

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2017

Remarks at a Luncheon With Servicemembers and an Exchange With Reporters

July 18, 2017

The President. Thank you very much. I'm pleased to have Vice President Pence with us and four great soldiers who spent a lot of time in Afghanistan. And I'm going to be talking to you about Afghanistan: what you think, your views. These are people on the ground, know it probably better than anybody. A few of you know it pretty well, right?

Participant. Yes.

The President. And we're going to be getting some ideas because we've been there—it's our longest war—we've been there for many years. We've been there for now close to 17 years——

National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster. Close to it. Sixteen.

The President. ——and I want to find out why we've been there for 17 years, how it's going, and what we should do in terms of additional ideas. I've heard plenty of ideas from a lot of people, but I want to hear it from the people on the ground.

So this is actually a very important luncheon, and it's a great honor to have you with us. And I look forward to the discussion. We'll wait until the media leaves.

I want to thank you, folks. Thank you very much. Thank you.

Health Care Reform Legislation/Tax Reform/Infrastructure/Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) Terrorist Organization

Q. Mr. President, Mr. President, are you angry at the Republicans who came out against your health care bill?

The President. Disappointed, very disappointed.

Q. Is the health care bill dead, sir?

The President. I don't think it's dead, no. But it's—I'm certainly disappointed. For 7 years, I've been hearing "repeal and replace" from Congress, and I've been hearing it loud and strong. And then, when we finally get a chance to repeal and replace, they don't take advantage of it. So that's disappointing.

So I'm very—I would say I'm disappointed in what took place. It will go on, and we'll win—we're going to win on taxes, we're going to win on infrastructure and lots of other things that we're doing. We've won and are winning the war, as you know, on the border. We are very much decimating ISIS. You can see that; you see that better than anybody sees it, the soldiers that are with us today.

We've had a lot of victories, but we haven't had a victory on health care. We're disappointed. I am very disappointed because, again, even as a civilian, for 7 years, I've been hearing about health care, and I've been hearing about repeal and replace. And Obamacare is a total disaster. Some States had over a 200-percent increase—a 200-percent increase—in their premiums, and their deductibles are through the roof. It's an absolute disaster.

And I think you'll also agree that I've been saying for a long time: Let Obamacare fail and then everybody is going to have to come together and fix it and come up with a new plan and a plan that's really good for the people with much lower premiums, much lower costs, and much better protection.

I've been saying that—Mike, I think you'll agree—for a long time. Let Obamacare fail. It will be a lot easier. And I think we're probably in that position where we'll just let Obamacare fail. We're not going to own it. I'm not going to own it. I can tell you, the Republicans are not going to own it. We'll let Obamacare fail, and then the Democrats are going to come to us, and they're going to say: "How do we fix it? How do we fix it?" Or, "how do we come up with a new plan?"

So we'll see what happens. There's some other things going on right now as we speak, but I am disappointed because, for so many years, I've been hearing repeal and replace. I'm sitting in the Oval Office, right next door, pen in hand, waiting to sign something, and I'll be waiting. And eventually, we're going to get something done, and it's going to be very good.

But Obamacare is a big failure, and it has to be changed. We have to go to a plan that works. We have to go to a much less expensive plan in terms of premiums. And something will happen, and it will be very good. It may not be as quick as we had hoped, but it's going to happen. Okay?

Health Care Reform Legislation

Q. Were these Republicans who came out against it disloyal?

The President. Well, they were not disloyal; they had their own reasons. I was very surprised when the two folks came out last night, because we thought they were in fairly good shape, but they did. And you know, everybody has their own reason.

But if you really think about it, you look at it, and we have 52 people—we had no Democrat support, which is really something that should be said. We should have had Democrats voted. This a great plan for a lot of people. We had no Democrat support. We have 52 people; we had four "noes." Now, we might have had another one somewhere in there. But essentially, the vote would have been pretty close to—if you look at it—48 to 4. That's a pretty impressive vote by any standard. And yet you have a vote of 48 to 4, or something like that, and you need more—that's pretty tough.

So the way I look at it is, in '18, we're going to have to get some more people elected. We have to go out and we have to get more people elected that are Republican. And we have to probably pull in those people—those few people that voted against it. I don't know, they're going to have to explain to you why they did, and I'm sure they'll have very fine reasons. But we have to get more Republicans elected because we have to get it done.

We got it passed in the House. We would have gotten it very much—yes, you can't use his stand as a stand, right? [*Laughter*] We don't want that to happen. You're messing with the wrong guy here.

So we want—I think we're going to do very well, actually, in '18. I would be not surprised if something were done long before that. But in any event, because the margin is so small—the majority margin is so small—we're going to have to go out and get more Republicans elected in '18, and I'll be working very hard for that to happen, okay?

And it would be nice to have Democrat support, but really, they're obstructionists. They have no ideas. They have no thought process. All they want to do is obstruct Government and obstruct, period. And in this case, think of it: so many good things. We didn't get one vote. And their plan has failed.

And by the way, Obamacare isn't failing, it's failed. It's gone. So I think something is going to happen. We'll find out. Stay tuned. Thank you all very much.

Q. Do you blame Mitch McConnell?

The President. No.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:35 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to First Sgt. Michael Wagner, USA; Master Sgt. Zachary Bowman, USA; Master Sgt. Henry Adames, USA; Maj. Eric Birch, USAF; and Sens. Gerald W. Moran, Michael S. Lee, Susan M. Collins, and Randal H. Paul. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : U.S. servicemembers, luncheon; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters :: White House.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Adames, Henry; Birch, Eric; Bowman, Zachary; Collins, Susan M.; Lee, Michael S.; McMaster, H.R.; Moran, Gerald W.; Paul, Randal H.; Pence, Michael R.; Wagner, Michael.

Subjects: Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Meetings with President; Defense and national security : Border security; Health and medical care : Affordability and costs; Health and medical care : Health insurance reforms; Taxation : Tax Code, reform; Terrorism : Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization; Transportation : Infrastructure, national, improvement efforts; White House Office : Assistants to the President :: National Security Adviser; White House Office : Vice President.

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