move things forward. And it's been blocked by Republicans -- not just their vote; an effort to move it forward has been blocked.

Q But there clearly are ways -- I mean, getting rid of the filibuster, for example, for this particular vote would be one way to move forward. And is that something that the President would consider to avoid losing, let's say, 10 percent of the value of the stock market?

MS. PSAKI: I just outlined how concerning we are -- how concerned we are, which you just echoed -- or echoed different components of it. And that's an issue we take incredibly seriously. You've also heard Secretary Yellen on the Hill talking about this. We're not going to let Republicans off the hook. We don't think they should be. This is not a game. This is the faith -- full faith and credit of the United States.

We're working with Leader Schumer on a path forward, but beyond that, I don't have more to preview for you.

Q But you can do it without Republicans if you got rid of the filibuster for this --

MS. PSAKI: We could do it if they let us move forward, and they haven't. So I have no more details on the pa- -- on the legislative process.

Q And just on the reconciliation package, is \$1.5 trillion enough in your spending to cover Biden's priorities -- the President's priorities?

MS. PSAKI: I understand that's a number that's been put out there. It's an active negotiation. I'm not going to weigh in from here on what is or isn't acceptable to the Democratic Caucus.

Go ahead.

Q A couple different topics. So, on immigration, there seems to be a real sense among advocates for immigrants -- people who have been fighting for legalization, for a pathway to citizenship -- there's a real sense of doom; people who described this, yesterday, even crying about the latest parliamentary ruling.

Do you -- what does the President -- you know, what would the President say or what does the President say if that -- if he is unable to move forward on any of the, sort of, big, sweeping promises that he made as a candidate to get -- to finally be the President to get something done on immigration?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we don't accept that. We're nine months into his presidency. And we share the disappointment. Obviously, as you know and you touched on, the parliamentarian ruled twice, in different ways, that it could be included in the reconciliation package -- or components, I should say, of immigration reform could not be included in the reconciliation practice -- process. Sorry, package.

That's disappointing to the President as well. So, clearly, now we need to figure out what the vehicle forward is.

I would say the President's plan is about certainly protecting DREAMers, farm workers, and others. It's also about investing in border security, making sure it makes sense and we're investing in it in a way that makes sense, and creating an asylum processing system that is actually functional, which I think we all agree it's not.

So there are several components of what he's proposed, and, certainly, we share the disappointment of many advocates that this wasn't included and the desire to find a vehicle to move it forward.

Q On one other separate topic: There have been a number of issues in the last, say, several weeks in which advocates -- allies of the President are describing him as "Trump-like." Most -- less in terms of his personality and sort of tone and tenor, obviously, but in terms of policy. Even today, a representative of the Cuban government describing the frustration with the President continuing to maintain Trump-era policies vis-à-vis Cuba.

Does the -- what's the President's reaction? And does he accept that in some areas of policy he is, you know, in agreement with the former President?

MS. PSAKI: So, just for the sake of argument here -- not argument, but discussion -- beyond the representative of the Cuban government who --

Q Afghanistan, immigration --

MS. PSAKI: Well, but who? Who are we talking about here?

Q Who --

MS. PSAKI: Who is saying that the President is like Trump?

Q Oh, I mean there -- there -- I mean, I could find you quotes. We have -- there have been quotes in our paper and quotes in lots of -- lots of folks have, depending on the issue, whether they are immigration advocates or, you know, folks in the Afghanistan -- who sort of watch Afghanistan. There have been numerous on-the-record descriptions of the President embracing -- and it's actually, in some ways, just a factual thing, right?

MS. PSAKI: But like on what policy?

Q Like the President has --

MS. PSAKI: On what policy? Sorry, I didn't -- you can -- you can name people but -- or what specific policies.

Q Well, I mean, for example, Afghanistan would have been the maintaining of the former President's decision to withdraw troops. On immigration, it's in maintaining Title 42 and keeping Title 42 in place. I mean they're --

Q Sub- --

Q Hm?

Q Submarines.

Q The submarine -- yeah. (Laughter.)

MS. PSAKI: Which one?

Q The submarine -- I'm just --

Q Yeah, the --

Q AUKUS.

Q The President was --

Q AUKUS.

Q -- yeah -- was compared to Trump --

Q -- to Trump. Well, the -- that's the French -- the French Foreign Minister compared him to Trump, in terms of how he handled the AUKUS negotiations.

MS. PSAKI: So, look, I'd take each one of these: On Afghanistan, the former President struck a deal without the Afghan government that, we heard the military convey yesterday, led to the demoralization of the Afghan Security Forces and the Afghan government, where he also released 5,000 Taliban fighters into Afghanistan.

I would say the President took a pretty different approach than that in ending a war that the former President didn't end -- something the American people strongly support.

As it relates to AUKUS, I'm not even sure what that's referring to, in terms of what they're comparing. The President worked with key partners -- Australia and the United Kingdom -- to come to an agreement that would help provide security in an important part of the world -- in the Indo-Pacific -- a priority that, frankly, getting out of the war in Afghanistan leaves space for us to spend more time addressing.

What was the last one? Immigration?

Q Immigration, Title 42, tariffs on China. I mean, there's --

MS. PSAKI: Title 42 is a public health -- is a public health requirement, a public health -- because we're in the middle of a pandemic, which, by the way --

Q The President and his allies --

MS. PSAKI: -- we would have made progress on had the former President actually addressed --

Q Right, but the --

MS. PSAKI: -- the pandemic and not suggested people inject bleach.

So, I think we're in a bit of a different place. I'm happy to discuss more examples. I think it's -- people would be pretty hard pressed to argue that the President has taken any aspect of the former President's playbook and used it as a model of his own.

Q Okay. Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Senator Manchin has also said that he wants to means test as much as possible of this reconciliation package. Without getting into or speaking for the senator, as you've said, what is the White House's position on, I guess, means testing in this package?

MS. PSAKI: Well, you can call it whatever you want. Sometimes means -- when you say "means testing" -- not you, but when -- when it's said, it sometimes has it not the right connotation or the wrong connotation.

The President's proposals, many of them have been targeted at the middle class, as have these proposals and these initiatives, which means there's a cap on income through which you can benefit. That's what -- you can call it whatever you want, if you call it "means testing." The President is very open to targeting, by income, many of his proposals. And that's something that you can see throughout many components of his agenda that have been proposed and many that have passed to date.

Q Does the White House believe that you all are currently in alignment with Manchin on what those thresholds would look like or --

MS. PSAKI: It's an ongoing discussion. But, again, our objective is to -- is to target and focus on bringing relief to the middle class. That's what the President wants to see this agenda accomplish.

Q In an op-ed for USA Today this morning, Senator Bernie Sanders defended the \$3.5 trillion price tag, asking, "Please tell me what [where] we should cut." This came out before Senator Manchin gave his line in the sand.

Does -- without speaking for either senator, does the White House believe that there's any provisions that, if we are talking about getting somewhere between 3.5 and 1.5, that are absolutely -- you all cannot stomach not having them in the final package?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to put anything on the table here. It's clear, as numbers come down, which they will, that there will be cuts to different components. That's just the nature of the totals here. But we'll leave those conversations private. I know you're eager [sic] -- eager to know more, and hopefully we'll have more to share soon.

Q And then just finally -- just one more point. As you all have said from here, the public -- public polling has consistently found that many parts of this -- of both packages are very supported by the American people. The American people are also very consistently pessimistic about action in Washington.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Ahead of what we're going to be seeing, whichever way this vote goes tonight, what is your message to the public as they look at the ongoing situation in Washington about -- what is your message to the American people as they look at, as you've said, a messy situation, the chaos of democracy?

MS. PSAKI: We hope we can prove them wrong.

Q Okay.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead, Karen.

Q Thanks, Jen. I know "hour by hour" is kind of the phrase of the day.

MS. PSAKI: (Laughs.) Yeah.

Q But given that, can we expect to hear from the President today? Or what would have to happen for us to hear from the President today?

MS. PSAKI: We'll see. I can't make a prediction for you now, but it is certainly possible. It's also possible he has more meetings. He'll certainly make more phone calls, possibly moves. But I don't have anything to predict for you at this point in time.

Q And, last night, he went to the congressional baseball game. Did he go specifically to do some arm twisting or lobbying on infrastructure? And he spent some time with Republican lawmakers -- something he really hasn't done here at the White House. Can you give us a sense of what he talked about with those Republican lawmakers? What was the interaction like, the tone of those conversations?

MS. PSAKI: I think you're undervaluing his baseball prowess -- (laughter) -- and history, which he was honored for last night.

No, look, I think what the President -- and I saw him this morning; he was reflecting on how it was -- and I think this is a tradition -- the Congressional Baseball Game. You know, it's something that has been around for some time, where Democrats and Republicans go participate in America's -- one of America's favorite pastimes.

And you saw -- I think you all saw in photos, but for people who didn't see -- he visited with some Republicans down in their area -- dugout?

Q Dugout.

MS. PSAKI: I don't even know it's called. (Laughter.) Okay, dugout. Help me out here. Thank you. He visited -- (laughs) -- with some -- my husband is going to be really mad about that.

He visited with some Republicans. You know, he wasn't -- it wasn't meant to be a negotiation; it was a discussion about, you know, how things are going and work we're all committed to and just saying hello to them. And sometimes, you know, that's important and powerful too at a time where there's been so much division, where there's a view from many in the public -- as per the question earlier -- that people can't work together, can't get things done.

And this was an opportunity to have a moment to visit with, to see people that you've known be -- you've known a long time, to meet new people, and to move beyond partisanship to celebrate one of America's favorite pastimes.

Q Did he have a response to you about getting booed last night? Any reaction to that?

MS. PSAKI: He's been in public life long enough to know there's going to be some yays and jeers in most big, public places.

Go ahead.

Q Can I just follow up on that? Is -- in some ways, does his visit and the rituals of getting together sort of prove the point that the face time doesn't work? I mean, you still -- you referred to Leader McConnell and the Republican Party not willing to raise the debt limit. He's had plenty of face time with Leader McConnell for decades. Maybe it just doesn't matter and people are going to do what their political interests or what they believe their political interests tells them to do?

MS. PSAKI: Well, this is how the President views it: You're going to have strong disagreements, as he does with Senator McConnell about how he's approached the debt limit. You're also going to have areas where you may come to agreement on, as they do on infrastructure and the importance of rebuilding our roads, our railways, and our bridges. And it's important to maintain lines of communication and discussion to figure out where you can work together.

That's also how he views and approaches diplomacy. We can call out and -- publicly and argue strongly privately issues we have with foreign governments. But we also sometimes still look for ways -- most of the time -- for ways to work together.

That's been his approach. I would say that given the infrastructure bill passed with 69 votes, that's evidence of it working.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. You mentioned at the top that on September 17th the President signed an executive order authorizing sanctions to be used against those undermining peace in Ethiopia.

But right now, it doesn't seem the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Abiy Ahmed, is interested in peace. He refused to meet with Samantha Power when she was there. He has -- he is expelling U.N. staff from the country. He's taken other steps that prove that he has no interest in peace.

Why not take the sanction now? Why not impose the sanction now, or take more drastic action against not just him but also the President of Eritrea, who still have troops inside Ethiopia?

MS. PSAKI: Well, absent clear and concrete changes, we will. We're preparing to take aggressive action under this executive order to impose targeted sanctions against a range of individuals and entities. What we're communicating to the parties on the ground is that we must see meaningful steps within weeks to initiate discussions to achieve a negotiated ceasefire, allow in an unhindered humanitarian access, and ensure respect for human rights. Absent significant progress, we'll take action. And we have the methods to do that. That's why I rec- -- talked about the executive order.

Q And then on Guinea, we've had so many coups in Africa. The President of Guinea has been overthrown. The President of Mali has been overthrown. And we just had the Prime Minister of Sudan who just survived a coup attempt. And the President promised to defend democracy around the world. Is he failing in that promise?

MS. PSAKI: He doesn't expect that to be accomplished in nine months. He expects that to be accomplished over the course of time for advocating for democracy, for human rights, for imposing steps when warranted, and -- as we are considering right now in Ethiopia -- and obviously by having a strong national security team that can convey this on his behalf when he cannot.

Go ahead.

Q I just have a question on Africa.

Q Thanks, Jen. On --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead. I'll come back to you next.

Q Thanks, Jen. Just to follow up on Mike's question on what the Cuban foreign minister said. Just to be specific, he said, "It's a pity that President Biden couldn't implement his own policy toward Cuba." And I just wondered if you had a specific response.

MS. PSAKI: I don't.

Q And there's a U.S. delegation -- top officials going to Port-au-Prince. What's the goal of that visit?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, I have some details on this, including who is going. So, let's see. So, what they're doing -- one, we feel it's pretty pivotal to have high-level officials from here engaged in traveling back and forth to Port-au-Prince to have discussions with actors across the political spectrum to see what we can do to help support dialogue and development for the Haitian people.

We know it's clearly a profoundly challenging time on the ground, and it's crucial that we meet with a range of stakeholders to help move this process forward or help support the process moving forward in a way that's in the interest of the Haitian people. So, this is really an effort to be engaged, to be on the ground.

I can tell you -- and you may know this already -- that our newly confirmed Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere, Brian Nichols, is on this as a part of this delegation; our NSC Senior Director for the Western Hemisphere, Juan Gonzales, are there. They're meeting with civil society groups, political stakeholders, the Haitian government. And they're, of course, as I noted, discussing a Haitian-led process charting the path to democratic elections.

But that's the focus, as well as discussing how we can continue to help provide support for the migration response, security, recovery from the earthquake, and the COVID pandemic.

Q Jen, last question.

Q Secretary Mayorkas had said he expected the results of an investigation on the Border Patrol officers --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- on horseback by the end of this week. What's the status of that investigation?

MS. PSAKI: I know he said that; as I understand, it's still on track. But I would really point you to the Department of Homeland Security on any update.

Brian, why don't we go to you last?

Q Yeah, thank you.

Q Oh, you said --

Q Thank you very much. And I appreciate it. I'm -- I wanted to ask what the President's reaction is to Democratic lawmakers calling on him to lean more on Senator Manchin and Senator Sinema. What is the President's reaction to that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, first, the President's reaction is -- he's been in the -- he was in the Senate for 36 years. He knows, as does Speaker Pelosi, Leader Schumer, what it takes at this point in negotiations. They've probably done this more, and more successfully, than any combinations of Democratic leaders in history.

And his approach has been: Yes, of course, it's listening. Yes, of course, it's conveying viewpoints and having sometimes, you know, direct and candid discussions, but he knows how to do this.

And a lot of people who are throwing stones aren't a part of these negotiations. They're one on one. So, I think they should leave it to him and others to get them done.

Q But there are members of his party that want him to be more actively involved, and have come out publicly and said, "We want to see the President more actively involved." What's his response to that?

MS. PSAKI: I would say that -- as I would point to something Congresswoman Jayapal said yesterday, "Right now, it's not a secret about what is the holdup." The holdup is that we need to get 50 votes in the Senate to move the infrastructure, to move the reconciliation package forward, in order for members of the Progressive Caucus in the house to feel comfortable that there's a path forward.

As many of them have conveyed, the President's role and work in communicating with Senator Manchin and Senator Sinema to help get that done is probably one of the most constructive roles he can play. And that's what he's been focused on over the last few days.

Q My follow-up question, Jen?

MS. PSAKI: Thanks so much, everyone.

Okay, last one, because I promised you. Go ahead.

Q Thank you. Jen, the President of Angola -- President João Lourenço -- was in D.C. last week, and he met with Jake Sullivan and Madam Speaker of the House. And I just want to check with you if the President made any comment about this visit, because Jake Sullivan, on the day that he met my president, he said he would brief the President on that day. So, I don't -- I'm trying to check with you if you heard any comments from the President (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any additional comment. I think we put a readout out about Jake Sullivan's meeting, but I don't have any additional comments.

Thanks so much, everyone.

3:19 P.M. EDT

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To: Li, Kai (PAO)
Sent: September 30, 2021 5:59 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 30, 2021

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, September 30, 2021

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

2:34 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Okay. Welcome back, Dr. Harper.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. I'm breaking my streak. I do have some items at the top for all of you. Lots going on in the world.

The U.S. government condemns in the strongest possible terms the government of Ethiopia's unprecedented action to expel the leadership of all of the United Nations organizations involved in ongoing humanitarian operations. We agree with U.N. leaders: This is a stain on our collective conscience and it must stop.

The action follows the release of reports warning that hundreds of thousands of people are starving to death in northern Ethiopia. We're deeply concerned that this action continues a pattern by the Ethiopian government of obstructing the delivery of food, medicine, and other lifesaving supplies that most -- to those most in need.

We call on the U.N. Security Council and members of the international community to take urgent action to make clear to the government of Ethiopia that impeding humanitarian operations and depriving your own citizens of the basic means of survival is unacceptable.

President Biden signed an executive order, earlier this month, enabling the U.S. government to impose financial sanctions

on those prolonging the conflict in northern Ethiopia. We will not hesitate to use this or any other tool at our disposal to respond quickly and decisively to those who obstruct humanitarian assistance to the people of Ethiopia.

One more items -- one more item. Some news from -- out of the First Lady's office: Today, Joining Forces -- the White House initiative led by the First Lady to support military families -- and the National Security Council released a White House report, signed by the President and Secretaries of 15 executive departments, which outlines the first round of administration-wide commitments and proposals to supporting military and veteran families, caregivers, and survivors.

In May of 2021, the Office of the First Lady and the National Security Council launched a Joining Forces Interagency Policy Committee with representatives from across the executive agencies to work collaboratively on priorities related to the families of service members and veterans, caregivers, and survivors.

This report details more than 800 -- 80, sorry -- specific commitments and proposals from across the administration and is the product of the Interagency Policy Committee's months of work.

Going forward, this committee will continue to advance these priorities, including those outlined in the report, through cross-agency working groups and will report results and updated plans annually.

Jonathan, why don't you kick us off.

Q Thank you, Jen. A few -- all on the dealings at Capitol Hill right now. Senator Manchin told reporters a short time ago that he told President Biden that \$1.5 trillion would be as high as he was willing to go for the reconciliation package. What was the President's reaction to that? Is that an acceptable number?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say, as we've said many times, we're not going to outline private negotiations or private discussions, and we'll let the senators speak for that, as Senator Manchin did earlier today. The way the President sees it is that this is an ongoing discussion, an ongoing negotiation.

Here's what we know: We know that timelines help make progress. We've seen that play out over the course of the last couple of days. We know that compromise is inevitable. We've also seen that play out over the last couple of days. And right now, we're clearly in the thick of it.

I'd also note that during his -- during Senator Manchin's -- and obviously, I'm not his spokesperson; he can certainly speak for himself -- but during his Q&A he did on the Hill today, he also referenced the fact that he -- that there was a document from a couple of months ago. And I'll let him and Senator -- Leader Schumer speak to that. And he was repeatedly pushed and asked, "Would you go higher than 1.5? Would you go higher than 1.5?" I will leave it to all of you to determine if he answered that question.

But this is an ongoing discussion, an ongoing negotiation. And as I said yesterday, that's going to require all sides giving a little, and we're in the midst of that right now.

Q So on that -- so, key Democratic House leaders have said they will, quote, "stay here all weekend" to work to get a deal. Does the President plan to do the same? Will he be at the White House working this weekend, having visitors, calling and hosting congressional lawmakers?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as Speaker Pelosi said earlier -- and we're following the same motto -- we're taking it hour by hour here and making a decision and determination about what's most needed.

So, as it relates to what's even going to happen this afternoon, we're open; he's available. He's been making calls this morning. He's open to having visitors. He's open to going places. But we're going to make those decisions hour by hour.

So, the weekend is a little bit away, but I will tell you that this is the President's top priority right now: getting relief to the

American people; making sure we're lowering costs for the American people; we're addressing the climate crisis; we're rebuilding our roads, rails, and bridges. We've made progress, and we're still at work at it.

Q All right. And last one from me. One of the President's central promises when he was elected was to restore Americans' ability to be confident in their government again, to believe in institutions again. What is the White House's message to Americans right now who look at this and see a mess? Nearly a government shutdown, the debt ceiling is unclear, legislation not being passed, at least not yet, even though Democrats control all the bodies of government. And those Americans don't feel that they can be confident in government.

What's the White House's response?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say: The President, the Speaker of the House, and the Leader have more experience getting legislation across the finish line than any group of Democrat -- Democratic leaders in history.

We're in the middle of it right now. It's messy, this sausage-making, on Capitol Hill. Policymaking is messy. There's negotiations. They all have representatives who are advocating for their points of view. That's democracy in action.

What I can tell them is that we're on the path to keep the government open. You just saw that pass the Senate. It was going over to the House. That's not just keeping the government open, that's getting relief to make sure we can -- we can take care of refugees, people who fought by our side in Afghanistan; that's to make sure we get relief to the Gulf Coast -- additional relief to the Gulf Coast. All important priorities.

And we would also tell them that the President is going to stop at -- he's going to use every lever at his disposal to fight to get this legislation passed -- these two pieces of legislation -- that will have a historic -- make historic investments. And he's doing it because he wants to have an impact on their lives.

But these type of packages, not a lot of precedent for them, but he's going to work at it. He's going to get it done. That's what he would tell them.

Go ahead.

Q Does the President see any strategic value in a vote failing on the House floor?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as Speaker Pelosi said earlier today, we're on a path to win. I don't want to even consider any other options than that. We're in it to win it. The President is also in it to win it. That's what we're working toward. It's only 2:40 right now; lots of time left in the day. And he's going to continue to engage -- stay closely engaged with her about the path forward.

Q You've repeatedly referred to this week -- to this moment as an "inflection point." How is the President viewing this moment, given where his caucuses are and where his members are?

MS. PSAKI: This moment as in "this moment" -- 2:40 p.m. this afternoon -- or just today?

Q As in it's deadline day for an infrastructure bill; he doesn't have the votes. One member of the United States Senate is about \$2 trillion below his topline number, and there's no clear way to bridge those gaps.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think the President views this as the last several days and even longer than that. His view is we've made some progress. You've seen some members come down. You've seen some members come up. You've seen active negotiations. He's obviously been hard at work at them himself.

And what we clearly see is an agreement about the need to get this done, whether it's the infrastructure bill or the reconciliation practice -- package, which has key priorities for the President -- key priorities. I think the Speaker referred

to it earlier today as the cause of her -- as her public li- -- as her time in public life. That's a bit of a paraphrase. I'll leave you to her words.

So, look, he sees this moment -- he knew that as we got closer to self-imposed timelines, which are important -- often these timelines can help make progress; we've seen progress made -- that more members would be out there advocating for what was important to them. That's happening.

We saw -- we would hopefully see more willingness to compromise; that's happening too. We're hard at work. And he's been through this before, so he's not too thrown off his game on it.

Q And then just one quick last one. Do you guys see a possibility of some type of framework agreement that could unlock the infrastructure vote today?

MS. PSAKI: That's what we're working towards.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. You talked about "self-imposed timelines" as opposed to the other real timelines for debt ceiling and the CR. The progressives don't seem to feel any sense of urgency about passing infrastructure, and the moderates, like Manchin, don't seem to feel any urgency about passing reconciliation. The only Democrat that I can think of who really has a sense of urgency is Terry McAuliffe.

Do you feel it -- does the President want this done in a certain amount of time, or does he also feel that this could play out over weeks and months and still come to the conclusion that he wants?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as I said a little bit earlier, we know -- and the President knows from his time in public office -- that timelines can help make progress. That's often how legislating happens on the Hill. And as the Speaker --

Q These ones aren't.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we would -- we would disagree with that. You've seen a lot of members out there advocating for their viewpoints, being very vocal about what they want to see; some coming up, some coming down. That's a sense of progress. And we're working at it hour by hour here.

Q But does he have -- does he feel that he needs it done by a certain time, like the end of the year?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to set new deadlines here for you. Obviously, we're trying to get it done now. We're working on it as of right now, today, and that's what our focus is on in this moment.

Go ahead. I'll go back to you, Weijia. Go ahead.

Q It's all right.

Q To follow up a little on what Phil was asking --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- what does the President want and what is he asking members of Congress to do on this infrastructure vote tonight? Is he calling progressives, and Republicans even, asking them to vote for it? Does he definitely want this vote tonight? Or is this all still this murky -- sort of trying to link these two things together and hope something emerges out of that?

MS. PSAKI: There's nothing really murky about what's going on here. I mean, we understand what progressive members

want. Right? They've been out there vocally talking to all of you about what they want.

It's clear we also need their votes in order to pass an infrastructure bill. They want to have a clear path forward on a reconciliation package. The President wants both pieces of legislation to pass. That's what he wants, bottom line. He's also going to work with the Speaker and the Leader to get that done.

So, what he's been spending his time on over the last couple of days is that -- having conversations with Senator Manchin, Senator Sinema, and others who have been very vocal about the fact that they're not quite there yet. And his objective is to try to get them there because that's what members of the Progressive Caucus are looking for in order to support an infrastructure bill, many compo- -- of components of which they support.

Q I guess, to put a finer point on it: If your choice is between a vote tonight that fails but sort of puts everybody on the record, or pulling the vote tonight and continuing deliberations despite it potentially upsetting moderates who feel like they've been promised this vote, what does the President prefer?

MS. PSAKI: We're working towards winning a vote tonight. We have several hours left in the day.

Q All right. Last one. What's the plan on the debt ceiling? I mean, Republicans have sort of made clear that they're not going to back any efforts. So it would seem at this point that Democrats' only hope here is to turn towards a reconciliation process on the debt ceiling.

I understand that you've made the point many times that Mitch McConnell is being hypocritical on this, that Republicans should support it, but it does seem now that the votes are on the table, that you're kind of pursuing this political point at the potential risk of default for the U.S. economy.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think that's a bit of a shorthand of what's happening, which I understand; it's a bit of a complicated thing.

But first, since you gave me the opportunity, it's not just Senator McConnell; Republicans are playing politics with an economic catastrophe, and they're treating a calamity for working families like a D.C. game. There are huge impacts here.

You touched on the fact, but let me give the public a little sense of that: an instant recession, 6 million jobs lost, \$15 trillion in savings wiped out, Social Security checks and payments to our troops blocked. Those are real impacts.

Republicans in Congress are treating this like a game. Let me give you some examples. Senator Rick Scott -- and this is a real quote, I will note: "This is going to be a...ball. I'm going to have so much fun." That's about the debt limit.

Senator Kevin Kramer: "It's sort of fun to watch."

And Senator Cornyn said yesterday that Republicans would use every tool at their disposal to slow Democrats from doing this on their own.

What we're trying to do right now is do it on their own -- do it on our own. That is what Leader Schumer is working to proceed -- working to move forward on.

And, obviously, as you know, Republicans have blocked that effort. So, of course, we are going to continue to press. We're not going to let up on that, on Republicans, to do what's responsible, to protect the full faith and credit of the United States, as has been done 80 times in the past.

We've also been working to do it on our own. We're going to keep working with Leader Schumer to get that done.

Q But you're not going to ask for reconcil- -- Democrats to push on reconciliation, (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to get into additional mechanisms here. We're going to continue. I don't think -- we're not going to, nor should anyone, let Republicans off the hook here, so we're going to continue to press them on it.

Q One of the things that Senator Manchin said today was that the, kind of -- the concern that he has around the 3.5 number is about how it would impact inflation in the economy. And I'm curious what the White House thinks of that concern and what you've done to allay that concern.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we've conveyed privately what we've said publicly and what many, many economists have also conveyed publicly, which is that what these packages will do is they will address -- address inflation and costs over the long term. That's one of the core reasons that people should be supporting them. So, if you are concerned about inflation, that's exactly a reason you should support these packages.

Q And would the President sign a reconciliation bill that does not include negotiating on drug prices?

MS. PSAKI: The President has obviously proposed that. He feels strongly about the need to make drugs -- prescription drugs, I should say, more affordable to the American public. I'm not going to negotiate further from here.

Q One other thing, just on a different topic: Jake Sullivan's conversations in Saudi Arabia. Did rising oil prices come up in those conversations? What was his message to the Saudis about alleviating some of the concerns that people have as they're paying a dollar more for gasoline now than they did a year ago?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, so, I know someone asked about this the other day. And, obviously, the focus of his trip was on Yemen and working with the Saudis on Yemen. And our -- Tim Lenderki -- Lenderking was -- joined him in those meetings, who's our envoy to Yemen, to kind of figure out the path forward.

He was -- obviously, the price of oil is of concern. We have been in touch with OPEC. And I believe it was going to be raised, but I haven't had a chance to get a readout beyond that. I can try to do that for you after the briefing.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. So, putting the topline number aside, Senators Manchin and Sinema have been very opaque about what it is they want and do not want in this reconciliation bill. Without revealing details, does the White House and the President have a clear understanding of what it is each one of them wants?

MS. PSAKI: We've had a lot of private conversations with both of the senators about what their priorities are, as they've said publicly. And I think as Senator Manchin said publicly today, what their priorities are and what that looks like in a final package, that's still an ongoing discussion.

Q Are they asking for the same things? Are the two of them on board with the same (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: I'll let them speak for their priorities and how they line up with each other.

Q Okay. And then to build on what Justin was asking about --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- decoupling these two.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Is the President worried at all about eroding trust with Republicans who signed on to the bipartisan deal after he

reassured them that it would not be conditional on reconciliation?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let's remember what's actually going on on the Hill here. Republicans in the House, led by Kevin McCarthy, are opting to vote against rebuilding roads and railways and bridges, despite the fact that the package was sent over with the support of 69 senators.

So, I think if you're asking about trust or whether people are delivering for the American people, you should direct it at Kevin McCarthy.

Go ahead.

Q I'm asking because the progressives have made so clear that they refuse to vote on infrastructure without a vote on reconciliation first. Why doesn't the President ask them to treat them separately?

MS. PSAKI: To treat -- well, I think the --

Q To treat the two bills separately.

MS. PSAKI: The President has made clear both are his priorities. He's also made clear he wants to get them both across the finish line.

What we're talking about now is the legislative process and how you get the majority of votes to get both of them done. And that's what he's working to negotiate and working to unify the caucus around.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks. And just one more --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- on a separate topic.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Go ahead.

Q The National School Boards Association has sent a letter to the President asking for help from federal law enforcement agencies because of the violence and the threats that they're seeing across the country. Has the President received that request? And are you considering offering that help?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, let me say we take the security of public servants and elected officials across the country very seriously. And, obviously, these threats to school board members is horrible. They're doing their jobs.

Obviously, there are going to be different law enforcement authorities that will be related to each community and -- where this is happening, so we'd certainly refer you to them about any specific threats. And we'd encourage individuals to report any threats they face to local and state law enforcement agencies. And we're continuing to explore what more can be done from across the administration.

But again, a lot of this will be local law enforcement and how they can help ensure these school board members feel protected.

Q Thanks.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. Has the President at all lost control of his party? Depending on which perspective you're looking at this from -- you know, some people say that it appears that progressives are running the show, they're banding together and making their demands. Other people are saying it looks like Joe Manchin is playing president. So, who is in charge?

MS. PSAKI: Well, this is how democracy works. I know it feels foreign because there wasn't much that happened over the last couple of years. But how it works is the American people elect their elected officials, the President of the United States puts forward a bold and ambitious proposal, and then everybody negotiates about it, and they have different points of view. That's how democracy should work. We're in the midst of it right now. We're not trying to paint over how messy it looks from the outside. We know that.

But what -- the good news is, is that there is agreement that -- among most Democrats, if not every single one of them, that we need to get something done; that we need to do more to rebuild our roads and railways and bridges; that we need to cut costs for the American people; we need to address the climate crisis. There's agreement on that.

Now we're in the nitty-gritty details, which is very important, but that's the end stage of this process. And the American people should know that that's what the President is working on.

Q And I want to follow up on Weijia's question. So, if the bipartisan bill fails or is stalled or doesn't happen today, it would appear that these two bills -- the reconciliation and the infrastructure -- are linked. And the President, you know, made statements that Republicans should be able to vote for the bipartisan bill on its merits. He stood in front of the White House with a group of Republicans who negotiated that infrastructure bill. Is there a message that he has to those Republican senators, who voted to pass that bill on its merits, that this bill is somehow not linked with the reconciliation because of what's happening in the House?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we're working towards victory here and a win. If it doesn't pass, it's because it doesn't have enough votes. I think Republicans in the Senate understand that and know how this process works.

But that's what we're working towards now. That's what the President has been making phone calls about. That's what we have his schedule cleared for this afternoon. And I'm not going to make a prediction of what the outcome will look like several hours from now.

Q And then with the Vice President -- and she was a senator as recently as this year --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- why isn't she on the Hill helping to broker this deal?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the Vice President had the CBC over, the CHC last week. She's been making calls herself, just like the President. If it's constructive for her to go to the Hill or for him to go to the Hill, to have members down here, they'll do that.

We're ready and willing. This is our top priority. All hands on deck. But a lot of what's happening right now is discussions at a staff level, a senior staff level to get through these intricate details, and that's where the focus is in this moment.

Go ahead, Kelly.

Q Since we haven't seen the President much publicly this week --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- and you talked about leaving room in his schedule, can you paint more of a picture of what's happening behind the scenes? Are there calls happening from the Oval Office inviting members to the President? Does he have scheduled meetings with

scenes? Are these calls happening from the Oval? Is he inviting guests to the Residence? Does he have a whiteboard with his own whip count? Can you give us a picture of what it looks like (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: (Laughs.) I like that visual. I would say he does not have a whiteboard with a whip count. I can assure you he's more of a paper and pen kind of guy.

But, look, he's been meeting with staff, he's been getting updates from staff as they've been having engagements with the Hill. You all know who the senior members of his team are who are negotiating, whether that's Steve Ricchetti or Louisa Terrell, Brian Deese, Susan Rice.

What he's asked his team to do is -- including the policy members, which people don't always factor this in -- is be available to have conversations with members about questions they have, to help address any parts of it they have suggestions on.

So, he's getting regular updates. People are in and out of the Oval Office providing him updates on their individual conversations. And he's picking up the phone and calling people as needed, whether that's the Speaker or Leader Schumer or other members, to have a conversation about the status, to check on where they are, to follow up on maybe a conversation they may have had with his staff.

These conversations are happening from the Oval Office, but certainly he does some from the Residence; it depends on what time of day it may be.

Q And are you running your own whip count, or are you relying on Hill resources to do that?

MS. PSAKI: We're very closely in touch, as you know, with leadership on the Hill; the President himself is. Of course, we're certainly in touch with members ourselves -- ourselves about where they stand, where they may have concerns, or any hesitations.

Go ahead. I'll come back to you, Terry. I'm sorry. Go ahead.

Q We finally learned today Senator Manchin's position on his topline number. Senator Schumer has been aware of it since late July, and Senator Manchin said that he told the President already this \$1.5 trillion number. Why has the decision been made strategically to pursue Senator Manchin, Senator Sinema, and not try to, within the last couple of weeks, apply more pressure on progressives to take half a loaf and say, "This is low-hanging fruit; it's a \$1.2 trillion infrastructure plan. Let's move on that"? Why was that strategic decision made not to do that?

MS. PSAKI: Both of these are huge priorities to the President. I'd also note that when Senator Manchin was asked -- and he can obviously speak for himself -- but just since I've read the whole transcript here, he also repeatedly referred back to a document that went back to July 28th. I'd remind you all that this is an active negotiation and discussion, and it is incumbent upon members to put out where they stand and where they are. And as we've seen over the past couple days, that's an everchanging process.

So, before you make conclusions about what the end results will be, I would remind you to look at the last several days or even weeks about how these discussions have progressed.

Q But Senator Manchin said today he believes his position is -- it sounded to me like his position was firm. And he also said that if progressives feel that the Congress should spend \$3.5 trillion, that they should convince voters to send more progressives to Washington. That sounded to me like he's saying that, through the end of this Congress, he's not going to agree to \$3.5 trillion.

MS. PSAKI: We could certainly parse Senator Manchin's words, but I am certain he'll go answer questions again, and your colleagues should ask him more questions.

Q But why do you think that this is not -- why do you think that Senator Manchin's position on this is not final?

MS. PSAKI: Because this is an active negotiation, because he was pushed repeatedly during the gaggle that he did on Capitol Hill about where he stood. But again, I'm not here to speak for Senator Manchin; he is -- certainly can speak for himself and what his points of view -- views are. And I certainly encourage you all to keep asking him questions about where he stands.

Go ahead.

Q Back on the deadline that was set at the beginning of the week -- announced at -- this is a big week: Democrats are in charge here at the White House and in both houses of Congress. And they set the deadline; Democrats set the deadline. Now they --

MS. PSAKI: To be clear, they just set the date of a vote.

Q All right. You called it a "deadline." I was just using your words.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Fair. But -- thank you for the clarification. It's -- they set the time of a vote.

Q All right. Democrats set this vote. Now they're going to miss it, fail to make it. Why is it that --

MS. PSAKI: We don't know that. It's only three o'clock.

Q Can you tell us if they're going to vote tonight?

MS. PSAKI: That's what Speaker Pelosi indicated her plan was.

Q All right. My question is: Why isn't it fair to see this as a failure of the President to get his own party to back him and his agenda?

MS. PSAKI: Why isn't it, before we've even had a vote and we don't even know where it sits, a failure of the President?

Q It feels like we're farther away today than we were on Monday.

MS. PSAKI: I don't think the President feels that way, and I don't think members of Congress feel that way.

Q You've talked about progress. Can you explain what progress is? You said it's people talking about where they are.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q That sounds like -- that sounds like an earlier part of the process when you had set a vote for the end of the week.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would point you again to what Speaker Pelosi said earlier today: In the end stages, the later stages of a process -- where we are now -- when you get closer to a vote, a time of a vote being set, that's when the negotiations get serious. That's when people start putting down bottom lines of where they stand. You've seen some people do that publicly. A lot more of it happens behind the scenes. That's what I mean by progress.

You've seen members come down in numbers. You've seen members come up in numbers. That's what we're working on -- to get to an agreed-upon path forward.

Q So there's progress, and it's people behind the scenes saying that -- where their numbers move.

MS. PSAKI: They've also said it publicly.

Q One more. A lot of Democrats are looking at what's happening, and they're saying Senator Manchin and Senator Sinema are holding this President and his agenda hostage. What would you say to that?

MS. PSAKI: I would say we have 50 votes in the Senate -- 50 Democrats in the Senate. So, we need the majority to win. That's how a bill becomes a law.

Q They've got the leverage.

MS. PSAKI: We need all 50 votes in the Senate to move this forward. That's where we stand now.

Go ahead.

Q I just wanted to go back to the debt ceiling for a second.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Democrats control all branches of government right now. Can you assure the American people and the financial markets that the United States will not default on its debt?

MS. PSAKI: That is absolutely what we're trying to accomplish. And I'd remind you that we would have gotten that done had Republicans done what they've done 80 times before -- supporting a bipartisan vote to do something that has been pretty standard in the past -- or if they had allowed Leader Schumer to move forward.

But, absolutely, we're going to do everything to prevent the federal -- us from defaulting --

Q But does the plan involve changing Mitch McConnell's mind -- Leader McConnell's mind in some way? Or is there a plan to just go forward using either reconciliation or --

MS. PSAKI: Well, Leader Schumer has already tried to -- already been working to move things forward. And it's been blocked by Republicans -- not just their vote; an effort to move it forward has been blocked.

Q But there clearly are ways -- I mean, getting rid of the filibuster, for example, for this particular vote would be one way to move forward. And is that something that the President would consider to avoid losing, let's say, 10 percent of the value of the stock market?

MS. PSAKI: I just outlined how concerning we are -- how concerned we are, which you just echoed -- or echoed different components of it. And that's an issue we take incredibly seriously. You've also heard Secretary Yellen on the Hill talking about this. We're not going to let Republicans off the hook. We don't think they should be. This is not a game. This is the faith -- full faith and credit of the United States.

We're working with Leader Schumer on a path forward, but beyond that, I don't have more to preview for you.

Q But you can do it without Republicans if you got rid of the filibuster for this --

MS. PSAKI: We could do it if they let us move forward, and they haven't. So I have no more details on the pa- -- on the legislative process.

Q And just on the reconciliation package, is \$1.5 trillion enough in your spending to cover Biden's priorities -- the President's priorities?

MS. PSAKI: I understand that's a number that's been put out there. It's an active negotiation. I'm not going to weigh in from here on what is or isn't acceptable to the Democratic Caucus.

Go ahead.

Q A couple different topics. So, on immigration, there seems to be a real sense among advocates for immigrants -- people who have been fighting for legalization, for a pathway to citizenship -- there's a real sense of doom; people who described this, yesterday, even crying about the latest parliamentary ruling.

Do you -- what does the President -- you know, what would the President say or what does the President say if that -- if he is unable to move forward on any of the, sort of, big, sweeping promises that he made as a candidate to get -- to finally be the President to get something done on immigration?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we don't accept that. We're nine months into his presidency. And we share the disappointment. Obviously, as you know and you touched on, the parliamentarian ruled twice, in different ways, that it could be included in the reconciliation package -- or components, I should say, of immigration reform could not be included in the reconciliation practice -- process. Sorry, package.

That's disappointing to the President as well. So, clearly, now we need to figure out what the vehicle forward is.

I would say the President's plan is about certainly protecting DREAMers, farm workers, and others. It's also about investing in border security, making sure it makes sense and we're investing in it in a way that makes sense, and creating an asylum processing system that is actually functional, which I think we all agree it's not.

So there are several components of what he's proposed, and, certainly, we share the disappointment of many advocates that this wasn't included and the desire to find a vehicle to move it forward.

Q On one other separate topic: There have been a number of issues in the last, say, several weeks in which advocates -- allies of the President are describing him as "Trump-like." Most -- less in terms of his personality and sort of tone and tenor, obviously, but in terms of policy. Even today, a representative of the Cuban government describing the frustration with the President continuing to maintain Trump-era policies vis-à-vis Cuba.

Does the -- what's the President's reaction? And does he accept that in some areas of policy he is, you know, in agreement with the former President?

MS. PSAKI: So, just for the sake of argument here -- not argument, but discussion -- beyond the representative of the Cuban government who --

Q Afghanistan, immigration --

MS. PSAKI: Well, but who? Who are we talking about here?

Q Who --

MS. PSAKI: Who is saying that the President is like Trump?

Q Oh, I mean there -- there -- I mean, I could find you quotes. We have -- there have been quotes in our paper and quotes in lots of -- lots of folks have, depending on the issue, whether they are immigration advocates or, you know, folks in the Afghanistan -- who sort of watch Afghanistan. There have been numerous on-the-record descriptions of the President embracing -- and it's actually, in some ways, just a factual thing, right?

MS. PSAKI: But like on what policy?

Q Like the President has --

MS. PSAKI: On what policy? Sorry, I didn't -- you can -- you can name people but -- or what specific policies.

Q Well, I mean, for example, Afghanistan would have been the maintaining of the former President's decision to withdraw troops. On immigration, it's in maintaining Title 42 and keeping Title 42 in place. I mean they're --

Q Sub- --

Q Hm?

Q Submarines.

Q The submarine -- yeah. (Laughter.)

MS. PSAKI: Which one?

Q The submarine -- I'm just --

Q Yeah, the --

Q AUKUS.

Q The President was --

Q AUKUS.

Q -- yeah -- was compared to Trump --

Q -- to Trump. Well, the -- that's the French -- the French Foreign Minister compared him to Trump, in terms of how he handled the AUKUS negotiations.

MS. PSAKI: So, look, I'd take each one of these: On Afghanistan, the former President struck a deal without the Afghan government that, we heard the military convey yesterday, led to the demoralization of the Afghan Security Forces and the Afghan government, where he also released 5,000 Taliban fighters into Afghanistan.

I would say the President took a pretty different approach than that in ending a war that the former President didn't end -- something the American people strongly support.

As it relates to AUKUS, I'm not even sure what that's referring to, in terms of what they're comparing. The President worked with key partners -- Australia and the United Kingdom -- to come to an agreement that would help provide security in an important part of the world -- in the Indo-Pacific -- a priority that, frankly, getting out of the war in Afghanistan leaves space for us to spend more time addressing.

What was the last one? Immigration?

Q Immigration, Title 42, tariffs on China. I mean, there's --

MS. PSAKI: Title 42 is a public health -- is a public health requirement, a public health -- because we're in the middle of a pandemic, which, by the way --

Q The President and his allies --

MS. PSAKI: -- we would have made progress on had the former President actually addressed --

Q Right, but the --

MS. PSAKI: -- the pandemic and not suggested people inject bleach.

So, I think we're in a bit of a different place. I'm happy to discuss more examples. I think it's -- people would be pretty hard pressed to argue that the President has taken any aspect of the former President's playbook and used it as a model of his own.

Q Okay. Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Senator Manchin has also said that he wants to means test as much as possible of this reconciliation package. Without getting into or speaking for the senator, as you've said, what is the White House's position on, I guess, means testing in this package?

MS. PSAKI: Well, you can call it whatever you want. Sometimes means -- when you say "means testing" -- not you, but when -- when it's said, it sometimes has it not the right connotation or the wrong connotation.

The President's proposals, many of them have been targeted at the middle class, as have these proposals and these initiatives, which means there's a cap on income through which you can benefit. That's what -- you can call it whatever you want, if you call it "means testing." The President is very open to targeting, by income, many of his proposals. And that's something that you can see throughout many components of his agenda that have been proposed and many that have passed to date.

Q Does the White House believe that you all are currently in alignment with Manchin on what those thresholds would look like or --

MS. PSAKI: It's an ongoing discussion. But, again, our objective is to -- is to target and focus on bringing relief to the middle class. That's what the President wants to see this agenda accomplish.

Q In an op-ed for USA Today this morning, Senator Bernie Sanders defended the \$3.5 trillion price tag, asking, "Please tell me what [where] we should cut." This came out before Senator Manchin gave his line in the sand.

Does -- without speaking for either senator, does the White House believe that there's any provisions that, if we are talking about getting somewhere between 3.5 and 1.5, that are absolutely -- you all cannot stomach not having them in the final package?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to put anything on the table here. It's clear, as numbers come down, which they will, that there will be cuts to different components. That's just the nature of the totals here. But we'll leave those conversations private. I know you're eager [sic] -- eager to know more, and hopefully we'll have more to share soon.

Q And then just finally -- just one more point. As you all have said from here, the public -- public polling has consistently found that many parts of this -- of both packages are very supported by the American people. The American people are also very consistently pessimistic about action in Washington.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Ahead of what we're going to be seeing, whichever way this vote goes tonight, what is your message to the public as they look at the ongoing situation in Washington about -- what is your message to the American people as they look at, as you've said, a messy situation, the chaos of democracy?

MS. PSAKI: We hope we can prove them wrong.

Q Okay.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead, Karen.

Q Thanks, Jen. I know "hour by hour" is kind of the phrase of the day.

MS. PSAKI: (Laughs.) Yeah.

Q But given that, can we expect to hear from the President today? Or what would have to happen for us to hear from the President today?

MS. PSAKI: We'll see. I can't make a prediction for you now, but it is certainly possible. It's also possible he has more meetings. He'll certainly make more phone calls, possibly moves. But I don't have anything to predict for you at this point in time.

Q And, last night, he went to the congressional baseball game. Did he go specifically to do some arm twisting or lobbying on infrastructure? And he spent some time with Republican lawmakers -- something he really hasn't done here at the White House. Can you give us a sense of what he talked about with those Republican lawmakers? What was the interaction like, the tone of those conversations?

MS. PSAKI: I think you're undervaluing his baseball prowess -- (laughter) -- and history, which he was honored for last night.

No, look, I think what the President -- and I saw him this morning; he was reflecting on how it was -- and I think this is a tradition -- the Congressional Baseball Game. You know, it's something that has been around for some time, where Democrats and Republicans go participate in America's -- one of America's favorite pastimes.

And you saw -- I think you all saw in photos, but for people who didn't see -- he visited with some Republicans down in their area -- dugout?

Q Dugout.

MS. PSAKI: I don't even know it's called. (Laughter.) Okay, dugout. Help me out here. Thank you. He visited -- (laughs) -- with some -- my husband is going to be really mad about that.

He visited with some Republicans. You know, he wasn't -- it wasn't meant to be a negotiation; it was a discussion about, you know, how things are going and work we're all committed to and just saying hello to them. And sometimes, you know, that's important and powerful too at a time where there's been so much division, where there's a view from many in the public -- as per the question earlier -- that people can't work together, can't get things done.

And this was an opportunity to have a moment to visit with, to see people that you've known be -- you've known a long time, to meet new people, and to move beyond partisanship to celebrate one of America's favorite pastimes.

Q Did he have a response to you about getting booed last night? Any reaction to that?

MS. PSAKI: He's been in public life long enough to know there's going to be some yays and jeers in most big, public places.

Go ahead.

Q Can I just follow up on that? Is -- in some ways, does his visit and the rituals of getting together sort of prove the point that the face time doesn't work? I mean, you still -- you referred to Leader McConnell and the Republican Party not willing to raise the debt limit. He's had plenty of face time with Leader McConnell for decades. Maybe it just doesn't matter and people are going to do what their political interests or what they believe their political interests tells them to do?

MS. PSAKI: Well, this is how the President views it: You're going to have strong disagreements, as he does with Senator McConnell about how he's approached the debt limit. You're also going to have areas where you may come to agreement on, as they do on infrastructure and the importance of rebuilding our roads, our railways, and our bridges. And it's important to maintain lines of communication and discussion to figure out where you can work together.

That's also how he views and approaches diplomacy. We can call out and -- publicly and argue strongly privately issues we have with foreign governments. But we also sometimes still look for ways -- most of the time -- for ways to work together.

That's been his approach. I would say that given the infrastructure bill passed with 69 votes, that's evidence of it working.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. You mentioned at the top that on September 17th the President signed an executive order authorizing sanctions to be used against those undermining peace in Ethiopia.

But right now, it doesn't seem the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Abiy Ahmed, is interested in peace. He refused to meet with Samantha Power when she was there. He has -- he is expelling U.N. staff from the country. He's taken other steps that prove that he has no interest in peace.

Why not take the sanction now? Why not impose the sanction now, or take more drastic action against not just him but also the President of Eritrea, who still have troops inside Ethiopia?

MS. PSAKI: Well, absent clear and concrete changes, we will. We're preparing to take aggressive action under this executive order to impose targeted sanctions against a range of individuals and entities. What we're communicating to the parties on the ground is that we must see meaningful steps within weeks to initiate discussions to achieve a negotiated ceasefire, allow in an unhindered humanitarian access, and ensure respect for human rights. Absent significant progress, we'll take action. And we have the methods to do that. That's why I rec- -- talked about the executive order.

Q And then on Guinea, we've had so many coups in Africa. The President of Guinea has been overthrown. The President of Mali has been overthrown. And we just had the Prime Minister of Sudan who just survived a coup attempt. And the President promised to defend democracy around the world. Is he failing in that promise?

MS. PSAKI: He doesn't expect that to be accomplished in nine months. He expects that to be accomplished over the course of time for advocating for democracy, for human rights, for imposing steps when warranted, and -- as we are considering right now in Ethiopia -- and obviously by having a strong national security team that can convey this on his behalf when he cannot.

Go ahead.

Q I just have a question on Africa.

Q Thanks, Jen. On --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead. I'll come back to you next.

Q Thanks, Jen. Just to follow up on Mike's question on what the Cuban foreign minister said. Just to be specific, he said, "It's a pity that President Biden couldn't implement his own policy toward Cuba." And I just wondered if you had a specific response.

MS. PSAKI: I don't.

Q And there's a U.S. delegation -- top officials going to Port-au-Prince. What's the goal of that visit?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, I have some details on this, including who is going. So, let's see. So, what they're doing -- one, we feel it's pretty pivotal to have high-level officials from here engaged in traveling back and forth to Port-au-Prince to have discussions with actors across the political spectrum to see what we can do to help support dialogue and development for the Haitian people.

We know it's clearly a profoundly challenging time on the ground, and it's crucial that we meet with a range of stakeholders to help move this process forward or help support the process moving forward in a way that's in the interest of the Haitian people. So, this is really an effort to be engaged, to be on the ground.

I can tell you -- and you may know this already -- that our newly confirmed Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere, Brian Nichols, is on this as a part of this delegation; our NSC Senior Director for the Western Hemisphere, Juan Gonzales, are there. They're meeting with civil society groups, political stakeholders, the Haitian government. And they're, of course, as I noted, discussing a Haitian-led process charting the path to democratic elections.

But that's the focus, as well as discussing how we can continue to help provide support for the migration response, security, recovery from the earthquake, and the COVID pandemic.

Q Jen, last question.

Q Secretary Mayorkas had said he expected the results of an investigation on the Border Patrol officers --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- on horseback by the end of this week. What's the status of that investigation?

MS. PSAKI: I know he said that; as I understand, it's still on track. But I would really point you to the Department of Homeland Security on any update.

Brian, why don't we go to you last?

Q Yeah, thank you.

Q Oh, you said --

Q Thank you very much. And I appreciate it. I'm -- I wanted to ask what the President's reaction is to Democratic lawmakers calling on him to lean more on Senator Manchin and Senator Sinema. What is the President's reaction to that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, first, the President's reaction is -- he's been in the -- he was in the Senate for 36 years. He knows, as does Speaker Pelosi, Leader Schumer, what it takes at this point in negotiations. They've probably done this more, and more successfully, than any combinations of Democratic leaders in history.

And his approach has been: Yes, of course, it's listening. Yes, of course, it's conveying viewpoints and having sometimes, you know, direct and candid discussions, but he knows how to do this.

And a lot of people who are throwing stones aren't a part of these negotiations. They're one on one. So, I think they should leave it to him and others to get them done.

Q But there are members of his party that want him to be more actively involved, and have come out publicly and said, "We want to see the President more actively involved." What's his response to that?

MS. PSAKI: I would say that -- as I would point to something Congresswoman Jayapal said yesterday, "Right now, it's not a secret about what is the holdup." The holdup is that we need to get 50 votes in the Senate to move the infrastructure, to move the reconciliation package forward, in order for members of the Progressive Caucus in the house to feel comfortable that there's a path forward.

As many of them have conveyed, the President's role and work in communicating with Senator Manchin and Senator Sinema to help get that done is probably one of the most constructive roles he can play. And that's what he's been focused on over the last few days.

Q My follow-up question, Jen?

MS. PSAKI: Thanks so much, everyone.

Okay, last one, because I promised you. Go ahead.

Q Thank you. Jen, the President of Angola -- President João Lourenço -- was in D.C. last week, and he met with Jake Sullivan and Madam Speaker of the House. And I just want to check with you if the President made any comment about this visit, because Jake Sullivan, on the day that he met my president, he said he would brief the President on that day. So, I don't -- I'm trying to check with you if you heard any comments from the President (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any additional comment. I think we put a readout out about Jake Sullivan's meeting, but I don't have any additional comments.

Thanks so much, everyone.

3:19 P.M. EDT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 30, 2021

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, September 30, 2021

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

2:34 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Okay. Welcome back, Dr. Harper.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. I'm breaking my streak. I do have some items at the top for all of you. Lots going on in the world.

The U.S. government condemns in the strongest possible terms the government of Ethiopia's unprecedented action to expel the leadership of all of the United Nations organizations involved in ongoing humanitarian operations. We agree with U.N. leaders: This is a stain on our collective conscience and it must stop.

The action follows the release of reports warning that hundreds of thousands of people are starving to death in northern Ethiopia. We're deeply concerned that this action continues a pattern by the Ethiopian government of obstructing the delivery of food, medicine, and other lifesaving supplies that most -- to those most in need.

We call on the U.N. Security Council and members of the international community to take urgent action to make clear to the government of Ethiopia that impeding humanitarian operations and depriving your own citizens of the basic means of survival is unacceptable.

President Biden signed an executive order, earlier this month, enabling the U.S. government to impose financial sanctions

on those prolonging the conflict in northern Ethiopia. We will not hesitate to use this or any other tool at our disposal to respond quickly and decisively to those who obstruct humanitarian assistance to the people of Ethiopia.

One more items -- one more item. Some news from -- out of the First Lady's office: Today, Joining Forces -- the White House initiative led by the First Lady to support military families -- and the National Security Council released a White House report, signed by the President and Secretaries of 15 executive departments, which outlines the first round of administration-wide commitments and proposals to supporting military and veteran families, caregivers, and survivors.

In May of 2021, the Office of the First Lady and the National Security Council launched a Joining Forces Interagency Policy Committee with representatives from across the executive agencies to work collaboratively on priorities related to the families of service members and veterans, caregivers, and survivors.

This report details more than 800 -- 80, sorry -- specific commitments and proposals from across the administration and is the product of the Interagency Policy Committee's months of work.

Going forward, this committee will continue to advance these priorities, including those outlined in the report, through cross-agency working groups and will report results and updated plans annually.

Jonathan, why don't you kick us off.

Q Thank you, Jen. A few -- all on the dealings at Capitol Hill right now. Senator Manchin told reporters a short time ago that he told President Biden that \$1.5 trillion would be as high as he was willing to go for the reconciliation package. What was the President's reaction to that? Is that an acceptable number?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say, as we've said many times, we're not going to outline private negotiations or private discussions, and we'll let the senators speak for that, as Senator Manchin did earlier today. The way the President sees it is that this is an ongoing discussion, an ongoing negotiation.

Here's what we know: We know that timelines help make progress. We've seen that play out over the course of the last couple of days. We know that compromise is inevitable. We've also seen that play out over the last couple of days. And right now, we're clearly in the thick of it.

I'd also note that during his -- during Senator Manchin's -- and obviously, I'm not his spokesperson; he can certainly speak for himself -- but during his Q&A he did on the Hill today, he also referenced the fact that he -- that there was a document from a couple of months ago. And I'll let him and Senator -- Leader Schumer speak to that. And he was repeatedly pushed and asked, "Would you go higher than 1.5? Would you go higher than 1.5?" I will leave it to all of you to determine if he answered that question.

But this is an ongoing discussion, an ongoing negotiation. And as I said yesterday, that's going to require all sides giving a little, and we're in the midst of that right now.

Q So on that -- so, key Democratic House leaders have said they will, quote, "stay here all weekend" to work to get a deal. Does the President plan to do the same? Will he be at the White House working this weekend, having visitors, calling and hosting congressional lawmakers?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as Speaker Pelosi said earlier -- and we're following the same motto -- we're taking it hour by hour here and making a decision and determination about what's most needed.

So, as it relates to what's even going to happen this afternoon, we're open; he's available. He's been making calls this morning. He's open to having visitors. He's open to going places. But we're going to make those decisions hour by hour.

So, the weekend is a little bit away, but I will tell you that this is the President's top priority right now: getting relief to the

American people; making sure we're lowering costs for the American people; we're addressing the climate crisis; we're rebuilding our roads, rails, and bridges. We've made progress, and we're still at work at it.

Q All right. And last one from me. One of the President's central promises when he was elected was to restore Americans' ability to be confident in their government again, to believe in institutions again. What is the White House's message to Americans right now who look at this and see a mess? Nearly a government shutdown, the debt ceiling is unclear, legislation not being passed, at least not yet, even though Democrats control all the bodies of government. And those Americans don't feel that they can be confident in government.

What's the White House's response?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say: The President, the Speaker of the House, and the Leader have more experience getting legislation across the finish line than any group of Democrat -- Democratic leaders in history.

We're in the middle of it right now. It's messy, this sausage-making, on Capitol Hill. Policymaking is messy. There's negotiations. They all have representatives who are advocating for their points of view. That's democracy in action.

What I can tell them is that we're on the path to keep the government open. You just saw that pass the Senate. It was going over to the House. That's not just keeping the government open, that's getting relief to make sure we can -- we can take care of refugees, people who fought by our side in Afghanistan; that's to make sure we get relief to the Gulf Coast -- additional relief to the Gulf Coast. All important priorities.

And we would also tell them that the President is going to stop at -- he's going to use every lever at his disposal to fight to get this legislation passed -- these two pieces of legislation -- that will have a historic -- make historic investments. And he's doing it because he wants to have an impact on their lives.

But these type of packages, not a lot of precedent for them, but he's going to work at it. He's going to get it done. That's what he would tell them.

Go ahead.

Q Does the President see any strategic value in a vote failing on the House floor?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as Speaker Pelosi said earlier today, we're on a path to win. I don't want to even consider any other options than that. We're in it to win it. The President is also in it to win it. That's what we're working toward. It's only 2:40 right now; lots of time left in the day. And he's going to continue to engage -- stay closely engaged with her about the path forward.

Q You've repeatedly referred to this week -- to this moment as an "inflection point." How is the President viewing this moment, given where his caucuses are and where his members are?

MS. PSAKI: This moment as in "this moment" -- 2:40 p.m. this afternoon -- or just today?

Q As in it's deadline day for an infrastructure bill; he doesn't have the votes. One member of the United States Senate is about \$2 trillion below his topline number, and there's no clear way to bridge those gaps.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think the President views this as the last several days and even longer than that. His view is we've made some progress. You've seen some members come down. You've seen some members come up. You've seen active negotiations. He's obviously been hard at work at them himself.

And what we clearly see is an agreement about the need to get this done, whether it's the infrastructure bill or the reconciliation practice -- package, which has key priorities for the President -- key priorities. I think the Speaker referred

to it earlier today as the cause of her -- as her public li- -- as her time in public life. That's a bit of a paraphrase. I'll leave you to her words.

So, look, he sees this moment -- he knew that as we got closer to self-imposed timelines, which are important -- often these timelines can help make progress; we've seen progress made -- that more members would be out there advocating for what was important to them. That's happening.

We saw -- we would hopefully see more willingness to compromise; that's happening too. We're hard at work. And he's been through this before, so he's not too thrown off his game on it.

Q And then just one quick last one. Do you guys see a possibility of some type of framework agreement that could unlock the infrastructure vote today?

MS. PSAKI: That's what we're working towards.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. You talked about "self-imposed timelines" as opposed to the other real timelines for debt ceiling and the CR. The progressives don't seem to feel any sense of urgency about passing infrastructure, and the moderates, like Manchin, don't seem to feel any urgency about passing reconciliation. The only Democrat that I can think of who really has a sense of urgency is Terry McAuliffe.

Do you feel it -- does the President want this done in a certain amount of time, or does he also feel that this could play out over weeks and months and still come to the conclusion that he wants?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as I said a little bit earlier, we know -- and the President knows from his time in public office -- that timelines can help make progress. That's often how legislating happens on the Hill. And as the Speaker --

Q These ones aren't.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we would -- we would disagree with that. You've seen a lot of members out there advocating for their viewpoints, being very vocal about what they want to see; some coming up, some coming down. That's a sense of progress. And we're working at it hour by hour here.

Q But does he have -- does he feel that he needs it done by a certain time, like the end of the year?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to set new deadlines here for you. Obviously, we're trying to get it done now. We're working on it as of right now, today, and that's what our focus is on in this moment.

Go ahead. I'll go back to you, Weijia. Go ahead.

Q It's all right.

Q To follow up a little on what Phil was asking --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- what does the President want and what is he asking members of Congress to do on this infrastructure vote tonight? Is he calling progressives, and Republicans even, asking them to vote for it? Does he definitely want this vote tonight? Or is this all still this murky -- sort of trying to link these two things together and hope something emerges out of that?

MS. PSAKI: There's nothing really murky about what's going on here. I mean, we understand what progressive members

want. Right? They've been out there vocally talking to all of you about what they want.

It's clear we also need their votes in order to pass an infrastructure bill. They want to have a clear path forward on a reconciliation package. The President wants both pieces of legislation to pass. That's what he wants, bottom line. He's also going to work with the Speaker and the Leader to get that done.

So, what he's been spending his time on over the last couple of days is that -- having conversations with Senator Manchin, Senator Sinema, and others who have been very vocal about the fact that they're not quite there yet. And his objective is to try to get them there because that's what members of the Progressive Caucus are looking for in order to support an infrastructure bill, many compo- -- of components of which they support.

Q I guess, to put a finer point on it: If your choice is between a vote tonight that fails but sort of puts everybody on the record, or pulling the vote tonight and continuing deliberations despite it potentially upsetting moderates who feel like they've been promised this vote, what does the President prefer?

MS. PSAKI: We're working towards winning a vote tonight. We have several hours left in the day.

Q All right. Last one. What's the plan on the debt ceiling? I mean, Republicans have sort of made clear that they're not going to back any efforts. So it would seem at this point that Democrats' only hope here is to turn towards a reconciliation process on the debt ceiling.

I understand that you've made the point many times that Mitch McConnell is being hypocritical on this, that Republicans should support it, but it does seem now that the votes are on the table, that you're kind of pursuing this political point at the potential risk of default for the U.S. economy.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think that's a bit of a shorthand of what's happening, which I understand; it's a bit of a complicated thing.

But first, since you gave me the opportunity, it's not just Senator McConnell; Republicans are playing politics with an economic catastrophe, and they're treating a calamity for working families like a D.C. game. There are huge impacts here.

You touched on the fact, but let me give the public a little sense of that: an instant recession, 6 million jobs lost, \$15 trillion in savings wiped out, Social Security checks and payments to our troops blocked. Those are real impacts.

Republicans in Congress are treating this like a game. Let me give you some examples. Senator Rick Scott -- and this is a real quote, I will note: "This is going to be a...ball. I'm going to have so much fun." That's about the debt limit.

Senator Kevin Kramer: "It's sort of fun to watch."

And Senator Cornyn said yesterday that Republicans would use every tool at their disposal to slow Democrats from doing this on their own.

What we're trying to do right now is do it on their own -- do it on our own. That is what Leader Schumer is working to proceed -- working to move forward on.

And, obviously, as you know, Republicans have blocked that effort. So, of course, we are going to continue to press. We're not going to let up on that, on Republicans, to do what's responsible, to protect the full faith and credit of the United States, as has been done 80 times in the past.

We've also been working to do it on our own. We're going to keep working with Leader Schumer to get that done.

Q But you're not going to ask for reconcil- -- Democrats to push on reconciliation, (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to get into additional mechanisms here. We're going to continue. I don't think -- we're not going to, nor should anyone, let Republicans off the hook here, so we're going to continue to press them on it.

Q One of the things that Senator Manchin said today was that the, kind of -- the concern that he has around the 3.5 number is about how it would impact inflation in the economy. And I'm curious what the White House thinks of that concern and what you've done to allay that concern.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we've conveyed privately what we've said publicly and what many, many economists have also conveyed publicly, which is that what these packages will do is they will address -- address inflation and costs over the long term. That's one of the core reasons that people should be supporting them. So, if you are concerned about inflation, that's exactly a reason you should support these packages.

Q And would the President sign a reconciliation bill that does not include negotiating on drug prices?

MS. PSAKI: The President has obviously proposed that. He feels strongly about the need to make drugs -- prescription drugs, I should say, more affordable to the American public. I'm not going to negotiate further from here.

Q One other thing, just on a different topic: Jake Sullivan's conversations in Saudi Arabia. Did rising oil prices come up in those conversations? What was his message to the Saudis about alleviating some of the concerns that people have as they're paying a dollar more for gasoline now than they did a year ago?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, so, I know someone asked about this the other day. And, obviously, the focus of his trip was on Yemen and working with the Saudis on Yemen. And our -- Tim Lenderki -- Lenderking was -- joined him in those meetings, who's our envoy to Yemen, to kind of figure out the path forward.

He was -- obviously, the price of oil is of concern. We have been in touch with OPEC. And I believe it was going to be raised, but I haven't had a chance to get a readout beyond that. I can try to do that for you after the briefing.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. So, putting the topline number aside, Senators Manchin and Sinema have been very opaque about what it is they want and do not want in this reconciliation bill. Without revealing details, does the White House and the President have a clear understanding of what it is each one of them wants?

MS. PSAKI: We've had a lot of private conversations with both of the senators about what their priorities are, as they've said publicly. And I think as Senator Manchin said publicly today, what their priorities are and what that looks like in a final package, that's still an ongoing discussion.

Q Are they asking for the same things? Are the two of them on board with the same (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: I'll let them speak for their priorities and how they line up with each other.

Q Okay. And then to build on what Justin was asking about --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- decoupling these two.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Is the President worried at all about eroding trust with Republicans who signed on to the bipartisan deal after he

reassured them that it would not be conditional on reconciliation?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let's remember what's actually going on on the Hill here. Republicans in the House, led by Kevin McCarthy, are opting to vote against rebuilding roads and railways and bridges, despite the fact that the package was sent over with the support of 69 senators.

So, I think if you're asking about trust or whether people are delivering for the American people, you should direct it at Kevin McCarthy.

Go ahead.

Q I'm asking because the progressives have made so clear that they refuse to vote on infrastructure without a vote on reconciliation first. Why doesn't the President ask them to treat them separately?

MS. PSAKI: To treat -- well, I think the --

Q To treat the two bills separately.

MS. PSAKI: The President has made clear both are his priorities. He's also made clear he wants to get them both across the finish line.

What we're talking about now is the legislative process and how you get the majority of votes to get both of them done. And that's what he's working to negotiate and working to unify the caucus around.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks. And just one more --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- on a separate topic.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Go ahead.

Q The National School Boards Association has sent a letter to the President asking for help from federal law enforcement agencies because of the violence and the threats that they're seeing across the country. Has the President received that request? And are you considering offering that help?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, let me say we take the security of public servants and elected officials across the country very seriously. And, obviously, these threats to school board members is horrible. They're doing their jobs.

Obviously, there are going to be different law enforcement authorities that will be related to each community and -- where this is happening, so we'd certainly refer you to them about any specific threats. And we'd encourage individuals to report any threats they face to local and state law enforcement agencies. And we're continuing to explore what more can be done from across the administration.

But again, a lot of this will be local law enforcement and how they can help ensure these school board members feel protected.

Q Thanks.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. Has the President at all lost control of his party? Depending on which perspective you're looking at this from -- you know, some people say that it appears that progressives are running the show, they're banding together and making their demands. Other people are saying it looks like Joe Manchin is playing president. So, who is in charge?

MS. PSAKI: Well, this is how democracy works. I know it feels foreign because there wasn't much that happened over the last couple of years. But how it works is the American people elect their elected officials, the President of the United States puts forward a bold and ambitious proposal, and then everybody negotiates about it, and they have different points of view. That's how democracy should work. We're in the midst of it right now. We're not trying to paint over how messy it looks from the outside. We know that.

But what -- the good news is, is that there is agreement that -- among most Democrats, if not every single one of them, that we need to get something done; that we need to do more to rebuild our roads and railways and bridges; that we need to cut costs for the American people; we need to address the climate crisis. There's agreement on that.

Now we're in the nitty-gritty details, which is very important, but that's the end stage of this process. And the American people should know that that's what the President is working on.

Q And I want to follow up on Weijia's question. So, if the bipartisan bill fails or is stalled or doesn't happen today, it would appear that these two bills -- the reconciliation and the infrastructure -- are linked. And the President, you know, made statements that Republicans should be able to vote for the bipartisan bill on its merits. He stood in front of the White House with a group of Republicans who negotiated that infrastructure bill. Is there a message that he has to those Republican senators, who voted to pass that bill on its merits, that this bill is somehow not linked with the reconciliation because of what's happening in the House?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we're working towards victory here and a win. If it doesn't pass, it's because it doesn't have enough votes. I think Republicans in the Senate understand that and know how this process works.

But that's what we're working towards now. That's what the President has been making phone calls about. That's what we have his schedule cleared for this afternoon. And I'm not going to make a prediction of what the outcome will look like several hours from now.

Q And then with the Vice President -- and she was a senator as recently as this year --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- why isn't she on the Hill helping to broker this deal?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the Vice President had the CBC over, the CHC last week. She's been making calls herself, just like the President. If it's constructive for her to go to the Hill or for him to go to the Hill, to have members down here, they'll do that.

We're ready and willing. This is our top priority. All hands on deck. But a lot of what's happening right now is discussions at a staff level, a senior staff level to get through these intricate details, and that's where the focus is in this moment.

Go ahead, Kelly.

Q Since we haven't seen the President much publicly this week --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- and you talked about leaving room in his schedule, can you paint more of a picture of what's happening behind the scenes? Are there calls happening from the Oval Office inviting members to the President? Does he have scheduled meetings with

scenes? Are these calls happening from the Oval? Is he inviting guests to the Residence? Does he have a whiteboard with his own whip count? Can you give us a picture of what it looks like (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: (Laughs.) I like that visual. I would say he does not have a whiteboard with a whip count. I can assure you he's more of a paper and pen kind of guy.

But, look, he's been meeting with staff, he's been getting updates from staff as they've been having engagements with the Hill. You all know who the senior members of his team are who are negotiating, whether that's Steve Ricchetti or Louisa Terrell, Brian Deese, Susan Rice.

What he's asked his team to do is -- including the policy members, which people don't always factor this in -- is be available to have conversations with members about questions they have, to help address any parts of it they have suggestions on.

So, he's getting regular updates. People are in and out of the Oval Office providing him updates on their individual conversations. And he's picking up the phone and calling people as needed, whether that's the Speaker or Leader Schumer or other members, to have a conversation about the status, to check on where they are, to follow up on maybe a conversation they may have had with his staff.

These conversations are happening from the Oval Office, but certainly he does some from the Residence; it depends on what time of day it may be.

Q And are you running your own whip count, or are you relying on Hill resources to do that?

MS. PSAKI: We're very closely in touch, as you know, with leadership on the Hill; the President himself is. Of course, we're certainly in touch with members ourselves -- ourselves about where they stand, where they may have concerns, or any hesitations.

Go ahead. I'll come back to you, Terry. I'm sorry. Go ahead.

Q We finally learned today Senator Manchin's position on his topline number. Senator Schumer has been aware of it since late July, and Senator Manchin said that he told the President already this \$1.5 trillion number. Why has the decision been made strategically to pursue Senator Manchin, Senator Sinema, and not try to, within the last couple of weeks, apply more pressure on progressives to take half a loaf and say, "This is low-hanging fruit; it's a \$1.2 trillion infrastructure plan. Let's move on that"? Why was that strategic decision made not to do that?

MS. PSAKI: Both of these are huge priorities to the President. I'd also note that when Senator Manchin was asked -- and he can obviously speak for himself -- but just since I've read the whole transcript here, he also repeatedly referred back to a document that went back to July 28th. I'd remind you all that this is an active negotiation and discussion, and it is incumbent upon members to put out where they stand and where they are. And as we've seen over the past couple days, that's an everchanging process.

So, before you make conclusions about what the end results will be, I would remind you to look at the last several days or even weeks about how these discussions have progressed.

Q But Senator Manchin said today he believes his position is -- it sounded to me like his position was firm. And he also said that if progressives feel that the Congress should spend \$3.5 trillion, that they should convince voters to send more progressives to Washington. That sounded to me like he's saying that, through the end of this Congress, he's not going to agree to \$3.5 trillion.

MS. PSAKI: We could certainly parse Senator Manchin's words, but I am certain he'll go answer questions again, and your colleagues should ask him more questions.

Q But why do you think that this is not -- why do you think that Senator Manchin's position on this is not final?

MS. PSAKI: Because this is an active negotiation, because he was pushed repeatedly during the gaggle that he did on Capitol Hill about where he stood. But again, I'm not here to speak for Senator Manchin; he is -- certainly can speak for himself and what his points of view -- views are. And I certainly encourage you all to keep asking him questions about where he stands.

Go ahead.

Q Back on the deadline that was set at the beginning of the week -- announced at -- this is a big week: Democrats are in charge here at the White House and in both houses of Congress. And they set the deadline; Democrats set the deadline. Now they --

MS. PSAKI: To be clear, they just set the date of a vote.

Q All right. You called it a "deadline." I was just using your words.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Fair. But -- thank you for the clarification. It's -- they set the time of a vote.

Q All right. Democrats set this vote. Now they're going to miss it, fail to make it. Why is it that --

MS. PSAKI: We don't know that. It's only three o'clock.

Q Can you tell us if they're going to vote tonight?

MS. PSAKI: That's what Speaker Pelosi indicated her plan was.

Q All right. My question is: Why isn't it fair to see this as a failure of the President to get his own party to back him and his agenda?

MS. PSAKI: Why isn't it, before we've even had a vote and we don't even know where it sits, a failure of the President?

Q It feels like we're farther away today than we were on Monday.

MS. PSAKI: I don't think the President feels that way, and I don't think members of Congress feel that way.

Q You've talked about progress. Can you explain what progress is? You said it's people talking about where they are.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q That sounds like -- that sounds like an earlier part of the process when you had set a vote for the end of the week.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would point you again to what Speaker Pelosi said earlier today: In the end stages, the later stages of a process -- where we are now -- when you get closer to a vote, a time of a vote being set, that's when the negotiations get serious. That's when people start putting down bottom lines of where they stand. You've seen some people do that publicly. A lot more of it happens behind the scenes. That's what I mean by progress.

You've seen members come down in numbers. You've seen members come up in numbers. That's what we're working on -- to get to an agreed-upon path forward.

Q So there's progress, and it's people behind the scenes saying that -- where their numbers move.

MS. PSAKI: They've also said it publicly.

Q One more. A lot of Democrats are looking at what's happening, and they're saying Senator Manchin and Senator Sinema are holding this President and his agenda hostage. What would you say to that?

MS. PSAKI: I would say we have 50 votes in the Senate -- 50 Democrats in the Senate. So, we need the majority to win. That's how a bill becomes a law.

Q They've got the leverage.

MS. PSAKI: We need all 50 votes in the Senate to move this forward. That's where we stand now.

Go ahead.

Q I just wanted to go back to the debt ceiling for a second.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Democrats control all branches of government right now. Can you assure the American people and the financial markets that the United States will not default on its debt?

MS. PSAKI: That is absolutely what we're trying to accomplish. And I'd remind you that we would have gotten that done had Republicans done what they've done 80 times before -- supporting a bipartisan vote to do something that has been pretty standard in the past -- or if they had allowed Leader Schumer to move forward.

But, absolutely, we're going to do everything to prevent the federal -- us from defaulting --

Q But does the plan involve changing Mitch McConnell's mind -- Leader McConnell's mind in some way? Or is there a plan to just go forward using either reconciliation or --

MS. PSAKI: Well, Leader Schumer has already tried to -- already been working to move things forward. And it's been blocked by Republicans -- not just their vote; an effort to move it forward has been blocked.

Q But there clearly are ways -- I mean, getting rid of the filibuster, for example, for this particular vote would be one way to move forward. And is that something that the President would consider to avoid losing, let's say, 10 percent of the value of the stock market?

MS. PSAKI: I just outlined how concerning we are -- how concerned we are, which you just echoed -- or echoed different components of it. And that's an issue we take incredibly seriously. You've also heard Secretary Yellen on the Hill talking about this. We're not going to let Republicans off the hook. We don't think they should be. This is not a game. This is the faith -- full faith and credit of the United States.

We're working with Leader Schumer on a path forward, but beyond that, I don't have more to preview for you.

Q But you can do it without Republicans if you got rid of the filibuster for this --

MS. PSAKI: We could do it if they let us move forward, and they haven't. So I have no more details on the pa- -- on the legislative process.

Q And just on the reconciliation package, is \$1.5 trillion enough in your spending to cover Biden's priorities -- the President's priorities?

MS. PSAKI: I understand that's a number that's been put out there. It's an active negotiation. I'm not going to weigh in from here on what is or isn't acceptable to the Democratic Caucus.

Go ahead.

Q A couple different topics. So, on immigration, there seems to be a real sense among advocates for immigrants -- people who have been fighting for legalization, for a pathway to citizenship -- there's a real sense of doom; people who described this, yesterday, even crying about the latest parliamentary ruling.

Do you -- what does the President -- you know, what would the President say or what does the President say if that -- if he is unable to move forward on any of the, sort of, big, sweeping promises that he made as a candidate to get -- to finally be the President to get something done on immigration?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we don't accept that. We're nine months into his presidency. And we share the disappointment. Obviously, as you know and you touched on, the parliamentarian ruled twice, in different ways, that it could be included in the reconciliation package -- or components, I should say, of immigration reform could not be included in the reconciliation practice -- process. Sorry, package.

That's disappointing to the President as well. So, clearly, now we need to figure out what the vehicle forward is.

I would say the President's plan is about certainly protecting DREAMers, farm workers, and others. It's also about investing in border security, making sure it makes sense and we're investing in it in a way that makes sense, and creating an asylum processing system that is actually functional, which I think we all agree it's not.

So there are several components of what he's proposed, and, certainly, we share the disappointment of many advocates that this wasn't included and the desire to find a vehicle to move it forward.

Q On one other separate topic: There have been a number of issues in the last, say, several weeks in which advocates -- allies of the President are describing him as "Trump-like." Most -- less in terms of his personality and sort of tone and tenor, obviously, but in terms of policy. Even today, a representative of the Cuban government describing the frustration with the President continuing to maintain Trump-era policies vis-à-vis Cuba.

Does the -- what's the President's reaction? And does he accept that in some areas of policy he is, you know, in agreement with the former President?

MS. PSAKI: So, just for the sake of argument here -- not argument, but discussion -- beyond the representative of the Cuban government who --

Q Afghanistan, immigration --

MS. PSAKI: Well, but who? Who are we talking about here?

Q Who --

MS. PSAKI: Who is saying that the President is like Trump?

Q Oh, I mean there -- there -- I mean, I could find you quotes. We have -- there have been quotes in our paper and quotes in lots of -- lots of folks have, depending on the issue, whether they are immigration advocates or, you know, folks in the Afghanistan -- who sort of watch Afghanistan. There have been numerous on-the-record descriptions of the President embracing -- and it's actually, in some ways, just a factual thing, right?

MS. PSAKI: But like on what policy?

Q Like the President has --

MS. PSAKI: On what policy? Sorry, I didn't -- you can -- you can name people but -- or what specific policies.

Q Well, I mean, for example, Afghanistan would have been the maintaining of the former President's decision to withdraw troops. On immigration, it's in maintaining Title 42 and keeping Title 42 in place. I mean they're --

Q Sub- --

Q Hm?

Q Submarines.

Q The submarine -- yeah. (Laughter.)

MS. PSAKI: Which one?

Q The submarine -- I'm just --

Q Yeah, the --

Q AUKUS.

Q The President was --

Q AUKUS.

Q -- yeah -- was compared to Trump --

Q -- to Trump. Well, the -- that's the French -- the French Foreign Minister compared him to Trump, in terms of how he handled the AUKUS negotiations.

MS. PSAKI: So, look, I'd take each one of these: On Afghanistan, the former President struck a deal without the Afghan government that, we heard the military convey yesterday, led to the demoralization of the Afghan Security Forces and the Afghan government, where he also released 5,000 Taliban fighters into Afghanistan.

I would say the President took a pretty different approach than that in ending a war that the former President didn't end -- something the American people strongly support.

As it relates to AUKUS, I'm not even sure what that's referring to, in terms of what they're comparing. The President worked with key partners -- Australia and the United Kingdom -- to come to an agreement that would help provide security in an important part of the world -- in the Indo-Pacific -- a priority that, frankly, getting out of the war in Afghanistan leaves space for us to spend more time addressing.

What was the last one? Immigration?

Q Immigration, Title 42, tariffs on China. I mean, there's --

MS. PSAKI: Title 42 is a public health -- is a public health requirement, a public health -- because we're in the middle of a pandemic, which, by the way --

Q The President and his allies --

MS. PSAKI: -- we would have made progress on had the former President actually addressed --

Q Right, but the --

MS. PSAKI: -- the pandemic and not suggested people inject bleach.

So, I think we're in a bit of a different place. I'm happy to discuss more examples. I think it's -- people would be pretty hard pressed to argue that the President has taken any aspect of the former President's playbook and used it as a model of his own.

Q Okay. Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Senator Manchin has also said that he wants to means test as much as possible of this reconciliation package. Without getting into or speaking for the senator, as you've said, what is the White House's position on, I guess, means testing in this package?

MS. PSAKI: Well, you can call it whatever you want. Sometimes means -- when you say "means testing" -- not you, but when -- when it's said, it sometimes has it not the right connotation or the wrong connotation.

The President's proposals, many of them have been targeted at the middle class, as have these proposals and these initiatives, which means there's a cap on income through which you can benefit. That's what -- you can call it whatever you want, if you call it "means testing." The President is very open to targeting, by income, many of his proposals. And that's something that you can see throughout many components of his agenda that have been proposed and many that have passed to date.

Q Does the White House believe that you all are currently in alignment with Manchin on what those thresholds would look like or --

MS. PSAKI: It's an ongoing discussion. But, again, our objective is to -- is to target and focus on bringing relief to the middle class. That's what the President wants to see this agenda accomplish.

Q In an op-ed for USA Today this morning, Senator Bernie Sanders defended the \$3.5 trillion price tag, asking, "Please tell me what [where] we should cut." This came out before Senator Manchin gave his line in the sand.

Does -- without speaking for either senator, does the White House believe that there's any provisions that, if we are talking about getting somewhere between 3.5 and 1.5, that are absolutely -- you all cannot stomach not having them in the final package?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to put anything on the table here. It's clear, as numbers come down, which they will, that there will be cuts to different components. That's just the nature of the totals here. But we'll leave those conversations private. I know you're eager [sic] -- eager to know more, and hopefully we'll have more to share soon.

Q And then just finally -- just one more point. As you all have said from here, the public -- public polling has consistently found that many parts of this -- of both packages are very supported by the American people. The American people are also very consistently pessimistic about action in Washington.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Ahead of what we're going to be seeing, whichever way this vote goes tonight, what is your message to the public as they look at the ongoing situation in Washington about -- what is your message to the American people as they look at, as you've said, a messy situation, the chaos of democracy?

MS. PSAKI: We hope we can prove them wrong.

Q Okay.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead, Karen.

Q Thanks, Jen. I know "hour by hour" is kind of the phrase of the day.

MS. PSAKI: (Laughs.) Yeah.

Q But given that, can we expect to hear from the President today? Or what would have to happen for us to hear from the President today?

MS. PSAKI: We'll see. I can't make a prediction for you now, but it is certainly possible. It's also possible he has more meetings. He'll certainly make more phone calls, possibly moves. But I don't have anything to predict for you at this point in time.

Q And, last night, he went to the congressional baseball game. Did he go specifically to do some arm twisting or lobbying on infrastructure? And he spent some time with Republican lawmakers -- something he really hasn't done here at the White House. Can you give us a sense of what he talked about with those Republican lawmakers? What was the interaction like, the tone of those conversations?

MS. PSAKI: I think you're undervaluing his baseball prowess -- (laughter) -- and history, which he was honored for last night.

No, look, I think what the President -- and I saw him this morning; he was reflecting on how it was -- and I think this is a tradition -- the Congressional Baseball Game. You know, it's something that has been around for some time, where Democrats and Republicans go participate in America's -- one of America's favorite pastimes.

And you saw -- I think you all saw in photos, but for people who didn't see -- he visited with some Republicans down in their area -- dugout?

Q Dugout.

MS. PSAKI: I don't even know it's called. (Laughter.) Okay, dugout. Help me out here. Thank you. He visited -- (laughs) -- with some -- my husband is going to be really mad about that.

He visited with some Republicans. You know, he wasn't -- it wasn't meant to be a negotiation; it was a discussion about, you know, how things are going and work we're all committed to and just saying hello to them. And sometimes, you know, that's important and powerful too at a time where there's been so much division, where there's a view from many in the public -- as per the question earlier -- that people can't work together, can't get things done.

And this was an opportunity to have a moment to visit with, to see people that you've known be -- you've known a long time, to meet new people, and to move beyond partisanship to celebrate one of America's favorite pastimes.

Q Did he have a response to you about getting booed last night? Any reaction to that?

MS. PSAKI: He's been in public life long enough to know there's going to be some yays and jeers in most big, public places.

Go ahead.

Q Can I just follow up on that? Is -- in some ways, does his visit and the rituals of getting together sort of prove the point that the face time doesn't work? I mean, you still -- you referred to Leader McConnell and the Republican Party not willing to raise the debt limit. He's had plenty of face time with Leader McConnell for decades. Maybe it just doesn't matter and people are going to do what their political interests or what they believe their political interests tells them to do?

MS. PSAKI: Well, this is how the President views it: You're going to have strong disagreements, as he does with Senator McConnell about how he's approached the debt limit. You're also going to have areas where you may come to agreement on, as they do on infrastructure and the importance of rebuilding our roads, our railways, and our bridges. And it's important to maintain lines of communication and discussion to figure out where you can work together.

That's also how he views and approaches diplomacy. We can call out and -- publicly and argue strongly privately issues we have with foreign governments. But we also sometimes still look for ways -- most of the time -- for ways to work together.

That's been his approach. I would say that given the infrastructure bill passed with 69 votes, that's evidence of it working.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. You mentioned at the top that on September 17th the President signed an executive order authorizing sanctions to be used against those undermining peace in Ethiopia.

But right now, it doesn't seem the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Abiy Ahmed, is interested in peace. He refused to meet with Samantha Power when she was there. He has -- he is expelling U.N. staff from the country. He's taken other steps that prove that he has no interest in peace.

Why not take the sanction now? Why not impose the sanction now, or take more drastic action against not just him but also the President of Eritrea, who still have troops inside Ethiopia?

MS. PSAKI: Well, absent clear and concrete changes, we will. We're preparing to take aggressive action under this executive order to impose targeted sanctions against a range of individuals and entities. What we're communicating to the parties on the ground is that we must see meaningful steps within weeks to initiate discussions to achieve a negotiated ceasefire, allow in an unhindered humanitarian access, and ensure respect for human rights. Absent significant progress, we'll take action. And we have the methods to do that. That's why I rec- -- talked about the executive order.

Q And then on Guinea, we've had so many coups in Africa. The President of Guinea has been overthrown. The President of Mali has been overthrown. And we just had the Prime Minister of Sudan who just survived a coup attempt. And the President promised to defend democracy around the world. Is he failing in that promise?

MS. PSAKI: He doesn't expect that to be accomplished in nine months. He expects that to be accomplished over the course of time for advocating for democracy, for human rights, for imposing steps when warranted, and -- as we are considering right now in Ethiopia -- and obviously by having a strong national security team that can convey this on his behalf when he cannot.

Go ahead.

Q I just have a question on Africa.

Q Thanks, Jen. On --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead. I'll come back to you next.

Q Thanks, Jen. Just to follow up on Mike's question on what the Cuban foreign minister said. Just to be specific, he said, "It's a pity that President Biden couldn't implement his own policy toward Cuba." And I just wondered if you had a specific response.

MS. PSAKI: I don't.

Q And there's a U.S. delegation -- top officials going to Port-au-Prince. What's the goal of that visit?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, I have some details on this, including who is going. So, let's see. So, what they're doing -- one, we feel it's pretty pivotal to have high-level officials from here engaged in traveling back and forth to Port-au-Prince to have discussions with actors across the political spectrum to see what we can do to help support dialogue and development for the Haitian people.

We know it's clearly a profoundly challenging time on the ground, and it's crucial that we meet with a range of stakeholders to help move this process forward or help support the process moving forward in a way that's in the interest of the Haitian people. So, this is really an effort to be engaged, to be on the ground.

I can tell you -- and you may know this already -- that our newly confirmed Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere, Brian Nichols, is on this as a part of this delegation; our NSC Senior Director for the Western Hemisphere, Juan Gonzales, are there. They're meeting with civil society groups, political stakeholders, the Haitian government. And they're, of course, as I noted, discussing a Haitian-led process charting the path to democratic elections.

But that's the focus, as well as discussing how we can continue to help provide support for the migration response, security, recovery from the earthquake, and the COVID pandemic.

Q Jen, last question.

Q Secretary Mayorkas had said he expected the results of an investigation on the Border Patrol officers --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- on horseback by the end of this week. What's the status of that investigation?

MS. PSAKI: I know he said that; as I understand, it's still on track. But I would really point you to the Department of Homeland Security on any update.

Brian, why don't we go to you last?

Q Yeah, thank you.

Q Oh, you said --

Q Thank you very much. And I appreciate it. I'm -- I wanted to ask what the President's reaction is to Democratic lawmakers calling on him to lean more on Senator Manchin and Senator Sinema. What is the President's reaction to that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, first, the President's reaction is -- he's been in the -- he was in the Senate for 36 years. He knows, as does Speaker Pelosi, Leader Schumer, what it takes at this point in negotiations. They've probably done this more, and more successfully, than any combinations of Democratic leaders in history.

And his approach has been: Yes, of course, it's listening. Yes, of course, it's conveying viewpoints and having sometimes, you know, direct and candid discussions, but he knows how to do this.

And a lot of people who are throwing stones aren't a part of these negotiations. They're one on one. So, I think they should leave it to him and others to get them done.

Q But there are members of his party that want him to be more actively involved, and have come out publicly and said, "We want to see the President more actively involved." What's his response to that?

MS. PSAKI: I would say that -- as I would point to something Congresswoman Jayapal said yesterday, "Right now, it's not a secret about what is the holdup." The holdup is that we need to get 50 votes in the Senate to move the infrastructure, to move the reconciliation package forward, in order for members of the Progressive Caucus in the house to feel comfortable that there's a path forward.

As many of them have conveyed, the President's role and work in communicating with Senator Manchin and Senator Sinema to help get that done is probably one of the most constructive roles he can play. And that's what he's been focused on over the last few days.

Q My follow-up question, Jen?

MS. PSAKI: Thanks so much, everyone.

Okay, last one, because I promised you. Go ahead.

Q Thank you. Jen, the President of Angola -- President João Lourenço -- was in D.C. last week, and he met with Jake Sullivan and Madam Speaker of the House. And I just want to check with you if the President made any comment about this visit, because Jake Sullivan, on the day that he met my president, he said he would brief the President on that day. So, I don't -- I'm trying to check with you if you heard any comments from the President (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any additional comment. I think we put a readout out about Jake Sullivan's meeting, but I don't have any additional comments.

Thanks so much, everyone.

3:19 P.M. EDT

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To: Hornbuckle, Wyn (PAO)
Sent: September 30, 2021 5:59 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 30, 2021

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, September 30, 2021

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

2:34 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Okay. Welcome back, Dr. Harper.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. I'm breaking my streak. I do have some items at the top for all of you. Lots going on in the world.

The U.S. government condemns in the strongest possible terms the government of Ethiopia's unprecedented action to expel the leadership of all of the United Nations organizations involved in ongoing humanitarian operations. We agree with U.N. leaders: This is a stain on our collective conscience and it must stop.

The action follows the release of reports warning that hundreds of thousands of people are starving to death in northern Ethiopia. We're deeply concerned that this action continues a pattern by the Ethiopian government of obstructing the delivery of food, medicine, and other lifesaving supplies that most -- to those most in need.

We call on the U.N. Security Council and members of the international community to take urgent action to make clear to the government of Ethiopia that impeding humanitarian operations and depriving your own citizens of the basic means of survival is unacceptable.

President Biden signed an executive order, earlier this month, enabling the U.S. government to impose financial sanctions

on those prolonging the conflict in northern Ethiopia. We will not hesitate to use this or any other tool at our disposal to respond quickly and decisively to those who obstruct humanitarian assistance to the people of Ethiopia.

One more items -- one more item. Some news from -- out of the First Lady's office: Today, Joining Forces -- the White House initiative led by the First Lady to support military families -- and the National Security Council released a White House report, signed by the President and Secretaries of 15 executive departments, which outlines the first round of administration-wide commitments and proposals to supporting military and veteran families, caregivers, and survivors.

In May of 2021, the Office of the First Lady and the National Security Council launched a Joining Forces Interagency Policy Committee with representatives from across the executive agencies to work collaboratively on priorities related to the families of service members and veterans, caregivers, and survivors.

This report details more than 800 -- 80, sorry -- specific commitments and proposals from across the administration and is the product of the Interagency Policy Committee's months of work.

Going forward, this committee will continue to advance these priorities, including those outlined in the report, through cross-agency working groups and will report results and updated plans annually.

Jonathan, why don't you kick us off.

Q Thank you, Jen. A few -- all on the dealings at Capitol Hill right now. Senator Manchin told reporters a short time ago that he told President Biden that \$1.5 trillion would be as high as he was willing to go for the reconciliation package. What was the President's reaction to that? Is that an acceptable number?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say, as we've said many times, we're not going to outline private negotiations or private discussions, and we'll let the senators speak for that, as Senator Manchin did earlier today. The way the President sees it is that this is an ongoing discussion, an ongoing negotiation.

Here's what we know: We know that timelines help make progress. We've seen that play out over the course of the last couple of days. We know that compromise is inevitable. We've also seen that play out over the last couple of days. And right now, we're clearly in the thick of it.

I'd also note that during his -- during Senator Manchin's -- and obviously, I'm not his spokesperson; he can certainly speak for himself -- but during his Q&A he did on the Hill today, he also referenced the fact that he -- that there was a document from a couple of months ago. And I'll let him and Senator -- Leader Schumer speak to that. And he was repeatedly pushed and asked, "Would you go higher than 1.5? Would you go higher than 1.5?" I will leave it to all of you to determine if he answered that question.

But this is an ongoing discussion, an ongoing negotiation. And as I said yesterday, that's going to require all sides giving a little, and we're in the midst of that right now.

Q So on that -- so, key Democratic House leaders have said they will, quote, "stay here all weekend" to work to get a deal. Does the President plan to do the same? Will he be at the White House working this weekend, having visitors, calling and hosting congressional lawmakers?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as Speaker Pelosi said earlier -- and we're following the same motto -- we're taking it hour by hour here and making a decision and determination about what's most needed.

So, as it relates to what's even going to happen this afternoon, we're open; he's available. He's been making calls this morning. He's open to having visitors. He's open to going places. But we're going to make those decisions hour by hour.

So, the weekend is a little bit away, but I will tell you that this is the President's top priority right now: getting relief to the

American people; making sure we're lowering costs for the American people; we're addressing the climate crisis; we're rebuilding our roads, rails, and bridges. We've made progress, and we're still at work at it.

Q All right. And last one from me. One of the President's central promises when he was elected was to restore Americans' ability to be confident in their government again, to believe in institutions again. What is the White House's message to Americans right now who look at this and see a mess? Nearly a government shutdown, the debt ceiling is unclear, legislation not being passed, at least not yet, even though Democrats control all the bodies of government. And those Americans don't feel that they can be confident in government.

What's the White House's response?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say: The President, the Speaker of the House, and the Leader have more experience getting legislation across the finish line than any group of Democrat -- Democratic leaders in history.

We're in the middle of it right now. It's messy, this sausage-making, on Capitol Hill. Policymaking is messy. There's negotiations. They all have representatives who are advocating for their points of view. That's democracy in action.

What I can tell them is that we're on the path to keep the government open. You just saw that pass the Senate. It was going over to the House. That's not just keeping the government open, that's getting relief to make sure we can -- we can take care of refugees, people who fought by our side in Afghanistan; that's to make sure we get relief to the Gulf Coast -- additional relief to the Gulf Coast. All important priorities.

And we would also tell them that the President is going to stop at -- he's going to use every lever at his disposal to fight to get this legislation passed -- these two pieces of legislation -- that will have a historic -- make historic investments. And he's doing it because he wants to have an impact on their lives.

But these type of packages, not a lot of precedent for them, but he's going to work at it. He's going to get it done. That's what he would tell them.

Go ahead.

Q Does the President see any strategic value in a vote failing on the House floor?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as Speaker Pelosi said earlier today, we're on a path to win. I don't want to even consider any other options than that. We're in it to win it. The President is also in it to win it. That's what we're working toward. It's only 2:40 right now; lots of time left in the day. And he's going to continue to engage -- stay closely engaged with her about the path forward.

Q You've repeatedly referred to this week -- to this moment as an "inflection point." How is the President viewing this moment, given where his caucuses are and where his members are?

MS. PSAKI: This moment as in "this moment" -- 2:40 p.m. this afternoon -- or just today?

Q As in it's deadline day for an infrastructure bill; he doesn't have the votes. One member of the United States Senate is about \$2 trillion below his topline number, and there's no clear way to bridge those gaps.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think the President views this as the last several days and even longer than that. His view is we've made some progress. You've seen some members come down. You've seen some members come up. You've seen active negotiations. He's obviously been hard at work at them himself.

And what we clearly see is an agreement about the need to get this done, whether it's the infrastructure bill or the reconciliation practice -- package, which has key priorities for the President -- key priorities. I think the Speaker referred

to it earlier today as the cause of her -- as her public li- -- as her time in public life. That's a bit of a paraphrase. I'll leave you to her words.

So, look, he sees this moment -- he knew that as we got closer to self-imposed timelines, which are important -- often these timelines can help make progress; we've seen progress made -- that more members would be out there advocating for what was important to them. That's happening.

We saw -- we would hopefully see more willingness to compromise; that's happening too. We're hard at work. And he's been through this before, so he's not too thrown off his game on it.

Q And then just one quick last one. Do you guys see a possibility of some type of framework agreement that could unlock the infrastructure vote today?

MS. PSAKI: That's what we're working towards.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. You talked about "self-imposed timelines" as opposed to the other real timelines for debt ceiling and the CR. The progressives don't seem to feel any sense of urgency about passing infrastructure, and the moderates, like Manchin, don't seem to feel any urgency about passing reconciliation. The only Democrat that I can think of who really has a sense of urgency is Terry McAuliffe.

Do you feel it -- does the President want this done in a certain amount of time, or does he also feel that this could play out over weeks and months and still come to the conclusion that he wants?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as I said a little bit earlier, we know -- and the President knows from his time in public office -- that timelines can help make progress. That's often how legislating happens on the Hill. And as the Speaker --

Q These ones aren't.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we would -- we would disagree with that. You've seen a lot of members out there advocating for their viewpoints, being very vocal about what they want to see; some coming up, some coming down. That's a sense of progress. And we're working at it hour by hour here.

Q But does he have -- does he feel that he needs it done by a certain time, like the end of the year?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to set new deadlines here for you. Obviously, we're trying to get it done now. We're working on it as of right now, today, and that's what our focus is on in this moment.

Go ahead. I'll go back to you, Weijia. Go ahead.

Q It's all right.

Q To follow up a little on what Phil was asking --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- what does the President want and what is he asking members of Congress to do on this infrastructure vote tonight? Is he calling progressives, and Republicans even, asking them to vote for it? Does he definitely want this vote tonight? Or is this all still this murky -- sort of trying to link these two things together and hope something emerges out of that?

MS. PSAKI: There's nothing really murky about what's going on here. I mean, we understand what progressive members

want. Right? They've been out there vocally talking to all of you about what they want.

It's clear we also need their votes in order to pass an infrastructure bill. They want to have a clear path forward on a reconciliation package. The President wants both pieces of legislation to pass. That's what he wants, bottom line. He's also going to work with the Speaker and the Leader to get that done.

So, what he's been spending his time on over the last couple of days is that -- having conversations with Senator Manchin, Senator Sinema, and others who have been very vocal about the fact that they're not quite there yet. And his objective is to try to get them there because that's what members of the Progressive Caucus are looking for in order to support an infrastructure bill, many compo- -- of components of which they support.

Q I guess, to put a finer point on it: If your choice is between a vote tonight that fails but sort of puts everybody on the record, or pulling the vote tonight and continuing deliberations despite it potentially upsetting moderates who feel like they've been promised this vote, what does the President prefer?

MS. PSAKI: We're working towards winning a vote tonight. We have several hours left in the day.

Q All right. Last one. What's the plan on the debt ceiling? I mean, Republicans have sort of made clear that they're not going to back any efforts. So it would seem at this point that Democrats' only hope here is to turn towards a reconciliation process on the debt ceiling.

I understand that you've made the point many times that Mitch McConnell is being hypocritical on this, that Republicans should support it, but it does seem now that the votes are on the table, that you're kind of pursuing this political point at the potential risk of default for the U.S. economy.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think that's a bit of a shorthand of what's happening, which I understand; it's a bit of a complicated thing.

But first, since you gave me the opportunity, it's not just Senator McConnell; Republicans are playing politics with an economic catastrophe, and they're treating a calamity for working families like a D.C. game. There are huge impacts here.

You touched on the fact, but let me give the public a little sense of that: an instant recession, 6 million jobs lost, \$15 trillion in savings wiped out, Social Security checks and payments to our troops blocked. Those are real impacts.

Republicans in Congress are treating this like a game. Let me give you some examples. Senator Rick Scott -- and this is a real quote, I will note: "This is going to be a...ball. I'm going to have so much fun." That's about the debt limit.

Senator Kevin Kramer: "It's sort of fun to watch."

And Senator Cornyn said yesterday that Republicans would use every tool at their disposal to slow Democrats from doing this on their own.

What we're trying to do right now is do it on their own -- do it on our own. That is what Leader Schumer is working to proceed -- working to move forward on.

And, obviously, as you know, Republicans have blocked that effort. So, of course, we are going to continue to press. We're not going to let up on that, on Republicans, to do what's responsible, to protect the full faith and credit of the United States, as has been done 80 times in the past.

We've also been working to do it on our own. We're going to keep working with Leader Schumer to get that done.

Q But you're not going to ask for reconcil- -- Democrats to push on reconciliation, (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to get into additional mechanisms here. We're going to continue. I don't think -- we're not going to, nor should anyone, let Republicans off the hook here, so we're going to continue to press them on it.

Q One of the things that Senator Manchin said today was that the, kind of -- the concern that he has around the 3.5 number is about how it would impact inflation in the economy. And I'm curious what the White House thinks of that concern and what you've done to allay that concern.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we've conveyed privately what we've said publicly and what many, many economists have also conveyed publicly, which is that what these packages will do is they will address -- address inflation and costs over the long term. That's one of the core reasons that people should be supporting them. So, if you are concerned about inflation, that's exactly a reason you should support these packages.

Q And would the President sign a reconciliation bill that does not include negotiating on drug prices?

MS. PSAKI: The President has obviously proposed that. He feels strongly about the need to make drugs -- prescription drugs, I should say, more affordable to the American public. I'm not going to negotiate further from here.

Q One other thing, just on a different topic: Jake Sullivan's conversations in Saudi Arabia. Did rising oil prices come up in those conversations? What was his message to the Saudis about alleviating some of the concerns that people have as they're paying a dollar more for gasoline now than they did a year ago?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, so, I know someone asked about this the other day. And, obviously, the focus of his trip was on Yemen and working with the Saudis on Yemen. And our -- Tim Lenderki -- Lenderking was -- joined him in those meetings, who's our envoy to Yemen, to kind of figure out the path forward.

He was -- obviously, the price of oil is of concern. We have been in touch with OPEC. And I believe it was going to be raised, but I haven't had a chance to get a readout beyond that. I can try to do that for you after the briefing.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. So, putting the topline number aside, Senators Manchin and Sinema have been very opaque about what it is they want and do not want in this reconciliation bill. Without revealing details, does the White House and the President have a clear understanding of what it is each one of them wants?

MS. PSAKI: We've had a lot of private conversations with both of the senators about what their priorities are, as they've said publicly. And I think as Senator Manchin said publicly today, what their priorities are and what that looks like in a final package, that's still an ongoing discussion.

Q Are they asking for the same things? Are the two of them on board with the same (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: I'll let them speak for their priorities and how they line up with each other.

Q Okay. And then to build on what Justin was asking about --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- decoupling these two.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Is the President worried at all about eroding trust with Republicans who signed on to the bipartisan deal after he

reassured them that it would not be conditional on reconciliation?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let's remember what's actually going on on the Hill here. Republicans in the House, led by Kevin McCarthy, are opting to vote against rebuilding roads and railways and bridges, despite the fact that the package was sent over with the support of 69 senators.

So, I think if you're asking about trust or whether people are delivering for the American people, you should direct it at Kevin McCarthy.

Go ahead.

Q I'm asking because the progressives have made so clear that they refuse to vote on infrastructure without a vote on reconciliation first. Why doesn't the President ask them to treat them separately?

MS. PSAKI: To treat -- well, I think the --

Q To treat the two bills separately.

MS. PSAKI: The President has made clear both are his priorities. He's also made clear he wants to get them both across the finish line.

What we're talking about now is the legislative process and how you get the majority of votes to get both of them done. And that's what he's working to negotiate and working to unify the caucus around.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks. And just one more --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- on a separate topic.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Go ahead.

Q The National School Boards Association has sent a letter to the President asking for help from federal law enforcement agencies because of the violence and the threats that they're seeing across the country. Has the President received that request? And are you considering offering that help?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, let me say we take the security of public servants and elected officials across the country very seriously. And, obviously, these threats to school board members is horrible. They're doing their jobs.

Obviously, there are going to be different law enforcement authorities that will be related to each community and -- where this is happening, so we'd certainly refer you to them about any specific threats. And we'd encourage individuals to report any threats they face to local and state law enforcement agencies. And we're continuing to explore what more can be done from across the administration.

But again, a lot of this will be local law enforcement and how they can help ensure these school board members feel protected.

Q Thanks.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. Has the President at all lost control of his party? Depending on which perspective you're looking at this from -- you know, some people say that it appears that progressives are running the show, they're banding together and making their demands. Other people are saying it looks like Joe Manchin is playing president. So, who is in charge?

MS. PSAKI: Well, this is how democracy works. I know it feels foreign because there wasn't much that happened over the last couple of years. But how it works is the American people elect their elected officials, the President of the United States puts forward a bold and ambitious proposal, and then everybody negotiates about it, and they have different points of view. That's how democracy should work. We're in the midst of it right now. We're not trying to paint over how messy it looks from the outside. We know that.

But what -- the good news is, is that there is agreement that -- among most Democrats, if not every single one of them, that we need to get something done; that we need to do more to rebuild our roads and railways and bridges; that we need to cut costs for the American people; we need to address the climate crisis. There's agreement on that.

Now we're in the nitty-gritty details, which is very important, but that's the end stage of this process. And the American people should know that that's what the President is working on.

Q And I want to follow up on Weijia's question. So, if the bipartisan bill fails or is stalled or doesn't happen today, it would appear that these two bills -- the reconciliation and the infrastructure -- are linked. And the President, you know, made statements that Republicans should be able to vote for the bipartisan bill on its merits. He stood in front of the White House with a group of Republicans who negotiated that infrastructure bill. Is there a message that he has to those Republican senators, who voted to pass that bill on its merits, that this bill is somehow not linked with the reconciliation because of what's happening in the House?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we're working towards victory here and a win. If it doesn't pass, it's because it doesn't have enough votes. I think Republicans in the Senate understand that and know how this process works.

But that's what we're working towards now. That's what the President has been making phone calls about. That's what we have his schedule cleared for this afternoon. And I'm not going to make a prediction of what the outcome will look like several hours from now.

Q And then with the Vice President -- and she was a senator as recently as this year --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- why isn't she on the Hill helping to broker this deal?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the Vice President had the CBC over, the CHC last week. She's been making calls herself, just like the President. If it's constructive for her to go to the Hill or for him to go to the Hill, to have members down here, they'll do that.

We're ready and willing. This is our top priority. All hands on deck. But a lot of what's happening right now is discussions at a staff level, a senior staff level to get through these intricate details, and that's where the focus is in this moment.

Go ahead, Kelly.

Q Since we haven't seen the President much publicly this week --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- and you talked about leaving room in his schedule, can you paint more of a picture of what's happening behind the scenes? Are there calls happening from the Oval Office inviting members to the President? Does he have scheduled meetings with

scenes? Are these calls happening from the Oval? Is he inviting guests to the Residence? Does he have a whiteboard with his own whip count? Can you give us a picture of what it looks like (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: (Laughs.) I like that visual. I would say he does not have a whiteboard with a whip count. I can assure you he's more of a paper and pen kind of guy.

But, look, he's been meeting with staff, he's been getting updates from staff as they've been having engagements with the Hill. You all know who the senior members of his team are who are negotiating, whether that's Steve Ricchetti or Louisa Terrell, Brian Deese, Susan Rice.

What he's asked his team to do is -- including the policy members, which people don't always factor this in -- is be available to have conversations with members about questions they have, to help address any parts of it they have suggestions on.

So, he's getting regular updates. People are in and out of the Oval Office providing him updates on their individual conversations. And he's picking up the phone and calling people as needed, whether that's the Speaker or Leader Schumer or other members, to have a conversation about the status, to check on where they are, to follow up on maybe a conversation they may have had with his staff.

These conversations are happening from the Oval Office, but certainly he does some from the Residence; it depends on what time of day it may be.

Q And are you running your own whip count, or are you relying on Hill resources to do that?

MS. PSAKI: We're very closely in touch, as you know, with leadership on the Hill; the President himself is. Of course, we're certainly in touch with members ourselves -- ourselves about where they stand, where they may have concerns, or any hesitations.

Go ahead. I'll come back to you, Terry. I'm sorry. Go ahead.

Q We finally learned today Senator Manchin's position on his topline number. Senator Schumer has been aware of it since late July, and Senator Manchin said that he told the President already this \$1.5 trillion number. Why has the decision been made strategically to pursue Senator Manchin, Senator Sinema, and not try to, within the last couple of weeks, apply more pressure on progressives to take half a loaf and say, "This is low-hanging fruit; it's a \$1.2 trillion infrastructure plan. Let's move on that"? Why was that strategic decision made not to do that?

MS. PSAKI: Both of these are huge priorities to the President. I'd also note that when Senator Manchin was asked -- and he can obviously speak for himself -- but just since I've read the whole transcript here, he also repeatedly referred back to a document that went back to July 28th. I'd remind you all that this is an active negotiation and discussion, and it is incumbent upon members to put out where they stand and where they are. And as we've seen over the past couple days, that's an everchanging process.

So, before you make conclusions about what the end results will be, I would remind you to look at the last several days or even weeks about how these discussions have progressed.

Q But Senator Manchin said today he believes his position is -- it sounded to me like his position was firm. And he also said that if progressives feel that the Congress should spend \$3.5 trillion, that they should convince voters to send more progressives to Washington. That sounded to me like he's saying that, through the end of this Congress, he's not going to agree to \$3.5 trillion.

MS. PSAKI: We could certainly parse Senator Manchin's words, but I am certain he'll go answer questions again, and your colleagues should ask him more questions.

Q But why do you think that this is not -- why do you think that Senator Manchin's position on this is not final?

MS. PSAKI: Because this is an active negotiation, because he was pushed repeatedly during the gaggle that he did on Capitol Hill about where he stood. But again, I'm not here to speak for Senator Manchin; he is -- certainly can speak for himself and what his points of view -- views are. And I certainly encourage you all to keep asking him questions about where he stands.

Go ahead.

Q Back on the deadline that was set at the beginning of the week -- announced at -- this is a big week: Democrats are in charge here at the White House and in both houses of Congress. And they set the deadline; Democrats set the deadline. Now they --

MS. PSAKI: To be clear, they just set the date of a vote.

Q All right. You called it a "deadline." I was just using your words.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Fair. But -- thank you for the clarification. It's -- they set the time of a vote.

Q All right. Democrats set this vote. Now they're going to miss it, fail to make it. Why is it that --

MS. PSAKI: We don't know that. It's only three o'clock.

Q Can you tell us if they're going to vote tonight?

MS. PSAKI: That's what Speaker Pelosi indicated her plan was.

Q All right. My question is: Why isn't it fair to see this as a failure of the President to get his own party to back him and his agenda?

MS. PSAKI: Why isn't it, before we've even had a vote and we don't even know where it sits, a failure of the President?

Q It feels like we're farther away today than we were on Monday.

MS. PSAKI: I don't think the President feels that way, and I don't think members of Congress feel that way.

Q You've talked about progress. Can you explain what progress is? You said it's people talking about where they are.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q That sounds like -- that sounds like an earlier part of the process when you had set a vote for the end of the week.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would point you again to what Speaker Pelosi said earlier today: In the end stages, the later stages of a process -- where we are now -- when you get closer to a vote, a time of a vote being set, that's when the negotiations get serious. That's when people start putting down bottom lines of where they stand. You've seen some people do that publicly. A lot more of it happens behind the scenes. That's what I mean by progress.

You've seen members come down in numbers. You've seen members come up in numbers. That's what we're working on -- to get to an agreed-upon path forward.

Q So there's progress, and it's people behind the scenes saying that -- where their numbers move.

MS. PSAKI: They've also said it publicly.

Q One more. A lot of Democrats are looking at what's happening, and they're saying Senator Manchin and Senator Sinema are holding this President and his agenda hostage. What would you say to that?

MS. PSAKI: I would say we have 50 votes in the Senate -- 50 Democrats in the Senate. So, we need the majority to win. That's how a bill becomes a law.

Q They've got the leverage.

MS. PSAKI: We need all 50 votes in the Senate to move this forward. That's where we stand now.

Go ahead.

Q I just wanted to go back to the debt ceiling for a second.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Democrats control all branches of government right now. Can you assure the American people and the financial markets that the United States will not default on its debt?

MS. PSAKI: That is absolutely what we're trying to accomplish. And I'd remind you that we would have gotten that done had Republicans done what they've done 80 times before -- supporting a bipartisan vote to do something that has been pretty standard in the past -- or if they had allowed Leader Schumer to move forward.

But, absolutely, we're going to do everything to prevent the federal -- us from defaulting --

Q But does the plan involve changing Mitch McConnell's mind -- Leader McConnell's mind in some way? Or is there a plan to just go forward using either reconciliation or --

MS. PSAKI: Well, Leader Schumer has already tried to -- already been working to move things forward. And it's been blocked by Republicans -- not just their vote; an effort to move it forward has been blocked.

Q But there clearly are ways -- I mean, getting rid of the filibuster, for example, for this particular vote would be one way to move forward. And is that something that the President would consider to avoid losing, let's say, 10 percent of the value of the stock market?

MS. PSAKI: I just outlined how concerning we are -- how concerned we are, which you just echoed -- or echoed different components of it. And that's an issue we take incredibly seriously. You've also heard Secretary Yellen on the Hill talking about this. We're not going to let Republicans off the hook. We don't think they should be. This is not a game. This is the faith -- full faith and credit of the United States.

We're working with Leader Schumer on a path forward, but beyond that, I don't have more to preview for you.

Q But you can do it without Republicans if you got rid of the filibuster for this --

MS. PSAKI: We could do it if they let us move forward, and they haven't. So I have no more details on the pa- -- on the legislative process.

Q And just on the reconciliation package, is \$1.5 trillion enough in your spending to cover Biden's priorities -- the President's priorities?

MS. PSAKI: I understand that's a number that's been put out there. It's an active negotiation. I'm not going to weigh in from here on what is or isn't acceptable to the Democratic Caucus.

Go ahead.

Q A couple different topics. So, on immigration, there seems to be a real sense among advocates for immigrants -- people who have been fighting for legalization, for a pathway to citizenship -- there's a real sense of doom; people who described this, yesterday, even crying about the latest parliamentary ruling.

Do you -- what does the President -- you know, what would the President say or what does the President say if that -- if he is unable to move forward on any of the, sort of, big, sweeping promises that he made as a candidate to get -- to finally be the President to get something done on immigration?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we don't accept that. We're nine months into his presidency. And we share the disappointment. Obviously, as you know and you touched on, the parliamentarian ruled twice, in different ways, that it could be included in the reconciliation package -- or components, I should say, of immigration reform could not be included in the reconciliation practice -- process. Sorry, package.

That's disappointing to the President as well. So, clearly, now we need to figure out what the vehicle forward is.

I would say the President's plan is about certainly protecting DREAMers, farm workers, and others. It's also about investing in border security, making sure it makes sense and we're investing in it in a way that makes sense, and creating an asylum processing system that is actually functional, which I think we all agree it's not.

So there are several components of what he's proposed, and, certainly, we share the disappointment of many advocates that this wasn't included and the desire to find a vehicle to move it forward.

Q On one other separate topic: There have been a number of issues in the last, say, several weeks in which advocates -- allies of the President are describing him as "Trump-like." Most -- less in terms of his personality and sort of tone and tenor, obviously, but in terms of policy. Even today, a representative of the Cuban government describing the frustration with the President continuing to maintain Trump-era policies vis-à-vis Cuba.

Does the -- what's the President's reaction? And does he accept that in some areas of policy he is, you know, in agreement with the former President?

MS. PSAKI: So, just for the sake of argument here -- not argument, but discussion -- beyond the representative of the Cuban government who --

Q Afghanistan, immigration --

MS. PSAKI: Well, but who? Who are we talking about here?

Q Who --

MS. PSAKI: Who is saying that the President is like Trump?

Q Oh, I mean there -- there -- I mean, I could find you quotes. We have -- there have been quotes in our paper and quotes in lots of -- lots of folks have, depending on the issue, whether they are immigration advocates or, you know, folks in the Afghanistan -- who sort of watch Afghanistan. There have been numerous on-the-record descriptions of the President embracing -- and it's actually, in some ways, just a factual thing, right?

MS. PSAKI: But like on what policy?

Q Like the President has --

MS. PSAKI: On what policy? Sorry, I didn't -- you can -- you can name people but -- or what specific policies.

Q Well, I mean, for example, Afghanistan would have been the maintaining of the former President's decision to withdraw troops. On immigration, it's in maintaining Title 42 and keeping Title 42 in place. I mean they're --

Q Sub- --

Q Hm?

Q Submarines.

Q The submarine -- yeah. (Laughter.)

MS. PSAKI: Which one?

Q The submarine -- I'm just --

Q Yeah, the --

Q AUKUS.

Q The President was --

Q AUKUS.

Q -- yeah -- was compared to Trump --

Q -- to Trump. Well, the -- that's the French -- the French Foreign Minister compared him to Trump, in terms of how he handled the AUKUS negotiations.

MS. PSAKI: So, look, I'd take each one of these: On Afghanistan, the former President struck a deal without the Afghan government that, we heard the military convey yesterday, led to the demoralization of the Afghan Security Forces and the Afghan government, where he also released 5,000 Taliban fighters into Afghanistan.

I would say the President took a pretty different approach than that in ending a war that the former President didn't end -- something the American people strongly support.

As it relates to AUKUS, I'm not even sure what that's referring to, in terms of what they're comparing. The President worked with key partners -- Australia and the United Kingdom -- to come to an agreement that would help provide security in an important part of the world -- in the Indo-Pacific -- a priority that, frankly, getting out of the war in Afghanistan leaves space for us to spend more time addressing.

What was the last one? Immigration?

Q Immigration, Title 42, tariffs on China. I mean, there's --

MS. PSAKI: Title 42 is a public health -- is a public health requirement, a public health -- because we're in the middle of a pandemic, which, by the way --

Q The President and his allies --

MS. PSAKI: -- we would have made progress on had the former President actually addressed --

Q Right, but the --

MS. PSAKI: -- the pandemic and not suggested people inject bleach.

So, I think we're in a bit of a different place. I'm happy to discuss more examples. I think it's -- people would be pretty hard pressed to argue that the President has taken any aspect of the former President's playbook and used it as a model of his own.

Q Okay. Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Senator Manchin has also said that he wants to means test as much as possible of this reconciliation package. Without getting into or speaking for the senator, as you've said, what is the White House's position on, I guess, means testing in this package?

MS. PSAKI: Well, you can call it whatever you want. Sometimes means -- when you say "means testing" -- not you, but when -- when it's said, it sometimes has it not the right connotation or the wrong connotation.

The President's proposals, many of them have been targeted at the middle class, as have these proposals and these initiatives, which means there's a cap on income through which you can benefit. That's what -- you can call it whatever you want, if you call it "means testing." The President is very open to targeting, by income, many of his proposals. And that's something that you can see throughout many components of his agenda that have been proposed and many that have passed to date.

Q Does the White House believe that you all are currently in alignment with Manchin on what those thresholds would look like or --

MS. PSAKI: It's an ongoing discussion. But, again, our objective is to -- is to target and focus on bringing relief to the middle class. That's what the President wants to see this agenda accomplish.

Q In an op-ed for USA Today this morning, Senator Bernie Sanders defended the \$3.5 trillion price tag, asking, "Please tell me what [where] we should cut." This came out before Senator Manchin gave his line in the sand.

Does -- without speaking for either senator, does the White House believe that there's any provisions that, if we are talking about getting somewhere between 3.5 and 1.5, that are absolutely -- you all cannot stomach not having them in the final package?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to put anything on the table here. It's clear, as numbers come down, which they will, that there will be cuts to different components. That's just the nature of the totals here. But we'll leave those conversations private. I know you're eager [sic] -- eager to know more, and hopefully we'll have more to share soon.

Q And then just finally -- just one more point. As you all have said from here, the public -- public polling has consistently found that many parts of this -- of both packages are very supported by the American people. The American people are also very consistently pessimistic about action in Washington.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Ahead of what we're going to be seeing, whichever way this vote goes tonight, what is your message to the public as they look at the ongoing situation in Washington about -- what is your message to the American people as they look at, as you've said, a messy situation, the chaos of democracy?

MS. PSAKI: We hope we can prove them wrong.

Q Okay.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead, Karen.

Q Thanks, Jen. I know "hour by hour" is kind of the phrase of the day.

MS. PSAKI: (Laughs.) Yeah.

Q But given that, can we expect to hear from the President today? Or what would have to happen for us to hear from the President today?

MS. PSAKI: We'll see. I can't make a prediction for you now, but it is certainly possible. It's also possible he has more meetings. He'll certainly make more phone calls, possibly moves. But I don't have anything to predict for you at this point in time.

Q And, last night, he went to the congressional baseball game. Did he go specifically to do some arm twisting or lobbying on infrastructure? And he spent some time with Republican lawmakers -- something he really hasn't done here at the White House. Can you give us a sense of what he talked about with those Republican lawmakers? What was the interaction like, the tone of those conversations?

MS. PSAKI: I think you're undervaluing his baseball prowess -- (laughter) -- and history, which he was honored for last night.

No, look, I think what the President -- and I saw him this morning; he was reflecting on how it was -- and I think this is a tradition -- the Congressional Baseball Game. You know, it's something that has been around for some time, where Democrats and Republicans go participate in America's -- one of America's favorite pastimes.

And you saw -- I think you all saw in photos, but for people who didn't see -- he visited with some Republicans down in their area -- dugout?

Q Dugout.

MS. PSAKI: I don't even know it's called. (Laughter.) Okay, dugout. Help me out here. Thank you. He visited -- (laughs) -- with some -- my husband is going to be really mad about that.

He visited with some Republicans. You know, he wasn't -- it wasn't meant to be a negotiation; it was a discussion about, you know, how things are going and work we're all committed to and just saying hello to them. And sometimes, you know, that's important and powerful too at a time where there's been so much division, where there's a view from many in the public -- as per the question earlier -- that people can't work together, can't get things done.

And this was an opportunity to have a moment to visit with, to see people that you've known be -- you've known a long time, to meet new people, and to move beyond partisanship to celebrate one of America's favorite pastimes.

Q Did he have a response to you about getting booed last night? Any reaction to that?

MS. PSAKI: He's been in public life long enough to know there's going to be some yays and jeers in most big, public places.

Go ahead.

Q Can I just follow up on that? Is -- in some ways, does his visit and the rituals of getting together sort of prove the point that the face time doesn't work? I mean, you still -- you referred to Leader McConnell and the Republican Party not willing to raise the debt limit. He's had plenty of face time with Leader McConnell for decades. Maybe it just doesn't matter and people are going to do what their political interests or what they believe their political interests tells them to do?

MS. PSAKI: Well, this is how the President views it: You're going to have strong disagreements, as he does with Senator McConnell about how he's approached the debt limit. You're also going to have areas where you may come to agreement on, as they do on infrastructure and the importance of rebuilding our roads, our railways, and our bridges. And it's important to maintain lines of communication and discussion to figure out where you can work together.

That's also how he views and approaches diplomacy. We can call out and -- publicly and argue strongly privately issues we have with foreign governments. But we also sometimes still look for ways -- most of the time -- for ways to work together.

That's been his approach. I would say that given the infrastructure bill passed with 69 votes, that's evidence of it working.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. You mentioned at the top that on September 17th the President signed an executive order authorizing sanctions to be used against those undermining peace in Ethiopia.

But right now, it doesn't seem the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Abiy Ahmed, is interested in peace. He refused to meet with Samantha Power when she was there. He has -- he is expelling U.N. staff from the country. He's taken other steps that prove that he has no interest in peace.

Why not take the sanction now? Why not impose the sanction now, or take more drastic action against not just him but also the President of Eritrea, who still have troops inside Ethiopia?

MS. PSAKI: Well, absent clear and concrete changes, we will. We're preparing to take aggressive action under this executive order to impose targeted sanctions against a range of individuals and entities. What we're communicating to the parties on the ground is that we must see meaningful steps within weeks to initiate discussions to achieve a negotiated ceasefire, allow in an unhindered humanitarian access, and ensure respect for human rights. Absent significant progress, we'll take action. And we have the methods to do that. That's why I rec- -- talked about the executive order.

Q And then on Guinea, we've had so many coups in Africa. The President of Guinea has been overthrown. The President of Mali has been overthrown. And we just had the Prime Minister of Sudan who just survived a coup attempt. And the President promised to defend democracy around the world. Is he failing in that promise?

MS. PSAKI: He doesn't expect that to be accomplished in nine months. He expects that to be accomplished over the course of time for advocating for democracy, for human rights, for imposing steps when warranted, and -- as we are considering right now in Ethiopia -- and obviously by having a strong national security team that can convey this on his behalf when he cannot.

Go ahead.

Q I just have a question on Africa.

Q Thanks, Jen. On --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead. I'll come back to you next.

Q Thanks, Jen. Just to follow up on Mike's question on what the Cuban foreign minister said. Just to be specific, he said, "It's a pity that President Biden couldn't implement his own policy toward Cuba." And I just wondered if you had a specific response.

MS. PSAKI: I don't.

Q And there's a U.S. delegation -- top officials going to Port-au-Prince. What's the goal of that visit?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, I have some details on this, including who is going. So, let's see. So, what they're doing -- one, we feel it's pretty pivotal to have high-level officials from here engaged in traveling back and forth to Port-au-Prince to have discussions with actors across the political spectrum to see what we can do to help support dialogue and development for the Haitian people.

We know it's clearly a profoundly challenging time on the ground, and it's crucial that we meet with a range of stakeholders to help move this process forward or help support the process moving forward in a way that's in the interest of the Haitian people. So, this is really an effort to be engaged, to be on the ground.

I can tell you -- and you may know this already -- that our newly confirmed Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere, Brian Nichols, is on this as a part of this delegation; our NSC Senior Director for the Western Hemisphere, Juan Gonzales, are there. They're meeting with civil society groups, political stakeholders, the Haitian government. And they're, of course, as I noted, discussing a Haitian-led process charting the path to democratic elections.

But that's the focus, as well as discussing how we can continue to help provide support for the migration response, security, recovery from the earthquake, and the COVID pandemic.

Q Jen, last question.

Q Secretary Mayorkas had said he expected the results of an investigation on the Border Patrol officers --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- on horseback by the end of this week. What's the status of that investigation?

MS. PSAKI: I know he said that; as I understand, it's still on track. But I would really point you to the Department of Homeland Security on any update.

Brian, why don't we go to you last?

Q Yeah, thank you.

Q Oh, you said --

Q Thank you very much. And I appreciate it. I'm -- I wanted to ask what the President's reaction is to Democratic lawmakers calling on him to lean more on Senator Manchin and Senator Sinema. What is the President's reaction to that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, first, the President's reaction is -- he's been in the -- he was in the Senate for 36 years. He knows, as does Speaker Pelosi, Leader Schumer, what it takes at this point in negotiations. They've probably done this more, and more successfully, than any combinations of Democratic leaders in history.

And his approach has been: Yes, of course, it's listening. Yes, of course, it's conveying viewpoints and having sometimes, you know, direct and candid discussions, but he knows how to do this.

And a lot of people who are throwing stones aren't a part of these negotiations. They're one on one. So, I think they should leave it to him and others to get them done.

Q But there are members of his party that want him to be more actively involved, and have come out publicly and said, "We want to see the President more actively involved." What's his response to that?

MS. PSAKI: I would say that -- as I would point to something Congresswoman Jayapal said yesterday, "Right now, it's not a secret about what is the holdup." The holdup is that we need to get 50 votes in the Senate to move the infrastructure, to move the reconciliation package forward, in order for members of the Progressive Caucus in the house to feel comfortable that there's a path forward.

As many of them have conveyed, the President's role and work in communicating with Senator Manchin and Senator Sinema to help get that done is probably one of the most constructive roles he can play. And that's what he's been focused on over the last few days.

Q My follow-up question, Jen?

MS. PSAKI: Thanks so much, everyone.

Okay, last one, because I promised you. Go ahead.

Q Thank you. Jen, the President of Angola -- President João Lourenço -- was in D.C. last week, and he met with Jake Sullivan and Madam Speaker of the House. And I just want to check with you if the President made any comment about this visit, because Jake Sullivan, on the day that he met my president, he said he would brief the President on that day. So, I don't -- I'm trying to check with you if you heard any comments from the President (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any additional comment. I think we put a readout out about Jake Sullivan's meeting, but I don't have any additional comments.

Thanks so much, everyone.

3:19 P.M. EDT

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