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Subject: FW: [EXTERNAL] Press Briefing by Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre and Chair of the Council of Economic Advisers Jared Bernstein, December 10, 2024

Date: Wed, 11 Dec 2024 17:11:52 -0500

Importance: Normal

On FBI investigation into UnitedHealth shooter; drone sightings; TikTok; FBI reward for Austin Tice

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Q Good to see you.

Given the killing of the UnitedHealthcare executive, what would you say to Americans who might sympathize with Luigi Mangione's purported manifesto indicating that insurance companies ultimately care more about their profits than the health of their customers?

MS. JEAN PIERRE: So, let me just s

Q Is that is that

MS. JEAN PIERRE: I'm sorry.

Q premise, like

MS. JEAN PIERRE: Yeah.

Q Do you is that premise accurate in any way?

MS. JEAN PIERRE: So, let me just say at the top offer up, certainly, our condolences to the victims and his loved ones. We are certainly tracking the latest regarding this deadly shooting.

As you all know, local enforcement is leading the investigation, and the FBI certainly is supporting. So, we will know more as they complete their work, and we're going to give them the space to do just that.

And we are grateful to law enforcement for apprehending the suspect, and we stand ready to provide further support if needed.

And so, while we're certainly not going to comment on the investigation, we condemn we condemn violence in the strongest term.

And so, I'm just going to be really careful here and not comment on this case, as we do normally. It's not it's our usual step forward, as as we talk about these types of situations.

Obviously, this is horrific. Violence to combat any sort of com corporate greed is unacceptable. And so, that is as far as I'm going to go.

I'm going to let the investigation move forward, and I'm not going to speak to any manifestos or anything that has

-

Q Okay. A couple questions about drones. There have been repeated drone sightings in the Northeast, especially in New Jersey. These are not small drones; some of them are pretty large. They're flying at low altitudes. They're flying in flocks. Has the president been briefed on this situation?

MS. JEAN PIERRE: So, we are certainly aware. The president is aware. So, we're closely tracking the activity and coordinating closely with relevant agency, including DHS and FBI, to continue the to investigate these incidents.

Don't have anything beyond that to share. Obviously, this is something that DHS and FBI are tracking very, very closely, and so I would have to refer you to to them directly.

But aware, keeping an eye out, and looking into the incidents that you just mentioned.

Q Right. A couple still, though, but

MS. JEAN PIERRE: Yeah, yeah.

Q has the has the federal government ruled out that these are controlled by foreign entities?

MS. JEAN PIERRE: Yeah.

Q And do you know if they're conducting surveillance over these areas?

MS. JEAN PIERRE: So, I cannot make any pr any kind of predictions or or

comments about that specifically from here. This is something that DHS is looking at and FBI, so I would have to refer you to them.

I don't have anything beyond that we're tracking this very closely. Obviously, we're all aware of the incidents that have been reported. I I'm not going to go into what they could be or could not be from here. That is something that obviously is being looked at those those respective agencies that I just mentioned.

Q When was the president briefed on this?

MS. JEAN PIERRE: I don't have a timeline, but he certainly have has been made aware of this in his in his update.

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Q Next one. Same question: TikTok.

MS. JEAN PIERRE: What about TikTok? (Laughter.)

Q Is the president is the president

MS. JEAN PIERRE: I was I was

Q committed to making a determination

MS. JEAN PIERRE: Do I like TikTok? What (laughs).

Q on TikTok

MS. JEAN PIERRE: Yeah.

Q before he leaves office, or is that something he might leave to his successor?

MS. JEAN PIERRE: So, look so, I'm going to refer you to the Department of Justice, who has put out a statement on this, and the court's finding that, and I quote, the government "has offered pers persuasive evidence demonstrating that the act is narrowly tailored to protect national security" and another quote here "to counter a well substa substantiated national security threat."

I'll just reiterate: The administration and a strong par bipartisan majority of Congress that passed this law have been clear that we want to we want to see is a divestment, not a ban. We've been very clear about that. You've heard us talk about that from here ad nauseam, I'm sure, for all of you.

So, this is not about banning the app. This is about preventing the PRC from being able to exploit data gathered on many Americans. So, this is about protecting our privacy and American privacy. And so, that's what we've been very clear about that.

Outside of that, I would have to refer you to the Department of Justice.

Q This is a presidential determination under the law that

MS. JEAN PIERRE: I would I would refer you to the Department of Justice since there was just a a decision made about this, so I'm going to refer you to this on that.

Q And and to that note, the president said that he believes that Austin Tice, the American journalist held in Syria, is alive. What exactly is that based off of? And has there been any movement in terms of securing his release?

MS. JEAN PIERRE: So, let me just say at the top that that is a priority. You heard that from the president when he took, I think he made a statement and certainly took a question about this on Sunday. Finding Austin Tice is a ti top priority of this administration.

The FBI and State Department have offered up to $11 million in reward to to anyone who can provide information.

We do not know where he is located. We do not know. But we continue to hope that he is alive. And I think that's what you hear from this this president: that he is hopeful that he is still alive.

And we're talking through, certainly, this with the Turks and others to find him and to bring him home, and that is our commitment from this president.

I will say, more broadly, to answer the question, there is no indication that he's not alive, but there's also no indication about his location or his condition.

So, again, we are hopeful. We are hopeful that he is, and we're going to continue to do the work to bring him home.

Q Sorry, just to follow up.

MS. JEAN PIERRE: Yeah.

Q So, when the president says he believes he is alive, are you saying he's really saying that he's hopeful he's alive?

MS. JEAN PIERRE: Well, there's no indication he's not alive. There isn't. But at the same time, we do not know his location and we do not know his condition. That is just the sadly, the realities that we're in.

You heard what I just laid out about what the FBI and the State Department have done: offered up $11 million in r awar rewards to anyone who can provide more information. I think that shows our commitment to bringing him home, and that's what you're going to continue to see from this president.

Again, I I talked about how he has in his administration, has brought home more than 75 Americans who have been wrongfully detained. And so, I think you can see this president and hear this president's commitment to doing that, getting Austin Tice home to his family.

his family.

Go ahead, Peter.

Q Can you detail how recently or when most recently President Biden himse himself spoke to the Tice family, what the engagements with the family look right now, and then, what, with some specificity, is being done to try to secure more information? Is there a hostage recovery effort that's taking place that is physically in Damascus on the ground? There are American troops there. What more can you tell us about that outfit?

MS. JEAN PIERRE: So, I don't I would have to check in. I don't have a any update on on a conversation that when is the last time the conversation the president had a conversation

Q None none since the fall of Assad, that you know of?

MS. JEAN PIERRE: I just I I don't I just want to be super mindful.

Q Got it. Got it.

MS. JEAN PIERRE: I just haven't had that conversation, so I don't have anything to share with you on the last time the president has spoken with Austin's family.

As you know, Jake Sullivan, the national security advisor, spoke to his family just last week. So, that has occurred. There has been engagement and and from us with the family. So, just want to make that clear.

Look, I I just laid out how the FBI and the State Department has offered up $11 million in in rewards right? to try and get more information.

We do not know his location and we do not know his condition. And so, we are trying to do everything that we can to get that information.

We are committed to bringing him home. And so, that is what you heard from the president, certainly, on Sunday when he was asked directly this question or asked a question arou about Austin. And so, that is continues to be our commitment.

So, we are certainly working through the Turks and others to find to find him and bring him home.

So, that is the actions that we have been taking. And so, I don't have anything else to share beyond that.

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Subject: [EXTERNAL] Press Briefing by Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre and Chair of the Council of Economic Advisers Jared Bernstein, December 10, 2024



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 11, 2024

PRESS BRIEFING BY
PRESS SECRETARY KARINE JEAN PIERRE
AND CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISERS JARED BERNSTEIN

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

(December 10, 2024)

2:31 P.M. EST

MS. JEAN PIERRE: All right. Good afternoon, everybody.

Q Good afternoon.

MS. JEAN PIERRE: Foggy day. Foggy day.

So, this afternoon, President Biden delivered a major address on his economic legacy. After decades of trickle down econ economics, President Biden has written a new playbook that's growing the economy from the middle out and the bottom up. His administration has delivered the strongest recovery in the world and laid a strong foundation for years to come by investing in America, empowering workers and u unions, lowering costs, and supporting small businesses.

Over the last four years, we have made remarkable progress, and the results speak for themselves: over 60 million jobs created, the lowest average unemployment rate of any administration in 50 years, inflation down faster than almost any other advanced economy, and incomes up almost $4,000. The list goes on.

As you heard the president say, we face an inflection point. Do we continue to grow the economy from the middle out and bottom up, or do we backslide to trickle down economics?

With that, I will turn it over to Jared Bernstein, chair of the Council of Economic Advisers, to further discuss the economic progress that we have made.

Jared.

CHAIR BERNSTEIN: Thank you. Great to be here with you again. I want to thank my team, as always, for helping me to prepare to speak to you today.

The president, as you just heard, gave a legacby legacy speech today wherein he spoke about the strong economy that his administration is leaving to the incoming team and how we got here, given what we faced when we took office.

He then lays out a set a set of he laid out a set of

benchmarks, which I will go through with you in a minute, against which the incoming administration's economic stewardship should be judged.

The speech makes clear that while the pandemic was the acute source of economic stress four years ago, the damage done by decades of Republican fealty to trickle-down economic policy was a long-term underlying source of economic pain for millions of America -- Americans.

The speech goes through the policy implications of that agenda -- offshoring jobs with no concern for workers and their communities, anti unionism, and disinvesting in American infrastructure workers' industries and contrasts that with the Biden Harris agenda of middle-out, bottom-up growth, which implies a very different agenda: investing in workers in key industries of future growth and productivity, union power, full employment, labor markets, fair taxation, and taking on corporations and lobbies like Big Pharma on behalf of the American middle class.

The timing is not accidental. As Karine said, a quote from the speech, "With the outcome of this election, we face an inflection point. Do we continue to grow from middle out and bottom up by investing in all of America and in all of Americans, supporting unions and working families, or do we backslide to an economic theory that benefited those at the top while working people in the middle class struggled for a fair share of the growth?"

The president, as his speech at the end of his speech, the president ticked through a set of benchmarks, indicators by which the -- the conditions of the current economy that the incoming team has inherited can be assessed and judged.

Sixteen million jobs with the manufacturing and a construction boom. In four years, we'll know if the -- that job growth and booms will continue or not.

Historic lows in unemployment. Record new businesses. Significantly closing the racial wealth gap. More people covered by health insurance than at any time in history. Our tax code is fairer. We've gone after concentrated corporate power, and in four years we'll know if this power goes back to big corporations or not.

Let me end my introductory comments today with a little bit of a reflection on the economics, speaking as the chair of the CEA, of the economic theory behind what the president talked about in his speech today. I should say the economic theory and the economic outcome. This is far from just a theoretical or an academic exercise.

The president talked about achieving a soft landing, and this is the idea of considerably lower inflation without giving up much on the economy's demand side that is, lower inflation without higher employment. As you know, many economists told us we couldn't get there. We'd have to have a recession to have as much

disinflation as we've seen.

In fact, that did not occur, and one of the reasons it didn't is because the job market. You know, I heard the president mention full employment a couple times in his speech today. The job market has stayed uniquely strong for uniquely long, and that's given workers bargaining clout along with his union agenda.

And so, as prices have come down as inflation, I should say as inflation has come down and wages have gone up, we've had real wage gains now for about a year and a half on a -- on a yearly basis. Last seen: 1.5 percent real year-over-year. That's -- that's real tha that's a considerable pace of real wage gains.

This helps support strong consumer spending, and that's been a core factor keeping this economy moving forward a above trend growth rates and leading to a situation that you heard the president talk about today, where the U.S. economy really is the envy of the world. And I say that as someone who recently came back from Europe, where I was frequently accosted by people who wanted to just talk about how we've achieved the innovation, the productivity, the persistent full employment that -- that we have.

That's the consumer side of the story the consumer spending side of the story. It's 70 percent of our nominal GDP, so it's extremely important to keep the economy moving forward.

But I often think of consumption as today's story and investment as tomorrow's story. I think what the president talked about today that was so important and so compelling -- especially given the fact that many of these benefits are going to unfold 2, 4, 5, 10 years from now, if the incoming folks nurture the seeds we've planted versus take them out this investment agenda i has the potential and is already transforming economic growth, production, innovation, building up new domestic sectors in this economy in the area of clean energy, battery production, chips. And and that kind of investment agenda, that speaks to future growth rates. That speaks to future opportunities. That speaks to future productivity growth.

Now, we've already as the president said in his speech today, there's been a trillion dollars of private investment that has flooded into those sectors -- into clean energy, into semiconductors, into providing infrastructure for this country. All of that, again, is a complement to the consumer spending side of the agenda, the soft-landing agenda that sets us up for a future based on the kinds of investments the president talked about today.

With that, I'll turn to your questions.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Go ahead, Josh.

Q Good to see you, Jared. Thanks for doing this and subjecting yourself to all of us. (Laughter.)

One of the benchmarks that President Biden didn't mention in his speech was the U.S. budget deficit, which is closing out the fiscal year last year, like, above 6 percent of GDP. How sustainable is that as an inheritance of the incoming administration?

CHAIR BERNSTEIN: The president spoke about this a bit in the speech in the context of doubling on the TCJA tax cuts, of course, most of which expire at the end of next year. And he talked about over fi I think he mentioned 5 trillion in deficit financed tax cuts if Republicans fail to offset that.

I think that stands in stark contrast to the budgets that -- that we've passed that have three the most recent one with $3 trillion of deficit reduction.

So, the first point is that if you look at the fiscal outlook that we've tried to craft in our budgets now, obviously, we were were not able to get those through Congress, but we certainly that's what we've been fighting for -- they're characterized by significant deficit reduction and a great deal more fairness in the tax code, which is something he talked about today.

So, I think he correctly took a stance that the extens- -- the full extension of the -- of the Trump tax cuts would be both significantly damaging our fiscal outlook and, even worse, creating more unfairness in the tax code and increasing after tax inequality.

In terms of whether 6 percent deficits are sustainable, I think that when we what what you really want to see, it's very h - I think it's hard and probably not that advisable to say, "This number is okay and that number isn't. Once you get to this level of debt to GDP, you're in trouble. Once you go over it" you know, the the markets don't really work that way.

Given the extent of the debt that we face so far, we still have very successful auctions to you know, to to explain, you know, what I'm talking about.

But I do think that what you want to see is, when you get to a full employment economy with above trend growth, you'd like to see that number coming down. So, I think it's much more of a delta story. You'd like to see that number coming down, and one of the reasons you don't is because decades of trickle-down economics and Republican tax cuts have broken, have severed the linkage between strong economic growth and revenue flows to the Treasury. We tried to correct that in our budgets, but the politics have blocked us from getting it there.

Q But basically, you believe the current situation is not sustainable based off your budget proposals?

CHAIR BERNSTEIN: I think that when you get to an economy I think that when you're an economy like ours no, I wouldn't say it that way. I would say, when you're an economy like ours, with all the kinds of indicators the president discussed today -- full

employment, above trend GDP growth, historically low unemployment yes, your budget deficit should be going down because the revenues that come into -- the revenues that come into your coffers are outpacing your -- your outlays.

And that's the budgets that we've written. That's something we've tried to embed in our budgets, and, you know, we haven't been able to get them passed.

What's worrisome and the president talked about this today is that the incoming administration is making sounds of going in the other direction, which I would consider fics- -- fiscally reckless.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Go ahead, Andrea.

Q Jared, it's been a a little while since I've seen you, so I want to ask you a question about the speech and and the context for it. I mean, so many voters cited inflation and just their pessimism about the economy in their -- in exit interviews as -- as we were watching the election.

So, what is the -- what is the purpose of sort of going out and saying, "Well, we did all this right"? Against that backdrop, it's kind of like water under the bridge, right? You know, sort of, your account of the economic progress is against the backdrop of people having said, "No, that's not what we want to do."

CHAIR BERNSTEIN: Well, as I tried to express in my topper here, in my introductory remarks, the purpose was really twofold. One was to lay out a set of benchmarks. I mean, I think the president quoted Reagan in the speech, saying, "Sometimes facts can be stubborn things," but they are facts.

So, lay out a set of facts that are unequivocally correct about above-trend growth trending at 3 percent on real GDP, lowest average unemployment in 50 years, 16 million jobs, and so on real gains in average income of $4,000 since we got here. Lay down a set of facts, benchma- -- 20 million new businesses -- small businesses created. Lay down a set of benchmarks against which the progress of the incoming administration should be judged.

I mean, this is -- the -- the incoming team, in no small part, ran hard against this economy. And so, it's entirely possible that, in some short amount of time, that they start making very different sounds about how how they own these great results. And we wanted to be sure that we set down the benchmarks that the Biden economic agenda delivered.

Secondly, how did we get there? So, those are the benchmarks, but how did we get there. We certainly didn't get there with trickle-down economics. We got there with the new playbook that Karine and I referenced, and that's a playbook that invests in American workers. It invests in American bargaining power. It believes in union strength. It believes in fair competition. It believes in fair taxation and a more reasonable fiscal outlook. It believes in

pushing back on concentrated corporate power.

All of those parts of the Biden economic agenda got us to where we are in terms of the positive indicators that we had in this -- that I we outlined today.

Now, at the same time, nobody is denying the inflation that you -- you asked about, and, in fact, the president hit that head on in two ways.

One, first, he talked about our efforts to get inflation down. So, remember, in mid-June, you saw inflation peak, and after that, it turned around and came down pretty quickly to now it's within target it's it's close to the Federal Reserve's target rate, and that's why you see them cutting rates.

And so, how did we get there? Well, we did a great deal of work on trying to unsnarl supply chains; the president talked about his release of oil from the strategic reserves; and, of course, a full set of cost-cutting measures going after junk fees, health care, and so on.

The incoming administration has talked about repealing measures that would directly raise costs, not to mention adding a set of sweeping tariffs that would act like a national sales tax, pushing the wrong way on inflation.

So, it seems to us entirely important to reference all of those developments in this in this case.

Q Can I just follow up? So, you know, given that there's this lag in the economy -- like something happens, and then there's a lag when you see the effect you know, how long will it be before, say, Trump's tariffs sort of make themselves felt? Because, you know, I think your -- you know, the White House itself looked at the possibility of repealing or removing the U.S.-China tariffs to sort of address inflation and realized there would be only a very modest impact, so

CHAIR BERNSTEIN: Okay. So, first of all --

Q Like, what what's your prediction

CHAIR BERNSTEIN: Sure. I can give you some economics on that --

Q for the lag? Yeah.

CHAIR BERNSTEIN: -- the lag structure.

First of all, it's really important in this conversation dis to distinguish between targeted tariffs that are designed to protect American industry and American taxpayers' investment against unfair overcapacity trade practices of the type that China has engaged in with sweeping tariffs of multi digit percent tariffs on everything coming in from Europe and China. Totally different worlds.

The first prodec protects produ American producers. The second hurts American consumers.

How quickly does that happen? Quite quickly.

So, let's talk about how a tariff works. And, again, I think we've gotten some misguided explanations in this regard from the other side. The other country doesn't -- the -- the exporting country doesn't pay the tariff. Technically, the tariff is paid by the importing company. It's paid upon customs receipt by the importer. Now, that business then typically pushes that tax or tariff forward to their consumers.

And that's why studies have shown that fairly quickly I don't want to cite a number, but I think it's months ra- -- versus -- I don't want to cite a time period, but I think it's more months than than quarters. So, pretty quickly, I think, we've seen in the past.

Oh, you know what's a good example is the washing machine tariffs. That they hit very quickly. I think it was a matter of weeks or months before we saw the price effects on washing machines and on dryers -- American dryers, even though they weren't tariffed. So, the price effects worked pretty quickly.

MS. JEAN PIERRE: Go ahead, M.J.

Q Thank you. Thanks, Chair.

CHAIR BERNSTEIN: Hi, M.J.

Q Hi. Nice to see you.

You know, over the last year or so, I think we've all seen you field a lot of questions about this disconnect between what you describe as a strong economy versus the people's generally pessimistic economic outlook. I just wondered and it's related to the last question what would you say is the reason that there wasn't enough of an improvement in people's economic outlook by Election Day? I assume you've had some time to reflect on the results of the election.

CHAIR BERNSTEIN: It seems clear, if you look not just at our election but at elections and approval ratings across the globe, that not just inflation because by the time the e election came along, inflation was back down within distance of 2 percent, so it was back down close to the Fed's target -- so, not inflation, but the price level, the cumulative impact of inflation -- so the fact that people could still remember what things used to cost, that was a force that really whacked incumbents in every elect I think, virtually every election we've seen across the globe. So, that was a very powerful force.

Now, look, from our perspective, we needed to do two things. We needed to get inflation down, because you'll never get -- people will never be able to acclimate to the higher price level unless

inflation comes back down to around 2 percent. And that was behind our work on unsnarling supply chains, which became very important in this space. One of the graphics that, you know, I -- I like to tout from our CEA team is, if you look at supply chain measures of stress, which go way up and way down, pandemic and post pandemic, and you plot them against commodities, goods inflation, they they track each other very closely with a bit of a lag.

And so, getting inflation back down to target was very much an important part of agenda. But that just means prices are rising more slowly. It doesn't mean they're falling. And, in fact, to have a broad decline in the price level, you would need a deep recession that nobody wants.

So, what you need to happen is for incomes to catch up.

Now, that those dynamics were happening. They were occurring. And I've spoken about this from the podium before. I theorized, you know, probably a couple of years ago -- and one of my colleagues and I are trying to write an academic paper about this - I theorized a couple of years ago that if inflation came down and people had enough time to acclimate to the new price level an acclimation that would be very much aided and, in fact, was essentially -- it had -- had to be aided by rising real wages or incomes eventually they'd start to get you know, to get acclimated and to feel better.

And, you know, pa- -- one -- one tr- -- you know, sort of, ape- -- what's the word I want? Sort of a trivial example of that is, you know, when I started driving, gas was 60 cents a gallon, but I don't walk around annoyed that gas isn't 60 cents a gallon because, while prices have gone up, incomes have gone up more.

That's where we are. Inflation is back down. Prices the price level remains too high from the perspective of consumers and voters, and that's partly -- you know, a big part of the answer to your question.

I sense you want to say something else.

Q Well, just this this long memory that people have on

CHAIR BERNSTEIN: Yeah.

Q price levels. I mean, do you feel like you, the president's economic team, the president himself, could have done anything differently over the last few years to better address that, better, you know, sort of meet people where they are? I mean, you've known that that is where people's heads

CHAIR BERNSTEIN: Yeah.

Q have been at for a while.

CHAIR BERNSTEIN: You know, the question of "could you have done something different and better," I always feel like, "Sure." You

know, you could always im nobody's perfect, and you can always improve on what you did.

But on the issues I'm talking to you about, we were one of the first folks to be to be talking about this, to be understanding the difference between inflation and price levels from people's perspective.

I mean, I don't know if you remember, but I brought this to our senior staff one day. You know, I brought this well, I think it might have been the only time I did this -- I brought a handout to our senior staff and said, "Let me talk to you about the difference between inflation and the price level and how people feel about that." And, you know, economics doesn't think that much about the price level. It thinks a lot about inflation. And, you know, not at all a critique of the mandate of the Fed, that -- that's the cr- congressional mandate and the one they follow, but it's full employment and stable inflation.

So -- and you'll hear Chair Powell talk about that -- that, "I recognize the price level is a stress to people, but my job is to get inflation down."

So, it's something we've been on for a long time, and it's behind the cost cutting work that we tried to do here. We cut costs in health care. The president talked ~~today~~ [today] about junk fees. You saw the energy results from the SPR release and so on.

We tried to get a lot more competition going in the grocery sector, where there's definitely not enough competition, leading to pretty high markups and profit levels that we've talked about and used the bully pulpit to convey our -- our concern about, but, you know, we live in a capitalist economy, and so prices are generally determ determined by private markets.

But where we could -- and health care is a great example, because the government is in 9 percent of the health care market. So, health care is about 18 percent of GDP; about half of that is the government. So, there's an area where we could and did make a huge difference: insulin; capping prescription drugs, which kicks in, by the way, in a couple of weeks the $2,000 cap on prescription drugs. We're very proud of that agenda.

You know, could we have done more or talked about it differently? You know, I I think we did what we could.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Go ahead, Annie.

Q Hey, Jared.

CHAIR BERNSTEIN: Hey.

Q Good to see you.

One of the things the president mentioned today at Brookings was some -- he -- he had a note of regret about not signing the COVID

checks the way that Donald Trump did. And I just was wondering if that's something you ever talked about or if, you know, following up on M.J.'s question about what could have been done differently, was that a debate that happened at all? Would you have recommended anything to the president in that regard?

CHAIR BERNSTEIN: It's not something I recall talking or debating about.

I mean, I will say two things about that. One is just to bring it back to the economic space in which I'm -- I'm more comfortable -- certainly, those checks were instrumental in what I described earlier, which was getting businesses and consumers to the other side of the crisis.

You know, we gave people more buying power than they had at a time and there's been a lot of second guessing on this, so I'd love to set the record kind of straight in 20 in January of 2021, it was peak COVID deaths. Okay? The unemployment was stuck at 6.7 percent. And I just looked back the other day; the last jobs report when we came in was a negative. It had been revi it's been revised differently. I think it's actually been revised to be a bigger negative, but it was a negative. In other words, we'd lost, I think, 140,000 jobs, according to the print that was in December of '20.

So, this was a very challenging economy. You know, people who say, "It was fine, and you shouldn't have done anything," are forgetting. You know, that's that's amnesia.

So -- so, we're very proud of the fact that this income got into people's hands quickly. Who was asking about the lag a second ago? Boy, there's a really tight lag there. You know, this this money got out quickly. It got into the economy quickly, and it very quickly set up an economic expansion that is today the envy of the world. The president isn't hyperbolic when he says that, and I say that having recently come back from Europe. Is the en that set up that full employment expansion that we've enjoyed since then.

And two so, I said there'd be two points. Two, he was kidding.

Q Oh, wait, he was kidding about signing the checks?

CHAIR BERNSTEIN: He was he was kidding.

Q Oh.

MS. JEAN PIERRE: Go ahead, Danny.

Q Thanks. Thanks, Jared. I just wondered if you have had the chance yet to speak to your successor in the Trump administration, and if you've got any advice for him.

CHAIR BERNSTEIN: I have not. I don't know who will be sitting in my chair yet, so I haven't spoken to that person.

And then, advice?

Q Yeah.

CHAIR BERNSTEIN: That's a good question one I haven't thought of. I would say, read the president's speech today. (Laughs.) Really, I'm not -- I'm not being facetious.

The president's speech today is the best advice I could give to any member of the incoming economic team, because what it says is we have planted some very important seeds in growing domestic industry, which I think both the outgoing and the incoming administration share the strong desire to see American industry stand up independently, more resilient supply chains.

Yes, we still believe in very robust trade flows. So, obviously, part of my advice would be not to do sweeping tariffs. Certainly, small tariffs -- you know, targeted tariffs that protect against unfair dumping, sure. But I would be -- it would be to nurture -- you know, I mean, I guess this this may not be the most mellifluous advice that they want to hear, but nurture the seeds that we've planted.

This is not a blue state thing or a red state thing. And, in fact, the president was very clear on this today, most of the investments under the IRA, under CHIPS, even under Infrastructure, are going to red states, not blue states. Most of them are going to people with relatively lower incomes or lower levels of education, so very much a working class issue.

So, nurture the seeds. Don't stomp on them.

MS. JEAN PIERRE: Go ahead.

Q Is there anything that you have seen or heard from the incoming administration's economic plans that you like or that could be in line with what you have done here?

CHAIR BERNSTEIN: You know, I've heard, certainly, commentary about getting on a more fiscally sustainable path. So, I'm thinking about Josh's question a moment ago.

What I can't put together is how you get there from here -- well, not from here how you get there from what I I believe to be their fiscal agenda.

And, in fact, there have been many scorekeepers across town who have been scoring the cost of not just extending fully the TCJA tax cuts but going further tax cuts for overtime, tax cuts for Social Security, tax cuts for tips. And so, if you -- if you tout that all up, by one study, there was an upper bound of north of $10 trillion in terms of adding to the deficit and the debt.

So, I like some of the sound I'm hearing about getting on a more sustainable fiscal path, but then I'm hearing a po- -- a policy

agenda that goes the wrong way on that.

Q Just to follow up, you said that most of these projects are in red states. Certainly, the -- your administration didn't get a whole lot of political benefit from that. But I'm wondering, why is that? Is it because it's easier, there's less red tape, there's less regulations in red states, you can get projects up and going faster than in blue states?

CHAIR BERNSTEIN: No, it's it's not so much that. It's more that -- that these projects were targeted to communities that had been historically left behind. This president believes -- and I think he probably shares this belief with, you know, the incoming president to some extent this president believes that while there are absolutely positive attributes to globalization, the idea that globalization didn't leave behind American communities and didn't hurt anybody and uplifted everybody is clearly wrong and and even bereft. I mean, to blithely say, you know, "Here's another trade deal; everybody is going to love it and be fine," is just denying the impact of the China shock and the hollowing out that happened to the very communities we're talking about.

So, these plans were designed in part to disproportionately send their investments to communities that had been hollowed out and left behind: energy communities, communities where factories where anchor factories were lost. And that's behind where those investments have flowed.

Q But a lot of battleground states are were deindustrialized and left behind.

CHAIR BERNSTEIN: Well, it -- that --

Q I mean, you could of put projects anywhere.

CHAIR BERNSTEIN: -- no -- so, go to --

Q Why red states, is what I'm asking.

CHAIR BERNSTEIN: No, no. Go to Investment.gov --

Q Well, yeah.

CHAIR BERNSTEIN: -- and you'll see that there are lots of projects there too. So, it's not that it's not that 90 percent were in red and 10 were in blue. It I don't know what the division is, but I think it's probably fairly close. It's that a lot more -- you know, when the president talked about this today, he framed it as, like, "This may not" you know, "Some may look at this and say this is not my greatest political move." You know, that's not where he's coming from. When he said, "I'm president for all Americans," he meant it, and he over delivered.

MS. JEAN PIERRE: Go ahead.

Q Yeah. Hi, Jared. Thanks for doing this. I have a question

sort of about legacy. Biden billed this billed the speech this m this afternoon as about an economic playbook, something that is successful and should be replicated, but it didn't have a lot of electoral success and it didn't -- you know, in the minds of voters, as other folks have said, they don't see it as a a success for them. I I just wonder, what gives you or what gives the president confidence that this -- this should be or would be --

CHAIR BERNSTEIN: So, here you have to

Q -- replicated in the future?

CHAIR BERNSTEIN: That's a totally fair question. Here you really have to get under the hood, and I've done this. If you ask people what they think about paying $35 for insulin versus $400 a month, it's not going to surprise you that that polls somewhere between 80 and 150 percent. I'm making the second number up, but it polls north of 80 percent.

If you ask people how they feel about an infrastructure project that restored a bridge in their area, again, your you get poll num you'll get approval numbers in in the high 70s and high 80s.

If you ask people and now I'm talking about Democrats and Republicans how you feel about this new computer fab that's going -- a micro- -- a microprocessor chip fab that's going up in your town, in your area, that's going to provide, you know, thousands of jobs building these fabs, which are three foot football fields long, and lots of jobs staffing them, jobs that the president today said can pay up to, you know, $100,000 for a non-college-educated person, not only are they going to say, "Yes, we like that," but a number of Republicans I think a double digit number of Republicans have sent notes to the incoming administration saying, "Don't repeal that stuff."

So, part one, get under the hood and look at how people feel about many of the actions that the president talked about today.

Part two, which -- you know, I'm not denying the premise of your question at all it gets back to inflation. And I probably haven't said enough about that today. I talked to M.J. and others about the difference between the price level and how if you remember what things cost, that really sticks in the craw of many in the electorate, not just here but globally. But re this this inflation was a global inflation, so let's not forget that. In fact, cumulatively -- we have good scatter plots on this in our forthcoming Economic Report of the President -- this in- -- this inflation cumulatively was about the same in the U.S. as it was in Europe and G7 countries.

Where we stand out from the pack is not in cumulative inflation; it's in growth. It's in productivity. It's in innovation. It's in job creation. And so, that's you know, that's that's an important part of the puzzle too.

MS. JEAN PIERRE: All right, we got to start to wrapping it up.

Go ahead, Peter.

Q Thank you for being here, Jared. I just want to ask you a lot of this has been sort of reactive to the new administration that's coming in. The president-elect posted, in the course of last hour as we've been gathering, that any company or person investing a billion dollars or more into the country will receive fully expedited approvals and permits, including environmental approvals.

Is there any consequence to something like that? Maybe this is a question that's more about the environment more broadly, but economically, is there any reason why there's -- this should be something that's reconsidered against tough scrutiny?

CHAIR BERNSTEIN: I would hesitate to respond to a tweet from the incoming president, just because I'd like to know more about what he's talking about and whether that's something they're actually planning or something

Q To be fair, that's all we know about what he's talking about.

CHAIR BERNSTEIN: Right.

Q Yeah, that's fair.

CHAIR BERNSTEIN: So so, I probably wouldn't say much about that.

I will say the following that speaks to that a little bit. I keep flacking our forthcoming book. So, in (laughter) in the Economic Report of the President, out in a few weeks, one of the chapters in that -- one of -- and it -- it's not like we make any money; it's just point and click. So, it's a -- you know, this is just the intellectual sharing. (Laughter.)

We've had tremendous foreign direct investment. And, yes, we've definitely tried to make -- you know, clean the brush out so -- there's I'm cer to to help diminish the burm burden from permitting and things like that. And there's more to do in that space, and I think there are members of Congress -- I -- I -- that -- that is, I believe, a bipartisan issue that we -- we could be working on. So, if the Trump team is serious about trying to clear some of that brush, sure.

But one thing I often hear too -- one thing I hear too often from - from him and them is without regard for any impacts of some of the some of the guardrails that are there for a reason. So, that's why you shouldn't really just respond to a tweet. You need to look at what's the impact of taking down guardrails that are embedded in that in that tweet, but not not realized not recognized. But without you know, even with the current situation being as it is, we've had tremendous inflows of foreign direct investment.

I mean, TSMC, as you well know, I suspect, is building plants and already testing chips -- and, I think, quite successfully -- in their -- in their fabrication plants in -- in Arizona, I believe.

And, of course, across the country, we've seen these investments play out.

And when I think about the pictures in this chapter, the you know, the the foreign direct investment charts like they spike up like that. We've certainly seen historical investments in manufacturing facilities in this country.

We recently hit a hi a peak in its contr in the contribution of manufacturing facilities in this country, its contribution to GDP was recently the highest it's been since the early 1980s. So, that's not just domestic investment, that's global investment. We're very proud of it.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Okay. All right. Go ahead, Jared. Last question.

Q Thank you. So, the -- the -- I guess, more broadly, the audience for the address today, was it, like, you said, just for the American people to to know sort of what you were and then kind of how to judge the next four years, or is this kind of a call to action for members of Congress, for Democrats to think before maybe they go along with some of these policies legislatively?

CHAIR BERNSTEIN: I mean, I think that in some ways, sure, the latter of what you said, in the sense that the president was very clearly outlining two very alternative economic playbooks, and he was very critical of the former the trickle down model and and, you know, very much underscoring the progress that we've made with the invest in America, invest in workers, worker -- invest in unions, invest in tax fairness, invest in domestic industries in this country.

That's the agenda, you know, that he obviously argued today is far superior to growing the economy in a lasting way to trickle-down tax cuts for rich people, which, as I said earlier, simply worsen the fiscal outlook and enrich their beneficiaries.

What I would say in terms of, you know, a me- -- I don't know that there was some sort of, you know no hidden message to politicians in there, but I've tried to say today, one, I think, useful way of looking at what he talked about today is this investment agenda. You know, strong consumer spending at 70 percent of our economy, that's important. But investment, you know, is another 10, 15 percent, and that's important too.

Consumer spending helped us get to where we are, helped us -- strong consumers on the backs of a strong labor market, easing inflation, strong real wage and income gains, that's helped get us to where we are. And, in fact, a healthy American consumer off the backs of a strong full-employment job market will always propel

this economy forward because consumer spending is 70 percent of our GDP. In Europe, it's 55 percent. In China, it's 40 percent. So, that's a natural place for us to have gone.

But for investing in the future, you got to plant seeds. So, the message to anyone D, R, whomever from the speech today is nurture those seeds. Take those seeds that we've planted -- and, by the way, these are not sprouts in the ground. I mean, these are seeds that have a hundred that have a trillion dollars of private capital backing them. So, they're sprouting.

I think I better put this tortured metaphor aside pretty soon. (Laughter.) But, you know, th those sprouts need to be nurtured. And I don't care if you have a D or an R next to your name, you need to roll up your sleeves and start nurturing.

MS. JEAN PIERRE: (Laughs.) Nurturing.

All right. Thank you so much, Chair. Appreciate it.

CHAIR BERNSTEIN: Thank you.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: We will be nurturing --

CHAIR BERNSTEIN: I'll bet you will.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: -- those seeds. (Laughter.)

All good?

CHAIR BERNSTEIN: Yeah, it's good.

MS. JEAN PIERRE: All right. Thank you so much, Jared. Appreciate it.

Q We'll take signed copies of the book. (Laughter.)

MS. JEAN PIERRE: That's right.

All right. Just have two more things to share with all of you at the top, and then we'll get we'll continue.

So, today, following the G7's June agreement and the president's October commitment, the United States has disbursed $20 billion to a New World Bank fund that will provide economic support for Ukraine. The U.S. and G7 loans will be paid back by the interest earned from Russia's immobilized sovereign assets, increasingly putting the cost of the war on Russia, not on U.S. taxpayers.

After Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine, the G7 made a commitment that Russian sovereign assets in our jurisdictions will remain immobilized until Russia ends its aggression and pays for the damages it has caused Ukraine. The United States and G7 are now making good on that commitment.

Together, we will leverage income earned from frozen Russian

sovereign assets to provide a total of $50 billion of extraordinary revenue acceleration, ERA, loans to Ukraine. This will lend vital support to the people of Ukraine as they defend their country, and it also makes clear aggressors and tyrants will be responsible for the damage they cause.

And finally, tomorrow, the president and the first lady will host the first-ever White House Conference on Women's Resear- -- Health Research. The conference will bring together business business, philanthropic leaders, academic researchers, advocates, investors, and administration officials to dicu- -- discuss the president and first lady's historic leadership to advance women's health research.

President Biden and First Lady Jill Biden created the White House Initiative on Women's Health Research to fundamentally change how our nations approaches and funds women's health research. The reality is, despite making up more than half the population, women have historically been understudied and underrepresented in health research.

To help close these gaps, President Biden called on Congress to make a transformative investment of $12 billion in new funding for women's health research in his 2024 State of the Union. He also signed an executive order to advance women's health research and innovative, directing the most comprehensive set of executive actions ever taken to expand and improve women -- research on women's health.

Since its launch in November of 2023, we're proud that the initiative has galvanized nearly $1 billion in funding to close gaps in research. And tomorrow, you will hear directly from the president, you will hear directly from the first lady, who are going to discuss this progress and the work that still remains.

And stay tuned for more.

With that, Josh, as always, it's good to see you.

Q Good to see you.

Given the killing of the UnitedHealthcare executive, what would you say to Americans who might sympathize with Luigi Mangione's purported manifesto indicating that insurance companies ultimately care more about their profits than the health of their customers?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, let me just s- --

Q Is that is that

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I'm sorry.

Q premise, like

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah.

Q Do you is that premise accurate in any way?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, let me just say at the top -- offer up, certainly, our condolences to the victims and his loved ones. We are certainly tracking the latest regarding this deadly shooting.

As you all know, local enforcement is leading the investigation, and the FBI certainly is supporting. So, we will know more as they complete their work, and we're going to give them the space to do just that.

And we are grateful to law enforcement for apprehending the suspect, and we stand ready to provide further support if needed.

And so, while we're certainly not going to comment on the investigation, we condemn -- we condemn violence in the strongest term.

And so, I'm just going to be really careful here and not comment on this case, as we do normally. It's not -- it's our usual step forward, as as we talk about these types of situations.

Obviously, this is horrific. Violence to combat any sort of com- -- corporate greed is unacceptable. And so, that is as far as I'm going to go.

I'm going to let the investigation move forward, and I'm not going to speak to any manifestos or anything that has --

Q But

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: -- is coming out to this.

Q Let me follow.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Sure.

Q This administration has made price gouging a priority. It's talked about junk fees. The president just outlined part of this in his economic speech.

Are Americans treated fairly by their insurance companies?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Look, I think what -- I want to be careful, because this is indeed connected to this case, connected to this ongoing investigation. I do want to be mindful in how what I say from here, and I'm going to let this open investigation continue and let -- let the law enforcement do their job. I think it's important that we give them the space to do that, and I don't want to speak to what has been said by this particular individual.

Obviously, we are going to continue to condemn any form of violence. That is unacceptable.

And so, that is as far as I can go from here, given that this is an ongoing investigation, and speaking to it would not be the right

thing to do right now from this podium.

Go ahead, Karen.

Q Okay. A couple questions about drones. There have been repeated drone sightings in the Northeast, especially in New Jersey. These are not small drones; some of them are pretty large. They're flying at low altitudes. They're flying in flocks. Has the president been briefed on this situation?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, we are certainly aware. The president is aware. So, we're closely tracking the activity and coordinating closely with relevant agency, including DHS and FBI, to continue the to investigate these incidents.

Don't have anything beyond that to share. Obviously, this is something that DHS and FBI are tracking very, very closely, and so I would have to refer you to to them directly.

But aware, keeping an eye out, and looking into the incidents that you just mentioned.

Q Right. A couple still, though, but --

MS. JEAN PIERRE: Yeah, yeah.

Q -- has the -- has the federal government ruled out that these are controlled by foreign entities?

MS. JEAN PIERRE: Yeah.

Q And do you know if they're conducting surveillance over these areas?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, I cannot make any pr- -- any kind of predictions or -- or comments about that specifically from here. This is something that DHS is looking at and FBI, so I would have to refer you to them.

I don't have anything beyond that we're tracking this very closely. Obviously, we're all aware of the incidents that have been reported. I I'm not going to go into what they could be or could not be from here. That is something that obviously is being looked at -- those -- those respective agencies that I just mentioned.

Q When was the president briefed on this?

MS. JEAN PIERRE: I don't have a timeline, but he certainly have has been made aware of this in his in his update.

Q Okay. And the New Jersey governor said, you know, it's frustrating that there aren't answers about where these are coming from, that people are very concerned about this. What's the White House message to the people up there who are frustrated that there isn't any information right now?

MS. JEAN PIERRE: Yeah. And and, obviously, we hear them and we understand that. We are closely tracking this. We are monitoring the incidents that have been put forward and -- and certainly made public.

And we have two respect- -- two agencies that I've already mentioned that are looking into this, working closely with folks on the ground, trying to get to the bottom of it.

I don't have anything more to share beyond that.

Go ahead, Andrea. I was trying to see who else I can call

Q (Laughs.)

MS. JEAN PIERRE: because I know I called on you already.

Q So, I just want to follow up on your comment -- or your -- your --

MS. JEAN PIERRE: Yeah.

Q -- desire to not comment, necessarily, on the UnitedHealthcare thing. But you did use the words "corporate greed." So, just to

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: You mean, just in general in this administration? Or or

Q Well, I mean, in terms of -- in ter- -- you -- you talked about the horrific response. I'll just read it back.

MS. JEAN PIERRE: Yeah.

Q "Obviously, this is a horrific response."

MS. JEAN PIERRE: Oh, you mean in my answer.

Q You know, your -- "This is horrific. Violence to combat any sort of corporate greed is unacceptable."

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah.

Q So, I mean, are you saying that you buy the argument that this violence was specifically targeted

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I --

Q at some sort of corporate greed by UnitedHealthcare?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: What I'm saying is that anything -- right? -- any type of violence on whatever it is right? whether it's political violence or or any kind of violence, we are going to - we're going to continue to say it is unacceptable and we're going to condemn any form of violence.

And that's what I was bringing it more so in a broader spectrum of -- of what we have been pretty consistent in saying at this podium, in this administration -- certainly this president as well.

Any form of violence any form of violence, whether what it is, we are going to certainly condemn it.

Q And then just to switch gears. The president today, during his remarks at Brookings, talked about leaving office but not going away and continuing to work on polarization and division issues. Do you have anything to share with us in terms of the president's plans? He's cut short his, you know, sort of you know, what will he be doing over the holidays? Can you just sort of give us a little readout on -- on what he's planning and whether, you know, there -- there would be a foundation or -- or how he envisions working on polarization?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, you're talking what his --

Q Post. Post.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: -- what his world will look like post his presidency? Look, I'm going to let the president speak to that. Obviously, he gave you a little bit of a window of his thinking of what he sees his world post January 20th. I don't want to get ahead of him.

This is someone, if you think about it right? in in more broadly, he has had a 52 year career in public service. So, he is a public servant to his core and always believes in doing everything that he can to make Americans' lives better. And you saw him do that in the last almost four years. And he's going to continue, certainly, doing that in the next 41 days the last 41 days of his administration.

And so, that is inherently who he is. He talks about continuing to do the work that he truly believes in.

Obviously, he talked about polarization. This is something that he's talked about for some time. And this is also a president whether he was president, vice president, or senator and you know this, if -- if you followed his career very closely -- he has -- he has found ways to reach across the aisles to get things done on behalf of the American people. And so, I'm sure that is something that he wants to continue to to speak to.

But I -- I don't have anything to share. I'm going to let him certainly lay that out when he feels is the right time to do so.

Q And just, really quickly, I know that Kirby spoke with us earlier, but the -- the question that I have is on Syria and the -- it looks like the government there now is sort of or the ch direction seems to be to embrace an open market economy. Can you say anything more about further contacts that you've had with -- with the opposition forces there in Syria and what your -- your,

sort of, understanding is about the direction that that government will take?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, look, what I will say is -- and what you've heard from many of my NSC colleagues over the past couple days, and certainly from the president on Sunday when he spoke to the developments in Syria on -- on Sunday, when he gave -- gave remarks in the Roosevelt Room -- so, what we can say and what I can say is that we are in contact with all the Syrian groups, including through with inter intermed including intermediaries, as we work to do whatever we can to support the Syrian people through a transition. And so, that's what I can speak to.

You heard the president say that various leaders of the rebel rebel grou- -- groups, including HTS, are saying what we view to be the right things publicly, obviously. But what is important is what they're saying closely matches their what they're saying their actions closely match their words, and that's what needs to be seen.

But I'm not going to go beyond that at this time. But certainly, we are in touch with Syrian groups.

Go ahead, M.J.

Q Thanks, Karine. Just quickly following up on the the murder of Brian Thompson. Can you give us any sense of how the president himself has been processing those headlines? I think even just setting aside the debate that it has prompted about the health care industry, I think just the image itself has been so shocking to a lot of people.

MS. JEAN PIERRE: Yeah. And and I'm going to be honest, I haven't had a a deep dive conversation with this the president about this. Obviously, I know that he has been updated. Certainly, have -- have talked to him about what -- what has been reported, and he's been updated by senior members other senior members of his team. So, haven't gone into the images or anything like that specifically.

But what I can say and what we've been really consistent and I just mentioned this to one of your colleagues is denouncing violence and how horrific this -- obviously, this incident is. And it is important to certainly continue to -- to say it's unacceptable, continue to say that we condemn it.

And we are trying to be really mindful because this is an ongoing legal matter. And so, what we say at this podium, as you know, goes far and wide and and has impact. So, we're trying to su be super, super careful from here.

But the thing that I can say is condemn the violence that we have - that we saw certainly last couple of da the couple days ago on this on this issue.

Q And just separately, can you confirm that the president still

opposes the death penalty?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: N- -- he -- his view has not changed on that.

Q Okay. Given that his view on that hasn't changed, can you talk to us a little bit about I know you're not wanting to, you know, share anything that you're not prepared to share yet, but given that that has been his stance, is he currently considering the possibility of the commutation of inmates that are currently on death row?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Again, I'm not going to go ahead of the president's thinking. Certainly, we will have more to announce on pardons and commutations, as I've said many times before, but there's a process. He's reviewing it. He's thinking through it. I'm just not going to get into any specifics from here at this time.

When he's ready to make announcements, we'll certainly, obviously, share that with all of you.

Go ahead.

Q Quickly, you mentioned the president can speak for himself on a lot of these issues. Will he give a year end press conference?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I don't have anything to share. Obviously, the president is going to -- wants to continue to engage with all of you. I don't have anything to share on on that.

Q The former defense min- -- Israeli defense minister was here today. Any updates on where the hostage negotiations stand?

MS. JEAN PIERRE: I don't have anything to update you on that. As you know -- and we've been pretty consistent about this and -- and pretty forthright on saying how we're -- certainly continue to be committed and working 24/7 to get the hostages home. This is a priority for this president, and he wants to do everything and continue to do everything that we can to do that.

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan is going to be traveling to Israel this week to meet with Israeli officials as part of our close consultations on a range of important issues, including our efforts to reach a hostage release and ceasefire deal in Gaza, and so and the latest development in Syria and and for discussions about Lebanon and Iran.

So, that is happening. Jake will be going to the region. And, as you probably already know, he's going to be meeting with the hostage the hostage the families of hostages in Gaza. And so, they're going to be meeting this afternoon, if they haven't already. And this is something that -- as you know, he has spoken to this before. Jake Sullivan regularly meets with the families of these hostages, and he has done that multiple time throughout this past -- past year. And so, that is -- that is something that he's -- he will be -- he's been doing -- he's going to be doing today.

And so, we have been really clear. This president has been really focused on his commitment on bringing Americans who have been wrongfully detained, held hostage. I think we have brought home over 75 Americans who are unjustly detained around the world. And so, that commitment continues.

And so, that is certainly what we're going to work on 24/7 from here.

Q And -- and to that note, the president said that he believes that Austin Tice, the American journalist held in Syria, is alive. What exactly is that based off of? And has there been any movement in terms of securing his release?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, let me just say at the top that that is a priority. You heard that from the president when he took, I think he made a statement and certainly took a question about this on Sunday. Finding Austin Tice is a ti- -- top priority of this administration.

The FBI and State Department have offered up to $11 million in reward to -- to anyone who can provide information.

We do not know where he is located. We do not know. But we continue to hope that he is alive. And I think that's what you hear from this -- this president: that he is hopeful that he is still alive.

And we're talking through, certainly, this with the Turks and others to find him and to bring him home, and that is our commitment from this president.

I will say, more broadly, to answer the question, there is no indication that he's not alive, but there's also no indication about his location or his condition.

So, again, we are hopeful. We are hopeful that he is, and we're going to continue to do the work to bring him home.

Q Sorry, just to follow up.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah.

Q So, when the president says he believes he is alive, are you saying he's really saying that he's hopeful he's alive?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Well, there's no indication he's not alive. There isn't. But at the same time, we do not know his location and we do not know his condition. That is just the sadly, the realities that we're in.

You heard what I just laid out about what the FBI and the State Department have done: offered up $11 million in r awar rewards to anyone who can provide more information. I think that shows our commitment to bringing him home, and that's what you're

going to continue to see from this president.

Again, I -- I talked about how he has -- in his administration, has brought home more than 75 Americans who have been wrongfully detained. And so, I think you can see this president and hear this president's commitment to doing that, getting Austin Tice home to his family.

Go ahead, Peter.

Q Can you detail how recently -- or when most recently President Biden himse- -- himself spoke to the Tice family, what the engagements with the family look right now, and then, what, with some specificity, is being done to try to secure more information? Is there a hostage recovery effort that's taking place that is physically in Damascus on the ground? There are American troops there. What more can you tell us about that outfit?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, I don't -- I would have to check in. I don't have a -- any update on -- on a conversation that -- when is the last time the conversation the president had a conversation

Q None -- none since the fall of Assad, that you know of?

MS. JEAN PIERRE: I just I I don't I just want to be super mindful.

Q Got it. Got it.

MS. JEAN PIERRE: I just haven't had that conversation, so I don't have anything to share with you on the last time the president has spoken with Austin's family.

As you know, Jake Sullivan, the national security advisor, spoke to his family just last week. So, that has occurred. There has been engagement and -- and -- from us with the family. So, just want to make that clear.

Look, I -- I just laid out how the FBI and the State Department has offered up $11 million in -- in rewards -- right? -- to try and get more information.

We do not know his location and we do not know his condition. And so, we are trying to do everything that we can to get that information.

We are committed to bringing him home. And so, that is what you heard from the president, certainly, on Sunday when he was asked directly this question or asked a question arou about Austin. And so, that is continues to be our commitment.

So, we are certainly working through the Turks and others to find - to find him and bring him home.

So, that is the actions that we have been taking. And so, I don't have anything else to share beyond that.

Q If you have anything more to share, I trust you'll tell us.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yes.

Q Let me ask you, if I can following up on a question that was asked to Jared that -- that raised this thought for me: Have you had any conversations with your successor --

MS. JEAN PIERRE: Yeah.

Q -- to the podium, Karoline Leavitt? And, specifically, what advice would you give to her when she takes the podium?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah, I was asked a questions like -- a question like this when her announcement was made. And certainly, I wish her all the luck. And this is a great job. I love this job. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve as the White House press secretary to this president -- to President Biden, to this administration. And -- and I hope she enjoys it, and I hope -- you know, again, I I just wish her well.

This has been an experience that I will always remember -- (laughs) -- a lifetime -- one of -- one of those experiences that will live with you forever. And and, you know, I know people say how tough this job is and how unre unrelenting it could be, but I enjoy it. I've enjoyed this opportunity. I've enjoyed speaking on behalf of the president of the United States. That is a big deal. That is an important job.

I have not spoken to her, but certainly wish her well.

Q Obviously, you wish her well. So, those are good wishes.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah.

Q But in terms of advice, what is your advice?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Well, look -- look, one of the things that we have -- I hope you all agree -- in this administration, is we have brought back the norms of how to engage with the press, having these press briefings, doing these back and forths, and trying to do that in the most respectful way that we can. And I think it's important. It's important.

We did that not because of all of you here obviously, we respect the work that you do, but also what -- what -- the job that you do and what it means to the American people.

Q So, to be clear, would you urge the new White House to have a daily press briefing?

MS. JEAN PIERRE: I I am not going to

Q That seems easy.

MS. JEAN PIERRE: No, no, no. No, no. No, no. I I think they have to decide for themselves how they want to move forward with a Trump administration. That is for them to decide.

What I can say is bringing back the norms, I thought I think we believe, not even "I" think the president believed was incredibly important to do. Having this back-and-forth with all of you, we believe was important to do on behalf of the American people.

Being able to have the freedom of the press -- right? -- and respecting the freedom of the press is, indeed, very much a part of our democracy. The we call you all the "fourth of state," right? That is incredibly important to have to have that be part of this administration. The job that you do, reporting on what we're doing, even when we disagree with all of you not all of you; with some of you. (Laughter.)

I won't say "with all of you" -- a blanket "all of you." (Laughter.)

But even when we disagree, just generally right? even when we disagree, we believe it's important to have that back-and-forth, and it's healthy, it is part of our democracy, and we want to continue to respect certainly continue to respect that.

I'm not -- it is up to them. I'm not sitting behind the -- the Resolute Desk, and that is for that person to decide -- the next person to decide how they're going to move forward.

Q Thank you.

MS. JEAN PIERRE: Yep.

Go ahead.

Q Yeah, two quick ones. One on the U.S. Steel matter. Is the can you give us an update on the timeline? And is the president committed to making a decision one way or the other before he leaves office, or is it --

MS. JEAN PIERRE: Yeah.

Q -- a possibility he'll let --

MS. JEAN PIERRE: I I

Q -- his successor make that decision?

MS. JEAN PIERRE: I don't have any update for you on that. I don't have an update.

Q Next one. Same question: TikTok.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: What about TikTok? (Laughter.)

Q Is the president is the president

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I was -- I was --

Q committed to making a determination

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Do I like TikTok? What -- (laughs).

Q on TikTok

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah.

Q before he leaves office, or is that something he might leave to his successor?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, look -- so, I'm going to refer you to the Department of Justice, who has put out a statement on this, and the court's finding that, and I quote, the government "has offered pers- -- persuasive evidence demonstrating that the act is narrowly tailored to protect national security" and -- another quote here -- "to counter a well substa substantiated national security threat."

I'll just reiterate: The administration and a strong par- -- bipartisan majority of Congress that passed this law have been clear that we want to we want to see is a divestment, not a ban. We've been very clear about that. You've heard us talk about that from here ad nauseam, I'm sure, for all of you.

So, this is not about banning the app. This is about preventing the PRC from being able to exploit data gathered on many Americans. So, this is about protecting our privacy and -- American privacy. And so, that's what we've been very clear about that.

Outside of that, I would have to refer you to the Department of Justice.

Q This is a presidential determination under the law that --

MS. JEAN PIERRE: I would I would refer you to the Department of Justice since there was just a a decision made about this, so I'm going to refer you to this on that.

Go ahead. I

Q Thank you. Two questions. One on Brazil. One on Haiti.

Haiti

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah.

Q Haiti do you have a reaction to the massacre that

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah.

Q recently happened? One hundred and eighty people were killed.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, we are horrified -- horrified by the reporting that nearly 200 people in Haiti were needlessly mass massacred, as you just stated, by self serving criminal gang members. And so, we strongly, strongly condemn this vicious and -- and criminal act. And we call upon all of the international community to immediately stand with the people of Haiti and provide assistance to the Kenyan led multinational security support mission.

But it is incredibly sad to us, what we been reported, and it's horrific. And, I mean, these are people who were needlessly massacred, again, by self-serving criminal gang members. And it is -- it is certainly disheartening to hear.

Q And in Brazil, the president President Biden met with President Lula of Brazil last month. Today, President Lula was -- he was undergoing surgery. Has the president been following this?

MS. JEAN PIERRE: So, he is aware, and and, you're right, the president was in Brazil recently. He -- he enjoyed President Lula's warm -- warm welcome to Brazil just a couple of weeks ago, just last month. And so, we are pleased to hear that his operation this morning went well. And certainly, we wish him a speedy recovery. And as you just asked me, the president is aware and is tracking.

Okay. Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Karine. One of the first things that the president did when he took office was rescind former President Trump's order creating a Schedule F that would have allowed thousands upon thousands of civil servants to be fired if they were determined to be in a -- in a policy-making position. And the administration has finalized regulations that would make doing that harder for a future president, but the president never got behind any of the bipartisan bills that would have prohibited future presidents from reclassifying civil servants, employees to make them more easily fireable. Does he regret not doing that, considering that President elect Trump has indicated he wants to immediately bring back Schedule F and begin firing lots of civil servants?

MS. JEAN PIERRE: So, what I will say is and you stated this in your question to me, and I think the president has led by example. You said what he was -- what he did the first couple of days, couple of weeks, even months when he stepped into this office, into this administration, and trying to protect, certainly, and turning back some of the policies policies that were put forward. And the reason he did that is because this is a president who believes that public servants deserve -- they deserve to be treated with dignity and respect because they are working on behalf of of their fellow Americans.

And so, he took those actions because he believed that. And he

took that those actions because he was able to lead by example in this office.

And so, I'm not going to get into what the next administration is going to do or not do, but what I can say is really, very much into how you led into your question to me, is that he respects public servants, and he certainly has led by example from here.

Q But the president, he had a democratic trifecta when he came into office, and yet he did not put any of his political capital into getting Congress to include, in any of the must-pass bills, legislation that would have prohibited future presidents from doing what Donald Trump has has vowed to do.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah.

Q And the regulations that the administration has finalized can be undone. They can be unwound. And all of what happened of what the administration did can be for naught.

Why did the president not, if he if he respects and respects civil servants so much, did he not put any political capital into safeguarding --

MS. JEAN PIERRE: Yeah.

Q -- their status in legislation?

MS. JEAN PIERRE: So, first, Andrew, I'm not going to litigate each policy, each legislation. I'm just not going to do that from here. And so, that is something that I'm not going to get into.

What I will say is the president took action. You said it in your question. He took action to undo some of the policies that were put forward by the last administration that harmed these public servants that were working very hard to the work -- to do the work on behalf of the American people. And he did lead by example. He did. He took steps, and and he did that because he believes in respecting and showing some dignity to those workers.

And he undid a lot of the harm that was caused policies, obviously, to these public servants. And I think that is showing leadership. That is showing how you can take action to do the right thing.

And so, I would so, I would obviously take a little offense to your question, but I'm not going to litigate each legislation. You said it yourself in asking me this question -- original question. The president did take action. He did lead by example, and I think that's important here.

I'm going to take one last question. Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Karine. Just quickly. Has the president been briefed on the fires out in California? Is the White House in touch with officials?

MS. JEAN PIERRE: He he certainly has been kept up to date to the fires in Malibu, California, more specifically. So, we are certainly praying for communities out west that have been, in fact, impacted by the wildfires. And administration officials, as we normally are, are in close touch with local and state officials on the ground. Their counterparts and FEMA has issued a -- a Fire Management Assistant Grant to help reimburse California for firefight fighting cost.

And so, we are obviously always grateful to the brave firefighters who go out there and put their lives on the line to protect people and save lives. And so, we stand ready as we normally do, stand ready to pr to provide any further support. And so, we certainly, as we do at all times when we see this type of extreme weather that's created, this type of havoc that communities on the ground, folks on the ground, need to certainly pay close attention to what's being said to them. Evacuate, if needed. And we want them to be ~~stafe~~ [safe] and to stay safe.

All right. Thanks, everybody. I'll see you (inaudible).
Q Thanks, Karine.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Thanks, everybody.

3:42 P.M. EST

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From: "Iverson, Dena (PAO)" <(b) (6) >
To: "Hornbuckle, Wyn (PAO)" <(b) (6) >, "Hinojosa, Xochitl (PAO)" <(b) (6) >
Subject: FW: Talking points on civil service protections
Date: Mon, 02 Dec 2024 16:39:13 -0500
Importance: Normal
Attachments: TPs_re_CSP.docx

From: Chandler, Adam (ODAG) <(b) (6) >
Sent: Monday, December 2, 2024 4:36 PM
To: (b) (6) <(b) (6) >
Cc: Lauria, Jolene A. (JMD) <(b) (6) >; Williams, Mike (JMD) <(b) (6) >
Subject: FW: Talking points on civil service protections

All – please see below and attached from OPM Acting Director Rob Shriver re civil-service protections and merit-systems principles. Please share this resource with your component heads, as well, in case it helps them field questions from your career staffs.

Thanks,
Adam

From: Shriver, RH
Sent: Monday, December 2, 2024 3:03 PM
Subject: Talking points on civil service protections

Good afternoon, colleagues. I've attached for your information OPM's talking points on civil service protections and merit systems principles. At the bottom of the attached document are links to (1) our final regulation and (2) our implementing guidance and accompanying FAQs on this topic. This material may be helpful to you in addressing questions that employees have about actions the incoming Administration might take to replace career civil servants through a mechanism such as Schedule F. Feel free to reach out if you want to discuss further. Thanks.

Rob

Upholding Civil Service Protections and Merit-System Principles

Talking Points

Background:

The incoming Administration has suggested that it plans to reduce the size of the federal workforce and has outlined a number of ideas for doing so. We know that federal employees have a lot of questions, including what protections career employees have.

We have prepared talking points below that can be used when communicating with employees about protections provided by Congress and reinforced and clarified by OPM's civil service protections and merit system principles final rule, issued in April 2024.

- (b) (5) [redacted]
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- (b) (5) [redacted]

- (b) (5) [redacted]

- For more information about OPM's rule, you can visit https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/04/09/2024-06815/upholding-civil-service-protections-and-merit-system-principles, for the rule text

- You can also find implementing guidance and FAQs here: Implementing Guidance for Upholding Civil Service Protections and Merit System Principles Regulations | CHCOC

From: "(b) (6) (USACT)" <(b) (6) >
To: "(b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per ATF" <(b) (6) >, "(b) (6) (ODAG)" <(b) (6) >, "(b)(6), (b)(7)(C), (7)(F) per USMS (USMS)" <(b) (6) >, "(b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per ATF" <(b) (6) >, "(b) (6) (OLP)" <(b) (6) >, "(b) (6) (CRT)" <(b) (6) >, "(b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per BOP (BOP)" <(b) (6) >, "(b)(6), (b)(7)(C) per BOP (BOP)" <(b) (6) >
Cc: (b)(6) DOJ Pride
Subject: DOJ GEN Panel TONIGHT @ 7 EST on Doxing and Schedule F / Government Accountability Project
Date: Mon, 16 Dec 2024 08:50:51 -0500
Importance: Normal
Inline-Images: image001.jpg; image002.gif; image003.png; image004.png; image005.png

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Dear DOJ Pride,

FYI, **tonight at 7:00 PM EST** DOJ GEN is hosting an event for employees to learn how to protect themselves from doxing and to learn more about Schedule F and what the Government Accountability Project does. Employees in the Civil Rights Division were doxed last week, so this event is unfortunately well-timed.

See message and RSVP link from DOJ GEN below.

Sincerely,
DOJ Pride Board

Follow us online at:

http://dojpride.org/
https://www.facebook.com/4DOJPride/
https://twitter.com/dojpride

Hi everyone,

DOJ GEN is having a panel discussion this coming **Monday, Dec. 16, at 7 p.m. EST**, that should last about an hour. We'll be hosting the following experts in their fields:

- **Tracy Chou**, a prominent tech CEO and leader in the movement to combat doxing and other online threats, will discuss how people can protect themselves.
- **Justin Sherman**, a cybersecurity expert whose recent Lawfare piece DOJ GEN cited in our letter asking DOJ leadership to strengthen its response to doxing, will discuss the specific online threats facing federal employees today, including from data brokers and geolocation technology.
- **Dana Gold**, the Government Accountability Project's (GAP) Senior Director of Advocacy & Strategy, will discuss GAP's work and address what a reinstitution of Schedule F could mean for the federal workforce.

If you can make it, please fill out this form and we'll send you a Zoom link:

RSVP FORM

If the form doesn't work for you, shoot us an email at (b)(6) DOJ Gender Equality Network.

Please share this invitation with your colleagues and friends at DOJ and other federal agencies.

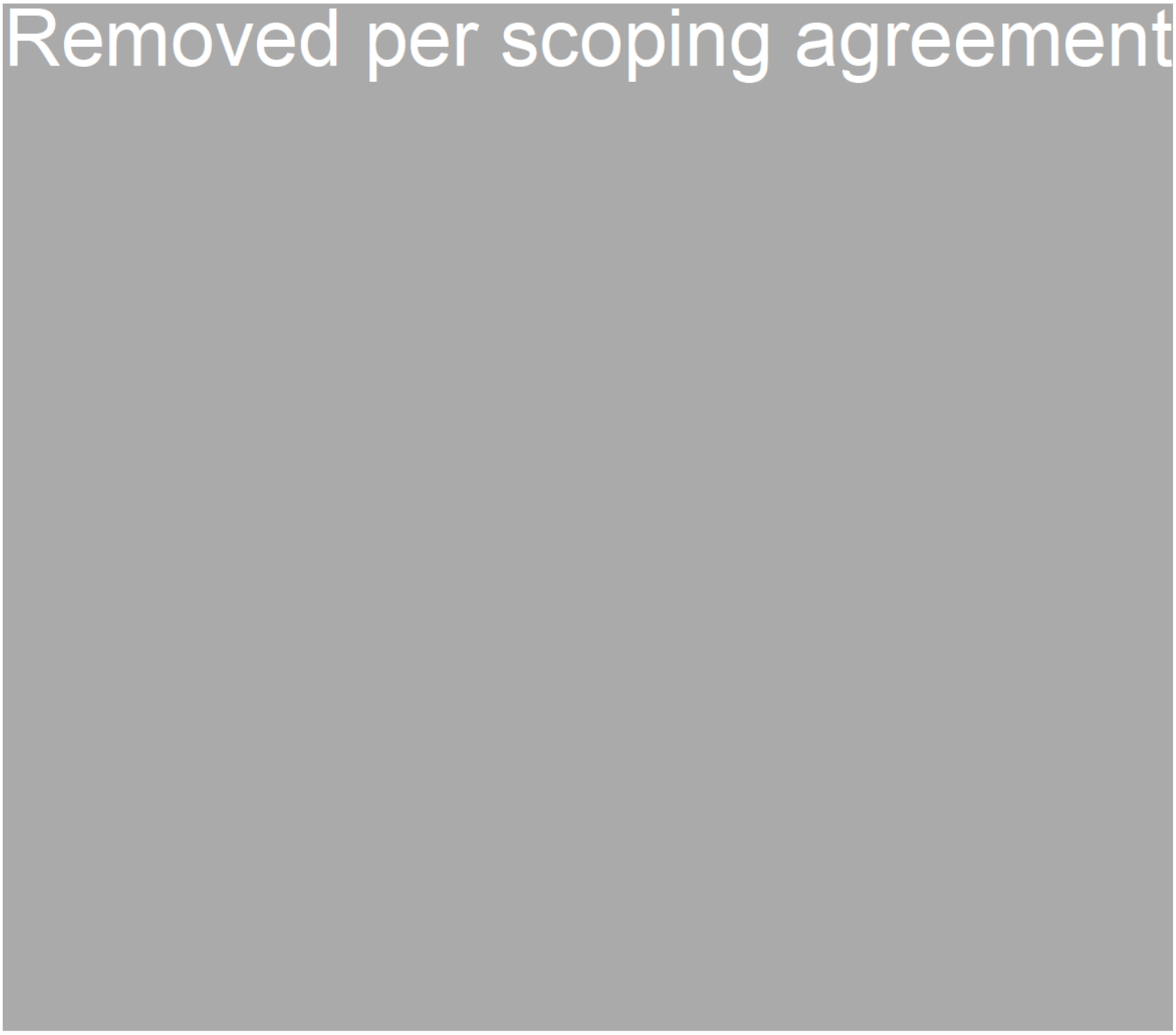
I hope to see you there.

Best,
(b) (6)

DOJ GEN

Please urge your colleagues to join DOJ GEN by filling out this form
www.dojgen.org
(b)(6) DOJ Gender Equality Network
Follow us on LinkedIn and X

From: (b) (6) (OLA)" <(b) (6) >
To: "Uriarte, Carlos F. (OLA)" <(b) (6) >, "Bond, Slade (OLA)" <(b) (6) >
Cc: "Linehan, Corey (OLA)" <(b) (6) >, "Cocklin, Katherine P. (OLA)" <(b) (6) >, "Herbert-King, Jenelle R. (OLA)" <(b) (6) >
Subject: News/Flags - December 9, 2024
Date: Tue, 10 Dec 2024 08:24:41 -0500
Importance: Normal
Embedded: OLA_Correspondence_12_09_2024



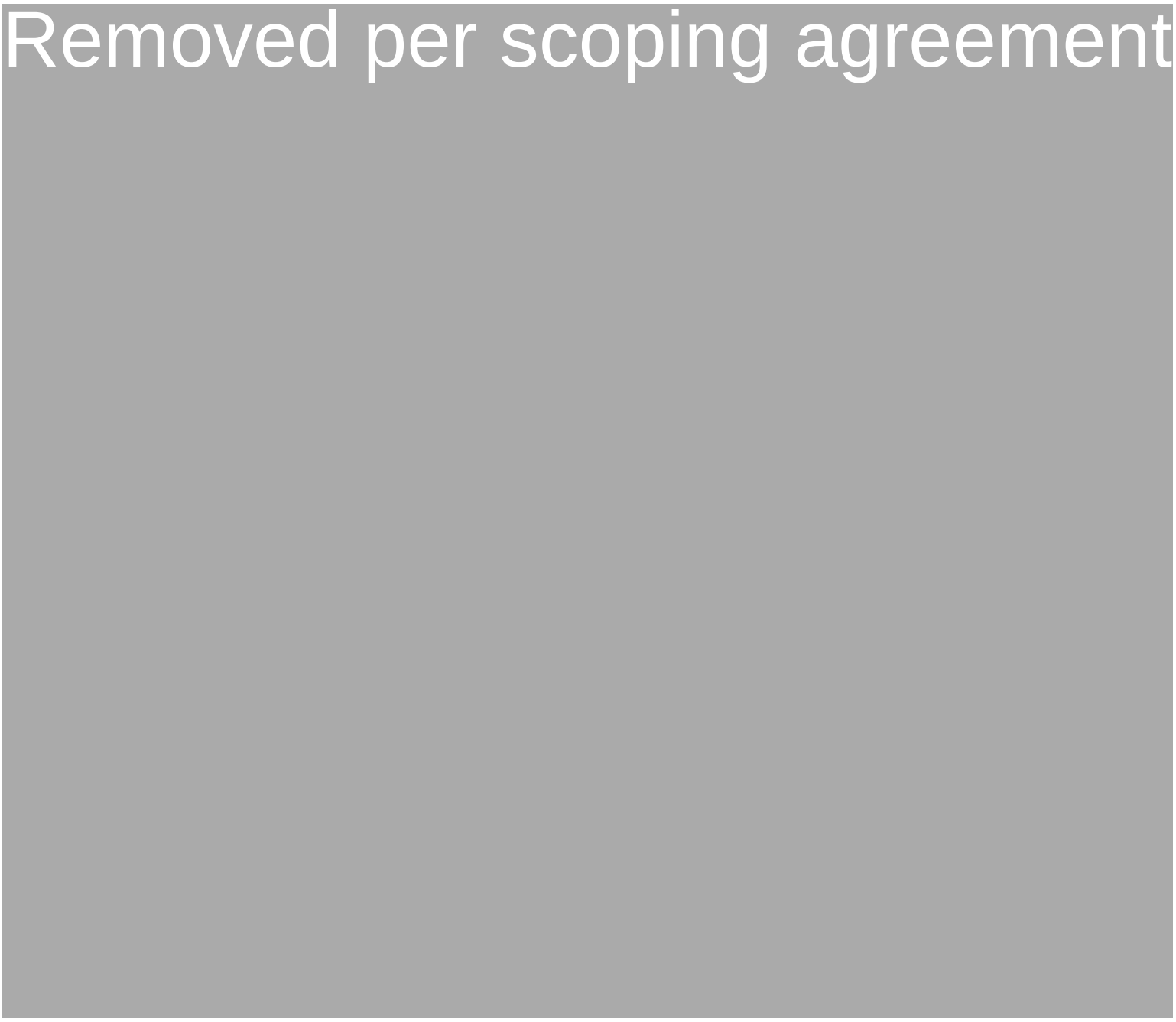
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CLIPS:

Justice Department Lawyers To Vote On Union On Eve Of Trump

Bloomberg Law reported that environmental and civil rights attorneys will vote on whether to form the Justice Department's first known union of litigators in the final weeks before a second Trump administration that's threatened to erode their job protections. Lawyers with DOJ's Civil Rights and Environment and Natural Resources divisions—handling some of the department's more politically divisive cases—will both start casting ballots Dec. 12, said a spokeswoman for the National Treasury Employees Union. The civil rights voting period ends Jan. 8 and the ENRD period closes Jan. 9, she added. The federal sector labor board could certify results before Trump takes office Jan. 20, but the timeline varies and may take months, depending on potential challenges filed over the results and other factors. The process comes amid widespread concerns from current and former DOJ employees that President-elect Donald Trump will dismantle the federal bureaucracy, with a particular focus on a Justice Department workforce he didn't trust in his prior term. The union organizing with NTEU at both divisions launched in part as a response to mandates last year from the Biden administration's DOJ to cut back on remote work flexibility. Trump's pledge as a candidate to revive his 2020 "Schedule F" executive order to fire "rogue bureaucrats" also mobilized the employees. "The Civil Rights Division and the Environment and Natural Resources Division remain fully committed to the right of our employees to organize consistent with federal law," a DOJ spokesperson said in a statement.

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(b) (6)
Confidential Assistant
Office of Legislative Affairs
C: (b) (6)

From: (b) (6) (OLA)" <(b) (6) >
To: "Uriarte, Carlos F. (OLA)" <(b) (6) >
Cc: "Linehan, Corey (OLA)" <(b) (6) >, "Cocklin, Katherine P. (OLA)" <(b) (6) >, "Herbert-King, Jenelle R. (OLA)" <(b) (6) >, "Bond, Slade (OLA)" <(b) (6) >
Subject: News/Flags - November 25, 2024
Date: Mon, 25 Nov 2024 07:47:25 -0500
Importance: Normal
Attachments: 11.25.24_Week_Ahead_Final.pdf; 11.25.24_Week_Ahead_Final(1).pdf
Embedded: OLA_Correspondence_11_22_2024; MoC_Sunday_Shows_–_November_24

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PLAYBOOK (WEEKEND):

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DOJ SIREN: Trump intends to fire every Justice Department employee who worked with special counsel **JACK SMITH** on the federal criminal investigations of him, purging "career attorneys typically protected from political retribution," WaPo's Amy Gardner, Josh Dawsey, Ashley Parker and Perry Stein report. He also intends to have DOJ try to turn up examples of voter fraud in the 2020 election, which all evidence indicates was not widespread but which has turned into the "big lie" foundational to Trump's recent political identity. But that effort is not as clearly formed as his principal goal to "clean house" of employees whom he accuses, without evidence, of weaponizing law enforcement against him.

It may not be easy for Trump to fire career civil servants, though, who still (for now) are insulated from such political targeting. Even if Trump reinstates his "Schedule F" rule, years of legal challenges would likely await. Trump's team responded to the Post that "anonymous sources not affiliated with him have no idea what they are talking about."

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