

Remarks Prior to a Cabinet Meeting

March 13, 2017

Hello, everybody. I'm proud to welcome everyone to our first official Cabinet meeting.

[At this point, the President greeted Secretary of Defense James N. Mattis, who was seated to his left.]

General.

[The President continued his remarks as follows.]

I want to begin by updating the public on the severe weather situation. I've been receiving the latest information on the blizzard forecast, and I think we're in very good shape. We're prepared—everybody in government is fully prepared and ready. And the entire Northeast, it seems, is under a very severe winter storm warning. So let's hope it's not going to be as bad as some people are predicting. Usually it isn't.

Chancellor Merkel and I have just spoken, and she's going to be postponing the trip until Friday. She'll be coming on Friday, and we look forward to that. It will be a very good visit.

I've spoken with my Homeland Security Adviser, who has spoken with the acting FEMA Administrator and instructed him to make certain that the Federal Government is ready to provide assistance to the States that need Federal help. FEMA and the Federal Government are ready to assist. They are literally waiting by the phones and ready to go.

Everyone should listen to their State and local officials who will be providing regular storm updates. Take that advice very seriously.

This Cabinet is here to serve and protect the American people, and that's what we're doing—even more so than anybody would understand. The folks in this room have done an amazing job, whether it's security or anything else. I want to thank General Mattis, I want to thank—who is now Secretary Mattis. I want to thank General Kelly, who is now Secretary Kelly. They've done outstanding work. You see what's happening. All you have to do is just watch. Big difference.

Unfortunately, not all of our Cabinet members could join us. We have four empty seats, which is a terrible thing because the Senate Democrats are continuing to obstruct the confirmation of our nominees for the Department of Labor, the Department of Agriculture, the Director of National Intelligence, and the United States Trade Representative, somebody I want very badly. We're in the midst of getting going, Wilbur, and they won't approve somebody who is highly qualified, and everybody understands that. The main victim of this very partisan obstruction is the American public.

Yet in spite of all of this, we've assembled a great team and already made historic progress in delivering results. We're rolling back job-crushing regulations at a faster clip than ever before by far. And we're seeing companies like Exxon, Walmart, Intel, Ford, Fiat-Chrysler, and so many others announcing that they will keep and create tens of thousands of jobs in the United States. Many, many companies are not moving now, which normally they would have been out of here a long time ago. They're not moving because they understand there are going to be consequences. If they move, that's fine, but there will be consequences. It's not going to

be so easy. They're not going to fire our people and move, and think they're going to ship their jobs back here and we won't be doing anything about it.

The first two job reports that have come out since my Inauguration, we've already added nearly half a million new jobs. Right after this meeting, we'll be signing a new Executive order to begin the process of reorganizing the executive branch to make it less wasteful and more productive. We're also working closely with the House and Senate Republicans to repeal and replace Obamacare.

Obamacare, all of a sudden, the last couple of weeks is getting a false rep that maybe it's okay. It's not okay; it's a disaster, and people understand that. It's failed, and it's imploding. And if we let it go for another year, it will totally implode. In fact, I've told the Republicans, why don't you just let it go for another year, that way everybody will really understand how bad it is. But it would be the wrong thing for us to do and for the American people.

The House plan will expand choice, lower cost, and ensure health care access for all. We're negotiating with everybody. It's a big, fat, beautiful negotiation, and hopefully we'll come up with something that's going to be really terrific.

I want to thank Paul Ryan and everybody—Mitch, everybody, they're all working around the clock. And I think ultimately the big beneficiary will be the American people. We'll end up with a really great health care plan.

We're also going to send Congress a budget request that will include one of the largest increases to defense spending in our history. And General/Secretary Mattis is extremely upset about that. *[Laughter]* And it will be fully paid for, okay? Fully paid for. And I saved a lot of money on those jets, didn't I? *[Laughter]* Did I do a good job? More than \$725 million on them. He's very happy with me. *[Laughter]*

In the first full month of my administration following the issuance of my Executive orders, illegal immigration on our southern border fell by an unprecedented 40 percent. I want to congratulate General Kelly.

At the same time, I've issued a Presidential memorandum directing Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security to undertake immediate steps to enhance our vetting process. So we're further enhancing our vetting process. We want people in our country who love our country and have the potential to love our country and our people. That's who we want. My administration will work every day to serve and protect our great citizens, and we will not rest until the job is done.

So this is our first Cabinet meeting. I hope this is going to be a historic Cabinet meeting—historic in the sense that we're going to do a fantastic job for the American people, for our country, and for the future of our country.

So thank you all very much. We'll see you later. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:07 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany; Homeland Security Adviser Thomas P. Bossert; Acting Federal Emergency Management Administrator Robert J. Fenton, Jr.; Secretary of Homeland Security John F. Kelly; Secretary-designate of Labor R. Alexander Acosta; Secretary-designate of Agriculture George E. "Sonny" Perdue; Director-designate of National Intelligence Daniel R. Coats; U.S. Trade Representative-designate Robert E. Lighthizer; Secretary of Commerce Wilbur L. Ross, Jr.; Speaker of the House of

Representatives Paul D. Ryan; and Senate Majority Leader A. Mitchell McConnell. He also referred to Executive Order 13781.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Cabinet meeting.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Acosta, R. Alexander; Bossert, Thomas P.; Coats, Daniel R.; Fenton, Robert J., Jr.; Kelly, John F.; Lighthizer, Robert E.; Mattis, James N.; McConnell, A. Mitchell; Merkel, Angela; Perdue, George E. "Sonny"; Ross, Wilbur L., Jr.; Ryan, Paul D.

Subjects: Armed Forces, U.S. : Funding; Cabinet, meeting with President; Commerce, Department of : Secretary; Congress : House of Representatives :: Speaker; Congress : Senate :: Majority leader; Defense, Department of : Secretary; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Germany : Chancellor; Government organization and employees : Federal regulations, review; Government organization and employees : Restructuring and reform; Health and medical care : Health insurance reforms; Homeland Security, Department of : Emergency Management Agency, Federal; Homeland Security, Department of : Secretary; Immigration and naturalization : Foreign nationals and refugees, U.S. admission policy; Immigration and naturalization : Illegal immigration; Natural disasters : Preparedness efforts; White House Office : Assistants to the President :: Homeland Security and Counterterrorism.

DCPD Number: DCPD201700165.