



BRIEFING ROOM

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry, and National Climate Advisor Gina McCarthy, January 27, 2021

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James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

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MS. PSAKI: Good afternoon. President Biden is continuing to follow through on his key promise to take swift and bold action that addresses the climate crisis, building on his day-one actions of rejoining the Paris Agreement and strengthening our clean air and water protections and holding polluters accountable.

Today, he will take executive action to tackle the climate crisis at home and abroad, while creating good-paying union jobs, building sustainable infrastructure, and delivering environmental justice.

I'm thrilled today, as a part of our effort to bring policy experts into the briefing room, we're joined by two very special guests who are going to talk to you — talk to you all about today's executive orders and take a few questions as well. And I will always — as always play the role of bad cop when they have to go: National Climate Advisor Gina McCarthy and Special Presidential Envoy for Climate — and my former boss — former Secretary of State John Kerry. And a big day for Boston in the briefing room, so — (laughter).

Okay, with that, go ahead.

ADMINISTRATOR MCCARTHY: Thank you. It's a big day for Boston every day. Thank you, everybody.

Today, President Biden will build on the actions he took on day one, and he'll take more to fulfill commitments he made to tackle the climate crisis, while creating good-paying union



jobs and achieving environmental justice.

In his campaign, he and Vice President Harris put forward the most ambitious climate vision that any presidential ticket had ever embraced, and he spent more time campaigning on climate than we have ever seen.

The President also has consistently identified the climate crisis as one of four interrelated existential crises that are gripping our nation all at once, and he’s demanding answers that can address all four. And he’s not waiting to take action, getting us started on his first day in office, because science is telling us that we don’t have a moment to lose to fight against all four of these crises in a way that recognizes their intersectionality.

He’s always committed the U.S. to reenter — I’m sorry, he’s already committed the U.S. to reenter the Paris Climate Agreement. And he committed us, as well, to start undoing the assault on our environment that has occurred over the past four years. And he is now taking additional action to really target the challenge of climate change.

So today, for me, is a very good day. Just one week into his administration, President Biden is continuing to move us forward at the breadth and the pace that climate science demands.

Today’s executive order starts by saying, “It is the policy of this administration that climate considerations shall be an essential element of U.S. foreign policy and national security.” That’s where the big guy comes in. It gives my colleague, John Kerry — the first-ever international climate envoy — the authority to really drive forward a process that will restore American leadership on climate throughout the world. And you will see and hear more about that from Secretary Kerry.

But, here at home, we have to do our part or we will not be able to make the kind of worldwide change that climate change demands.

So this executive order establishes a White House Office of Domestic Climate Policy, and it directs everyone who works for the President to use every tool available at our disposal to solve the climate crisis, because we’re going to take a whole-of-government approach. We’re going to power our economy with clean energy. We’re going to do that in a way that will produce millions of American jobs that are going to be good-paying, that are going to be jobs that have the opportunity for workers to join a union.

Because, as President Biden has often told us, when he thinks of climate change, his first thought is about jobs. And it should be, because people in this country need a job, and about making that happen in the most creative and significant way that the federal government can move forward. And we’re going to make sure that nobody is left behind, and I’m not just



can move forward. And we're going to make sure that nobody is left behind, and I'm not just talking about communities, in terms of environmental justice, but workers as well.

This order takes historic strides to address environmental injustice. It creates both a White House interagency task force to address environmental justice, as well as an advisory council. It directs the Department of Health and Human Services to create an Office of Climate Change and Health Equity because, after all, climate change is the most significant public health challenge of our time.

And it tasks the Department of Justice with establishing an Office of Climate Justice because we know the communities who are being hurt, and we know we have to start enforcing the standards today and ensuring that they are part of the solution and in places that we can invest. In fact, it commits 40 percent of our investment in clean energy towards disadvantaged communities so they can benefit from the new jobs that are available and see that better future.

President Biden's order establishes a Working Group on Coal and Power Plant Communities because we have to make sure that, in this transition, every agency in government is using every tool at their disposal to drive resources to those communities. And it fulfills longstanding commitments to leverage our vast natural resources to contribute to our clean energy future.

It places a pause and review on new oil and gas leases on federal public lands and waters, consistent with a promise President Biden has repeatedly made and has been very clear in the face of efforts to distort his promise. And it sets a goal of doubling offshore wind production by 2030.

In addition, he plans to sign a presidential memorandum that aims to restore scientific integrity across the federal government and earn back the public's trust, making a commitment to base solutions on the best available science and data.

So today is a very big day for science and for our efforts to power our economy with good-paying union jobs.

Thank you very much.

SECRETARY KERRY: Good afternoon, everybody. It's great to be here. Let me say, first of all, what a pleasure it is to be here with Gina. I'm a big fan of Gina's. Gina and I worked very, very closely together during the campaign, when we sat down to bring the Bernie Sanders folks together around the Biden climate plan. And she is the perfect person to be tackling the domestic side of this equation, which is complicated. And nobody knows the details better than she does, and nobody is going to be more effective in compelling everybody to move in the



than she does, and nobody is going to be more effective in corraining everybody to move in the same direction.

It's also an enormous pleasure for me to be here with Jen Psaki. She mentioned that — nobody was her boss, but I had the privilege of working with her. And she — seven years ago, we gathered in the State Department briefing room. She's traded up, obviously, but she has not given away any of her fundamental principles and commitment to telling you all the truth, telling the American people the truth, and doing so with great candor and transparency. And I'm very happy to be here with her.

The stakes on climate change just simply couldn't be any higher than they are right now. It is existential. We use that word too easily, and we throw it away. But we have a big agenda in front of us on a global basis, and President Biden is deeply committed — totally seized by this issue, as you can tell by this executive order and by the other — the initiative for getting back into Paris immediately. That's why he rejoined the Paris agreement so quickly, because he knows it is urgent.

He also knows that Paris alone is not enough — not when almost 90 percent of all of the planet's emissions — global emissions — come from outside of U.S. borders. We could go to zero tomorrow and the problem isn't solved.

So that's why today, one week into the job, President Biden will sign this additional executive set of orders to help move us down the road, ensuring that ambitious climate action is global in scope and scale, as well as national, here at home.

Today, in the order that he will sign — that Gina has described to you — he makes climate central to foreign policy planning, to diplomacy, and to national security preparedness. It creates new platforms to coordinate climate action across the federal agencies and departments sorely needed. And most importantly, it commissions a National Intelligence Estimate on the security implications of climate change to give all of us an even deeper understanding of the challenges.

This is the first time a president has ever done that. And our 17 intelligence agencies are going to come together and assess exactly what the danger and damage and potential risks are.

The order directs the State Department to prepare a transmittal package, seeking Senate advice and consent on the Kigali Amendment, to the Montreal Protocol — an amendment that by itself, if ratified and fully enforced globally, could hold the Earth's temperature by 0.5 of an entire degree — not insignificant.

And it sets forth a process for us to develop an ambitious new Paris target, as well as a U.S. climate finance plan, both of which are essential to our being able to bring countries of the



world together to raise ambition and meet this moment when we go to Glasgow for the follow-on agreement to Paris.

So that's the only way for the world to succeed together, my friends. And so, again, this is an issue where failure literally is not an option.

As he committed to doing on the campaign trail, the President is announcing that he will host a Leaders Summit on Climate Change less than three months from now, on April 22nd, Earth Day, which will include a leader-level reconvening of the Major Economies Forum. We'll have specifics to lay out over time.

But the convening of this — of this summit is essential to ensuring that 2021 is going to be the year that really makes up for the lost time of the last four years and that the U.N. Climate Conference — COP26, as it's called, which the UK is hosting in November — to make sure that it is an unqualified success.

The Road to Glasgow will be marked not just by promises, but by progress, at a pace that we can all be proud of. And Gina is going to be putting her efforts into making certain that that is true. The world will measure us by what we can do here at home.

So with these executive actions today, we believe we're steps further down that journey.

Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: All right. Let's start with Nancy.

Q Thank you so much. Secretary Kerry, a question for you and then for Administrator McCarthy. You talked about the fact that it won't really matter what we do very much if the rest of the world doesn't do the same thing. But the U.S. has had a fairly rocky relationship with China recently. How do you plan to try to bring both China and India to the table on this issue?

SECRETARY KERRY: Well, before I — before I answer that, let me just say that the issue of making a difference — i.e. what we do at home — what I'm saying is you can't solve the problem alone, but our doing things makes an enormous difference. What Gina succeeds in pulling together is essential to our ability to have credibility in the world.

Now, with respect to China, obviously we have serious differences with China on some very important issues. And I am as mindful of that as anybody, having served as Secretary of



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State and in the Senate, the issues of theft of intellectual property and access to market, the

South China Sea. I mean, run the list; we all know them. Those issues will never be traded for anything that has to do with climate. That's not going to happen.

But climate is a critical standalone issue that we have to deal on in the sense that China is 30 percent of the emissions of the world; we're about 15 percent of the emissions of the world. You add the EU to that, and you got three entities that are more than 55 percent or so.

So it's urgent that we find a way to compartmentalize, to move forward. And we'll wait and see.

But President Biden is very, very clear about the need to address the other issues with China. And I know some people have been concerned. Nothing is going to be siphoned off into one area from another.

Q And then a question for either of you on coal. Your executive order talks about oil and gas on federal lands, but it doesn't really say much about coal. What is this administration's policy when it comes to coal?

ADMINISTRATOR MCCARTHY: Well, in terms of the oil and gas decision, it was to — is to make sure that we take a little pause and review the entire strategy of we're looking at public lands. So it will include looking at what new leases ought to be approved and sold; it's looking at our ability also to look at coal in that mix.

So the program review is going to look at how we manage public lands — consistent with climate, but also consistent with the marriage between climate and really growing jobs of the future. So it will be in the mix to be looked at, but it is — it is not, at this point, included. It was not part of the commitments on the campaign, but we're going to take a close look at all of it.

And can I just add on your comment about China, which — I'm not going to speak to the international dynamic, but I am going to say that part of the challenge that we face here is a challenge that President Biden has already started to address with his Buy American Pledge. We have to start, not just going — shifting to clean energy, but it has to be manufactured in the United States of America — you know, not in other countries. And there is going to be a large discussion about how we make sure that a lot of the investment is about building up our manufacturing base again. That's great jobs. That's often, hopefully, union jobs. But it is also a wonderful opportunity for us to recoup the benefits of that manufacturing and lower the costs of clean energy.

Part of the way we're going to get there is by making sure the federal government buys

American and that the federal government looks at its procurement across every agency so that



the breadth of what we spend is spent — designed to advance job growth in the United States, to advance health benefits for environmental justice communities, and to begin to tackle the very challenge — the existential challenge of climate change.

MS. PSAKI: Jeff Mason.

Q Thank you. Jeff Mason with Reuters. Question for both of you: Can you give us a sense of when you expect to have the so-called “NDC” or U.S. target for cutting greenhouse gas emissions as part of the Paris Accord? And can you also give us a sense of how ambitious you plan to make that number? Will it be 40 percent, 50 percent — higher than that?

ADMINISTRATOR MCCARTHY: Well —

SECRETARY KERRY: We’re united in this, so —

ADMINISTRATOR MCCARTHY: Yeah, I’m the dude who’s supposed to deliver this in a timely way — (laughter) — and he sets the timing. So, basically, we want to make sure that the NDC is something that can be announced before the summit on Earth Day. And so we’re going to be, out of the gate, working with the agencies to see what kind of reductions and mitigation opportunities there are and also, again, to look at our public lands to make sure that we can continue to store carbon in our soil, to work with agriculture and others to look at how we better manage our forests so we’re not seeing the devastating forest fires that we’ve been having before.

So, all across the federal government, every agency — and you’ll see many of them specifically tasked in this executive order — will participate in the task force that we’re going to have to actually develop the most aggressive NDC that we can to deliver the kind of boost that Secretary Kerry is looking for to be able to ensure that our international efforts are robust and sufficient to address the challenge internationally.

Q And just a follow-up on that, perhaps, for Secretary Kerry: How do you assure international partners that the U.S. will stick to whatever you propose after having seen the Trump administration take the U.S. out of the Paris Accord?

SECRETARY KERRY: That’s precisely why we’re going to stick by it, and I think our word is strong. I’ve been on the phone for the last few days, talking to our allies in Europe, elsewhere around the world. And they are welcoming us back. They know that this administration already had a significant part of what has brought us to — will bring us to Glasgow, which is the Paris Agreement.



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The Obama-Biden administration had great credibility on this issue, and having President Biden be the person now who is driving this forward is enormously meaningful to the folks there. And they also know that I was deeply involved in the negotiations in Paris and am now asked by the President – by President Biden – to make certain that we do the same in Glasgow, if not more.

So I – I have had no one question our credibility at this point in time. Someone probably will, and the answer will be that I think we can achieve things in the course of the next four years that will move the marketplace, the private sector, global finance, innovation, and research that, in fact, no – no one, no political person in the future would be able to undo what the planet is going to be organizing over these next months and years.

This is the start of something new. I don't know if you read Larry Fink's letter, of BlackRock, the other day – yesterday. But there's a new – new awareness among major asset managers and commercial banks and others about the need to be putting resources into this endeavor because it is – it is major in investment demand.

So I think the proof will be in what we do. Neither Gina nor I are going to start, you know, throwing around a lot of big promises, but you heard what she just said, and we will work very closely. Because we're going to try to bring to the table, to help inform her and the folks she's working with, what we're picking up abroad and what people are doing abroad and the steps that they're taking and how we now have to measure ourselves against them, and they will measure themselves against us. We are well aware of that.

ADMINISTRATOR MCCARTHY: Can I just add something? I just want to call attention to the fact that cities and states have really picked up the initiative to move forward on clean energy because the solutions are cheap. The solutions compete effectively against fossil fuels.

We are talking about solutions that we're not asking anybody to sacrifice, but are to their advantage. And if you look at the record over the past four years, while the prior administration might have wanted energy – clean energy to head in a different direction, it's gone faster and farther than anyone ever expected.

And the idea that we could, with this new work that we're doing together, send signals to the marketplace, who are purchasing at the federal level and are re-looking at different ways of having on-the-ground change – we can build that demand. We can actually grow, significantly, millions of clean energy jobs. And all of a sudden, the question won't be whether the private sector is going to buy into it; the private sector is going to drive it.

And so this is going to be a signal setter, the way the federal government ought to set, on ourselves and what we think the future needs to be. And that's – it's – this is a value being



our values are, what we think the future needs to be. And that's — it's — this is a value-laden [sic] — -laden effort that President Biden has undertaken, with full knowledge that is going to benefit jobs, it's going to benefit our health, and it's going to lead to that future we want to hand to our children.

MS. PSAKI: We'll just do these two in the front, and then they will come back, I promise. So, go ahead.

Q Thank you. Mr. Secretary, if you would, there's — there certainly are oil and gas industry workers who are watching you both right now who will hear the message that's — that the takeaway to them is that they are seeing an end to their livelihoods. What do you say to them, particularly those people who President Trump struck a chord with on the campaign trail when he promised to save their jobs? What is your message to them right now?

And also, to the oil industry executives who are listening — are you putting them on notice today?

SECRETARY KERRY: Well, we didn't come here to put anybody on notice, except to the seriousness of President Biden's intent to do what needs to be done to deal with this crisis, and it is a crisis.

With respect to those workers, no — no two people are more — in this room, are more concerned about it. And the President of the United States has expressed, in every comment he has made about climate, the need to grow the new jobs that pay better, that are cleaner, that —

I mean, you know, you look at the consequences of black lung for a miner, for instance, and measure that against the fastest-growing job in the United States before COVID was solar power technician. The same people can do those jobs, but the choice of doing the solar power one now is a better choice. And similarly, you have the second-fastest-growing job pre-COVID was wind turbine technician.

This is happening. Seventy-five percent, seventy percent of all the electricity that's come on line in the United States in the last few years came from renewables, not — you know, coal plants have been closing over the last 20 years.

So what President Biden wants to do is make sure those folks have better choices, that they have alternatives, that they can be the people who go to work to make the solar panels — that we're making them here at home. That is going to be a particular focus of the Build Back Better agenda.

And I think that, unfortunately, workers have been fed a false narrative. No surprise, right?

For the last few years, they've been fed the notion that, somehow, dealing with climate is coming at their expense. No, it's not. What's happening to them is happening because of other market forces already taking place.

And what the — what the — what the financiers, the big banks, the asset managers, private investors, venture capital are all discovering is: There's a lot of money to be made in the creation of these new jobs in these sectors. So whether it's green hydrogen that is going to come, whether it is geothermal heat, or whether it — whatever it's going to be, those are jobs.

The same worker who works in South Carolina today putting together a BMW, which happens to be made there, and — and is currently an internal combustion engine, can put together a car, but it's electric.

So this is not a choice between having jobs, having good jobs, having the quality of life. Quality of life will be better when Gina has put her team together that produces choices for us that are healthier, less cancer, cleaner air. The greatest — the greatest cost in America, the greatest cause of children being hospitalized every summer in the United States — we spent \$55 billion a year on it — is environmentally induced asthma. That will change as we begin to rein in what we used to call "pollution" in this country, because it is pollution.

And I think that workers are going to see that, with the efforts of the Biden administration, they're going to have a much better set of choices, and, frankly, it will create more jobs than stuck where we were.

ADMINISTRATOR MCCARTHY: Could I just add by pointing out a couple of things in the executive order that I want you to just call to your attention?

We talked about the Civilian Conservation Corps. That is an opportunity to put younger people into work in vitally important efforts. But if you look at this, it also has set up a task force that is looking at these coal communities — communities that are really reliant on their local energy and utility, and it talks about how do we revitalize those economies. And it talks about how we can put people to work, using the skills they currently have, where they are, to start looking at those old abandoned oil and gas wells that are spewing out methane or all of the coal that that is — mines that haven't been properly closed that are doing the same.

That has great impact on climate, but also will keep an opportunity for those — for those individual workers to have work in their own communities. We're not going to ask people from the middle of Ohio or Pennsylvania and ship out to the coast to have solar jobs. Your solar jobs will be everywhere, but we need to put people to work in their own communities. That's where their home is. That's where their vision is.



What's where their name is. What's where their vision is.

So we're creatively looking at those opportunities for investment, so that we can get people understanding that we are not trying to take away jobs. Remember when — when we say “climate change,” eventually, people are going to think “jobs,” just like President Biden when he hears the words “climate change.”

And so we'll do everything we can to recognize that revitalization is necessary in these communities, to find creative ways to put them to work. And then we're going to do, as Secretary Kerry says, and start investing in new technologies and new manufacturing, and that includes the large manufacturing, like cement and steel. That's work that we should be doing here. That's work that inevitably is going to be necessary to rebuild our infrastructure, which is also one of the biggest opportunities we have for job growth moving forward.

Q Two quick questions?

MS. PSAKI: Kick us off, Peter.

Q Sure. Administrator, one to you, and one to the Secretary, if I may. What you may hear from some corners of criticism is: Why are we doing this now, when we're already in an economic crisis? You look at the state of New Mexico, where one third of the state's budget is funded by oil and gas. So why not let the country get back on its feet before we do this?

ADMINISTRATOR MCCARTHY: Well, the issue in New Mexico is that somebody reported — a bit incorrectly, or maybe not as precisely enough — that this wasn't about impacting existing permits and fracking; this was about new leases on federal lands.

So I think that the opportunity for the states to continue to accrue the royalties from — from both coal and oil and natural gas that is properly done on federal lands is going to continue, and there's even an opportunity in the review of that program to look at the royalty issues, look at the job growth opportunities, look at a variety of things to make sure that public lands are being properly managed.

Now, in terms of the job issue, we're explicitly doing this because our economy is right now stagnant. We have millions of people out of work, out of jobs; millions of people that are afraid they can't feed their families. If you're faced with that, what do you do? You boost the economy, and you grow jobs.

But why, at the same time, aren't we thinking about the weaknesses of our current economy in terms of the number of environmental justice communities that have been left behind, the number of people that are breathing dirty air and that kids are getting asthma?



So, instead, let's think about all of it at the same time. I know it's a crazy idea. In a bureaucracy, you're only supposed to do one thing, but we're going to do and think about all of it, because people need to have jobs. This is all about building the jobs of the future we want, not continuing to niddle at an economy that is no longer going to be where our future lies.

Q And, Mr. Secretary, to you: Right now, over the course of this first week, there are a lot of big priorities here. There's COVID, the economy, immigration, racial justice, now climate change. As a veteran of Congress, of the Senate, what is the priority? And how quickly do you need legislation to make this permanent?

SECRETARY KERRY: Well, Peter, the priority is precisely what the President has set out: all of them, all six of the major crises that he faces. And he's addressing every single one of them, and he knows that the United States, all of us, have the ability to be able to do that. And the reason that has to be done is: Every single one of them are life and death. Every single one of them represent a challenge to the very fiber of our society.

And the other reason — obviously, everything — I agree with everything Gina said, but I'd simply add that the other reason for doing it now is the science tells us we have to. And that's one of the things the President is restoring today in the executive order is respect for science and the science office.

So, I mean —

Q And \$2 trillion price tag — \$2 trillion for COVID, \$2 trillion for this — is a lot of money to a lot of Americans.

SECRETARY KERRY: It is real money, and yes, it's a lot of money. But you know what? It costs a lot more if you don't do the things we need to do. It costs a lot more. There are countless economic analyses now that show that it is now cheaper to deal with the crisis of climate than it is to ignore it.

We spent \$265 billion, two years ago, on three — three storms: Irma, Harvey, and Maria. Maria destroyed Puerto Rico. Harvey dropped more water on Houston in five days than goes over Niagara Falls in a year. And Irma had the first recorded winds at 185 miles an hour for 24 sustained hours. Last year we had one storm — \$55 billion.

So we're spending the money, folks. We're just not doing it smart, and we're not doing way that would actually sustain us for the long term.



So this is critical. We're — the goal of the Paris Agreement was to hold the Earth's temperature increase to two degrees centigrade. Even if you did everything that was in Paris, we're going up to 3.7 or 4. That's catastrophic. What President Biden is trying to do is listen to science, listen to facts, and make tough decisions about what we need to do to take the world to a better place, and particularly our own country. And that is what he is committed to doing.

So, yes, there are a lot of challenges right now, which, sadly, all of them were exacerbated by the last four years. Now we have to try to make up for that. And that is a hard pull, but this President is capable of doing it, and he's putting together a great team that I think can help him do that.

Q Thank you, sir.

MS. PSAKI: Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, Gina McCarthy. Thank you, Secretary Kerry, for joining us. You're free to go —

ADMINISTRATION MCCARTHY: Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: — to go see the President.

So you can all see they're both experienced and passionate and tenacious, having worked with both of them in the past. So the crisis is in good hands.

I know we have a short period of time here, but I just wanted to provide an update on a question that you all have been asking a bit about, which is what some of the outreach our teams are doing as it relates to the COVID package. That is a top priority for President Biden.

As we have talked about almost every day in here — probably every day — our team continues to build support for the American Rescue Plan as more and more voices across the country recognize the urgent need to get American families the help they need.

We've obviously seen a broad coalition of support emerge, from the Chamber of Commerce, Senator Sanders and organized labor, to hundreds of mayors and local public health officials. The President and Vice President are engaged directly with members and have had a number of productive conversations. That will continue through the course of the week and will only pick up in the days ahead.

Senior White House officials are also engaging with not just congressional leaders, but also state and local officials, key constituency groups, and others to gather feedback on the plan and move the package forward.



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So let me give you a couple of examples from just yesterday:

Chief of Staff Ron Klain engaged with members directly throughout the day, as did Senior Advisor Anita Dunn, which they will both continue to do moving forward. Counselor to the President Steve Ricchetti and Office of Legislative Affairs Director Louisa Terrell are quarterbacking the team's broader legislative outreach and have had dozens of conversations with individual members to understand their priorities and receive their feedback.

In addition to ongoing conversations with leadership on both sides of the aisle, already this week, members of the National Economic Council and Domestic Policy Council and staff from Treasury have met with the relevant committees, including Senate Banking Committee, Senate Finance Committee, House Ways and Means, House Financial Services, House Education and Labor, and the bicameral Small Business Committee.

NEC Director Brian Deese is doing one-on-one briefings with members of Congress and meetings with caucuses, including yesterday's meeting, which I believe has been reported, with the Problem Solvers Caucus to discuss the proposal.

Hill engagement will continue, with Jeff Zients and Brian Deese meeting with the New Dem Coalition, along with several other briefings that are scheduled.

Also, our outreach isn't limited to Congress, which is vitally important. This isn't just about speaking to elected officials; this is also about speaking to the country, and building support, and educating and engaging with leaders across the country.

So, yesterday, Jeff Zients and his team spoke with bipartisan governors — as you all know, they talked about the COVID package — by the National Governors Association — organized by them. And administration officials briefed tribal leaders and a number of mayors yesterday as well. And the Office of Public Engagement, led by Cedric Richmond, briefed civil rights groups yesterday, including the NAACP, the National Action Network, Justice Action Network, Urban League, Coalition of Black Civic Participation, and Black Women's Roundtable. Today they have meetings with labor leaders, advocates for young people, as well as organizations dedicated to building wealth in the black community.

On Friday, OP will also — the Office of Public Engagement, I should say; I hate acronyms — will convene 100 presidents of historically black colleges and universities also to discuss this proposal.

And the only other thing I wanted to mention before we get to your questions is that, as you know, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen was just confirmed. The President will be meeting with his economic team on Friday, including Secretary Yellen, for a briefing on the impact of delay...



his economic team on Friday, including Secretary Yellen, for a briefing on the impact of delay and moving forward with the additional economic relief.

And now, with that, let's get your questions. Alex, it's your first day in the White House Briefing Room.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: And Alex's first day. Two Alexes' first days.

Q It's good to be here.

MS. PSAKI: There's an initiation afterward that the press corps will conduct.

Q Hazing? I'm ready for it.

MS. PSAKI: Yes, go ahead.

Q Yeah, I'll make it quick because I know you have a pretty hard out in a few minutes.

MS. PSAKI: I think you all have a hard out too. But, yes.

Q Absolutely.

I wanted to ask about one of your favorite topics: impeachment. Nearly every Republican senator last night voted to throw out the impeachment trial against President Trump. Does President Biden have a reaction to that? Does he trust Congress to hold President Trump accountable for the insurrection against the Capitol? And does he see censure against former President Trump as a viable alternative to convictions, since it looks unlikely at this point?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President certainly respects the role that Congress has — senators, of course — the Senate — as they're overseeing the trial moving forward, in determining the path and the path forward for holding the former President accountable. That continues to be his belief.

In all of his conversations that he's been having with members about the recovery plan, he has — they have said they expect from him that his focus will be on COVID relief. That's how he will use the bully pulpit. That's how he will speak to the American people. And they are eager to work with him on that. So that's where his focus remains. And what steps they take to hold the former President accountable, he'll leave it to them.

Q Why the resistance on weighing in on the issue?



MS. PSAKI: We've weighed in many times. The President has been asked about the issue. We put out a statement when the House put out a vote — voted on impeachment, I should say. But his focus is on doing — delivering on what the American people elected him to do, which is to get relief to the American people, to get the pandemic under control, to ensure working families can put food on the table. And that's where he feels his efforts should be to remain.

Okay, go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Does the White House have a comment on this social media profile that has emerged of Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene? And is there a response to whether any disciplinary action should be taken against her, given everything that's come out?

MS. PSAKI: We don't. And I'm not going to speak further about her, I think, in this briefing room.

Q Okay. And —

MS. PSAKI: Oh, go ahead.

Q One more, if you don't mind. Just kind of — a little bit of a housekeeping.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q The last administration had suggested that — on the origins of the COVID-19 virus — that it may have originated in a lab in China. It was never definitive. Do you have an update on that — on the origin or where we are on an investigation?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, obviously the misinformation, of course, that has — we've seen also come out of some sources in China is of great concern to us. It's imperative that we get to the bottom of the early days of the pandemic in China, and we've been supportive of an international investigation that we feel should be robust and clear.

We — our view is that we must prepare to draw on information collected and analyzed by our intelligence community, which is something that is ongoing, and to work — and also to continue to work with our allies to evaluate the report's credibility on the investigation once it's done.

In addition, as you all know, the Secretary of State was just — Tony Blinken was just sworn in yesterday, and one of his priorities is, of course, ensuring that our staffing on the ground in Beijing — which is something that fell back in the last administration — is returned to what was prior, which means we want to have science experts, policy experts on the ground in the



roles that they should be serving in to ensure that, you know, we're also there representing, you know, our interests from the United States, on the ground in China.

Go ahead, Peter.

Q A couple quick ones that I still don't think I fully understand. I know the executive order that was signed, but has this White House invoked the DPA? And how soon until we'll actually see companies compelled to produce supplies or vaccine or whatever else that impacts Americans?

MS. PSAKI: We — it was invoked the day it was signed — within 24 hours of it being signed.

Q But you said that jumpstarted the process. So I guess that meant it was invoked?

MS. PSAKI: Yes. And I confirmed that when it was — the next day — the following day in the briefing room, which I realize everybody can't be here every day because of COVID.

But it was invoked, and it means that our work is ongoing with companies to ensure that we are expediting the manufacturing of materials to ensure that we can get 100 million shots in the arms of Americans. And I know there's been some confusion about this and what exactly it is, what does the DPA mean.

There are a few examples that our team has cited, including, on vaccine supply; low dead space syringes, which means it allows for the ability to get an extra dose into the Pfizer vial, which is important to getting more doses out there; help — additional N95 — the production of additional N95 masks; isolation gowns; gloves; pipette tips; and high absorbency foam swabs. So we're really talking about very specific materials that can be used by vaccinators to get these shots in the arms of Americans.

Q Thanks for clarifying. There was some confusion on the earlier call, which is why I repeated it here.

Let me ask one other question. Yesterday, you deflected this to the USOC, but my question is a little bit different today. We're now hearing from the organizers of this year's Summer Games in Japan, and the head of Japan's Olympics Committee is seeking public reassurances from President Biden himself — given that the U.S., of course, is the largest contingent of athletes — that the Games should be able to go on. As the world's — as the world is dealing with the pandemic right now, based on where we are now with the vaccine, does President Biden believe the Games in Japan can safely go on?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President — and I'm not sure if this readout had gone out yet — but he had spoken with the Prime Minister of Japan earlier this morning, and a readout was going out

as we were coming out to the briefing. I'm not sure if they spoke about the Olympics. I'm

happy to check with our national security team on that, to follow up with, but I don't have any more assessment of the Olympics at this point in time.

Q Whether he has — so it hasn't been discussed whether he has a position on whether it would safely be able to go on yet?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything more, other than — I haven't had much on it, but I don't have anything more than I've had on other days on it.

Q Japan is asking, so we asked. So we'll follow up with (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: Understood. And they just had a call this morning, but I haven't had a chance to talk to him specifically about it.

Go ahead, Jen.

Q Thank you, Jen.

Q Thanks, Jen. Two vaccine questions. First of all, this came up on the COVID call earlier, but how seriously is the White House considering using the Defense Production Act to compel other pharmaceutical companies to produce the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines to do supply?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I didn't hear the entirety of the call because we were doing some preparation for the event this afternoon. But from listening to our team talk about it, there are obviously manufacturing facilities that have the capacity and the ability to get these vaccine doses out. And we don't want to get our — get behind the pace of — and start from scratch, I should say, and ensuring that they're ready to do that.

I don't think our concern at this point is whether or not we're going to have the vaccine dose. Obviously, the President announced yesterday the intention to purchase doses [sic] — additional doses, the — our confidence in the manufacturers to have those doses available.

The concerns we have are, one, contingency planning and all of the different things that can happen, because this is a herculean task that has never been done before, but also ensuring we have vaccinators, we have vaccine sites, et cetera, available.

So I have not heard from our team plans to seek other manufacturers at this point in time. I'm happy to follow up with them and see if there's anything additional.

Q And then on the 200 million doses, the President said he's ordering them



Q And then, on the 200 million doses, the President said he's ordering them.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q What is the status of that order? Have Pfizer and Moderna agreed to produce 100 million doses each? And how quickly do they say they can do it?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we expect to get the doses by mid to late summer. The majority of doses by mid to late summer, some earlier than that. So we are confident that we'll be able to get those from the manufacturers. Yes.

Go ahead, Karen.

Q Jen, a couple of questions on schools. Does the administration plan to develop metrics or standards for what a safe reopening of schools will look like?

MS. PSAKI: We do. And our CDC director — and I'm not sure, again, if she was asked about this important question — I know as a fellow mother — but we will have specifics that we'll defer to the CDC on, on the safe reopening of schools. As you know, the President talked about — has talked about his commitment and his goal of reopening most K-8 schools within 100 days. There are obviously a number of steps that will need to be taken in order for that to be possible. But he has directed the Department of Education, the Department of Health and Human Services to provide guidance on safe reopening and operating for schools, childcare providers, and institutions of higher education.

But as our COVID team has outlined, that's going to require testing materials, support for contact tracing, vaccinations for teachers and ensuring they're equitably provided. But our CDC director and team will be looking into putting together some specific guidelines so there can be clarity on that front, which I know a lot of districts are looking for.

Q And to follow on that: Those things you mentioned all cost a lot of money, and a big part of the COVID relief package is a lot of money to go to school reopening.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q If Congress doesn't approve the money you want, and schools don't have what they need to pay for things to open safely, would the President support teachers staying at home and support virtual learning continuing through this entire school year?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think the President recognizes, as we all do, the value of having children in schools and doing that in a safe way, which is one of the reasons he set this ambitious goal of



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reopening most K-8 schools within 100 days.

But one of the reasons that this — the funding for safe reopening, for getting schools the equipment, the testing, the ventilation, in some cases, that they need is because nobody wants to be having a conversation in May or June about why schools are not reopened.

So this goes back to the argument that our team has been making, and all of these calls and engagements and meetings that I outlined, about the importance and vital nature of each component of the package. So we won't get into a hypothetical. We're confident that Congress will move forward with a package.

Let me just go — oh, we got to wrap up soon. Okay, I'm sorry. We'll do more questions tomorrow, but we had two such great guests.

Jen, go ahead.

Q Thanks. I just have two quick questions. One is just on the climate actions today. They leave out Treasury's Financial Stability Oversight Council, which experts say could play an influential role in addressing climate risks. Does the administration have plans to take action on climate finance? And should FSOC direct agencies and regulators to address climate change?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'm going to use a reference that my friend and colleague, Ambassador Susan Rice, used yesterday, which is: There are 1,453 days left in this administration, and addressing climate and the crisis of climate is an issue that the President has conveyed to members of his Cabinet and members of his senior team as an absolute priority.

So, Secretary Yellen has been in her role for one day, but certainly I'd send you to them for any more specifics. But this is the beginning, not the end, of our work on climate.

Nadia.

Q And just another question —

MS. PSAKI: Oh, go ahead.

Q Is the White House concerned about the stock market activity we're seeing around GameStop and now with some other stocks as well, including the subsidiary — or whatever — the company that was Blockbuster? And have there been any conversations with the SEC about how to proceed?



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MS. PSAKI: Well, I'm also happy to repeat that we have the first female Treasury Secretary and a team that's surrounding her. And, often, questions about market we'll send to them. But our team is, of course — our economic team, including Secretary Yellen and others, are monitoring the situation. It's a good reminder, though, that the stock market isn't the only measure of the health of our economy — of our economy. It doesn't reflect how working and middle-class families are doing.

As you all know from covering this, we're in the midst of a K-shaped recovery. America's workers are struggling to make ends meet, which is why the President has introduced this urgent package to get immediate relief to families.

All right, I'm going to go Nadia, and then we'll be totally done because everybody has to go.

Okay, go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. Good to see you on a different podium. I have two questions: one about COVID and one about China.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q Regarding COVID, the President promised to increase supply to states by 10 million doses, yet statistics shows that 47 percent of Americans are hesitant to take the vaccine, despite that the President and the Vice President took it publicly. What is the administration doing to convince Americans to take it to reach the herd immunity by, say, 70 percent by the fall?

MS. PSAKI: You're absolutely right, Nadia, that this is one of the biggest challenges we face. And for anyone who tuned in to the briefing that our health team led this morning, it was one of the first issues that CDC Director Dr. Walensky raised.

And one of the things we're doing is prioritizing — providing correct information about it. And the vaccines — and one — so I'll take the opportunity: The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are safe and effective. That's one of the things she said today. They were tested in large clinical trials to make sure they meet safety standards. About 30 percent of U.S. participants in those trials were Hispanic, African American, Asian, or Native American; about half were older adults.

And so we want to provide clear data, as I just did, but also we want to meet people where they are, communicate directly with communities of color, people who have concerns, and use medical and health professionals to do exactly that.

Okay, you had a China question, and then you really have to go, but go ahead.



Q And, second, many welcomed your rejoining of the WHO, yet some want to push for a transparent investigation into the relationship between China and WHO. And also, yesterday, in her hearing in the Senate, Governor Raimondo declined to blacklist Huawei technology in the U.S. Is this some kind of caving into China, or is it a nuanced way to deal with China?

MS. PSAKI: So, I think your — the second reference, I think, was to Huawei, right? And then —

Q Right.

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

So let me just convey clearly our position on this. Let us be clear: Telecommunications equipment made by untrusted vendors, including Huawei, is a threat to the security of the U.S. and our allies. We'll ensure that the American telecommunications network do not use equipment from untrusted vendors, and we'll work with allies to secure their telecommunications networks and make investments to expand the production of telecommunications equipment by trusted U.S. and allied companies.

Again, we'll take many more questions tomorrow. Thank you all. Have a great rest of your day.

END 1:24 P.M. EST

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