

**Remarks at a Cabinet Meeting and an Exchange With Reporters**

*March 8, 2018*

*The President.* Okay, thank you very much. It's going to be a very busy day; we have a lot of things in store. We're going to be meeting today with the video makers having to do with the violence and what impact and effect that has on school shootings and our children. And we have a very big meeting at 3:30. I call it an economic meeting, something we have to do to protect our steel, our aluminum, and our country.

But I want to just say that this one Cabinet meeting has—a lot of things have—a lot of things have been happening. Very positive things have been happening for our country. I'm pleased to report that our very massive tax cuts are continuing to show tremendous results. Ninety percent of American workers are already seeing bigger paychecks, and that number is actually going to go up. Almost 4.6 million people have received tax cut bonuses. Wages are rising at the fastest pace in more than a decade, something that people have been waiting for. As you know, when I was campaigning, I was talking about 18 and 20 years, and wages, effectively, went down. Now, for the first time in a long time, they're starting to go up for people.

We've created almost 3 million new jobs since the election. And unemployment claims are at the lowest level in 49 years. Think of that. Unemployment at the lowest level in 49 years. That's a beautiful statistic. We're also taking action to protect American industries that are vital to our national security, including American aluminum and steel. You'll be hearing about that at length at 3:30. Aluminum and steel are the backbone of our Nation. They're the bedrock of our defense industrial base.

Our greatest Presidents, from Washington to Jackson to Lincoln to McKinley and others, they protected our country from outside influence, from other countries coming in and stealing our wealth and stealing our jobs and stealing our companies. And we're going to be very fair. We're going to be very flexible. But we're going to protect the American worker, as I said I would do in my campaign.

We also recognize that today is International Women's Day, and we're proud in all of the measures we've taken economically to empower women, especially in the workplace. You see what's happened. And I'm very pleased to announce that the unemployment rate for women in our workforce is at an 18-year low; the lowest it's been in 18 years. And we're very close to the alltime record, so we hope to be able to hit that. Soon, I'll be able to say is the alltime low. So they've hit an 18-year low, and we're very close to breaking the record.

As our economic policies restore prosperity, we're also working to bring back our safety. We have a lot of safety provisions. You read so much about our cutting of regulations, but we are, in some cases, cutting, but in many ways making it stronger having to do with safety. And I would also say, believe it or not, having to do with the environment. You can have fewer regulations and have the remaining regulations be stronger and more effective, and that's what we're doing. I would say doing it, too, fairly well, Scott. So it's—we're having some great numbers coming out.

In recent weeks, I've met with the victims of school shootings, including the courageous students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida. In the aftermath of that terrible tragedy, we're taking very strong action. As you know, bump stocks, we're almost finished with the legal papers. We have statutory ceilings that we have to go through to get rid of things that people agree that we should get rid of. So bump stocks are just about finished from the standpoint of getting the legal work done, the paperwork. Again, you have to wait periods of time before you

make the next move, and it's a long, complicated process, unfortunately. But bump stocks are going to be gone.

And I want to congratulate the State of Florida and your representatives on some very good legislation that's been passed. I guess they've been listening to me a lot more, because, unexpectedly, they passed concealed carry for some very special teachers that have a great ability with weapons and with guns. And they passed that. It was somewhat surprising to people because they didn't go in thinking about that, but I guess they liked what I said. And a certain group of people have great talent, they're in the school, they love their students, it's concealed. And I think it brings great safety. They're on the site. You don't have to call them. It doesn't take 15 or 20 minutes to get there. And you know exactly what's going on.

So they passed that, and it's—a lot of people were surprised. I wasn't so surprised. They—I think they did a great job in many respects. But they passed a lot of very good legislation last night.

We're working to harden our schools and to make them less vulnerable to attack. We're working to strengthen our early warning system so that when there are red flags, as we had in the case in Florida—there were 39 red flags, which is a disgrace. So many red flags. It was—they were crying out for somebody to go and nab that guy—authorities will take action quickly and decisively.

And we're working on commonsense measures to protect the rights of law-abiding gun owners while keeping guns out of the hands of those who pose a violent threat, or even a threat.

Background checks are moving along in Congress, and I think moving along pretty well. You know, you've been covering Congress for a long time, and some things like even background checks, making them tougher, it's never that easy. But it's moving along, and a lot of great things are being done. We're making it much tougher. But a lot of things are happening right now as we speak.

I will also say that, at the State level, a lot of States are doing things that go along with the Federal Government. A lot of this can be done by States, as was the case over the last few days with Florida. And, really, some tremendous legislation is happening with States and having to do with school safety and safety.

But it's not enough to secure only our schools. We must secure the communities where our kids are growing, and wherever they go we have to secure—and wherever anybody goes; not just the kids. And that's why we're committed to reducing violent crime like, I think, no other administration.

We're fighting the deadly gangs—the MS-13 and the gangs. They're vicious. They're horrible. And there's just no excuse for allowing them to flourish as they were. We've taken thousands of them out of circulation, gotten them out. We've gotten them out of the country or they're in jail. And we're tackling this deadly scourge like nobody has ever tackled it before.

Sanctuary cities, we're working very hard. The Justice Department has done a fantastic job. I do think we should have legislation where we put an extra line in the money that we give them. You want the money; you can't have the sanctuary cities. That way we avoid the court battles all the time, which we probably will win. But who needs it? They want the money, they should give up on the sanctuary cities. It harbors horrible criminals.

What the Mayor of Oakland did the other day was a disgrace, where they had close to a thousand people ready to be gotten, ready to be taken off the streets. Many of them—they say 85 percent of them were criminals and had criminal records. And the Mayor of Oakland went out and she—she went out and warned them all: "Scatter." So instead of taking in a thousand, they

took in a fraction of that; about 150. And they were all set. This was long in the planning. And she said, "Get out of here." And she's telling that to criminals. And it's certainly something that we're looking at with respect to her, individually.

What she did is incredible and very dangerous from the standpoint of ICE and Border Patrol. Very dangerous. She really made law enforcement much more dangerous than it had to be. So we're looking at that situation very carefully.

We're also establishing the Federal Interagency Council on Crime Prevention and Improving Reentry to help former inmates reenter society as productive citizens. We have people that have been in jail, they made a mistake, they get out, and they can't get a job no matter what they do.

Now, the thing I think I'm doing best for them is making the economy so strong that we need them in the whole system. And many of them go in, and they're phenomenal employees—phenomenal. We're doing studies on that. In fact, we're going to be putting out some information. But they go into the system, and when they can get a job, they really take advantage of it. They do a great job, and it's very important.

Each of the Cabinet Secretaries here today has a very vital role. One of the things I'll be starting off the meeting with is to continue to cut regulations. We have a tremendous way to go. I think we're probably 40 percent of the way there. Again, statutory requirements make it where you have to give a 90-day notice, and you have to give 30-day notice, and you have to give a 6-month notice after you do the various—by the time you give all these notices, time goes by.

But still, in 12 months—in fact, at the end of the 11th month, we cut far more regulations than any administration in the history of our country, whether it's 4 years, 8 years, or in the one case, 16 years. So, nobody is close.

But we're going to cut a lot more. We really have a lot more to go. And we're working with General Mattis very much on the Army Corps of Engineers, because they've been not so fast. And they're slowing up some jobs. So we're going to get that taken care of. We've been working on that.

The Army Corps—you know, EPA gets it done and we're all getting it done. The Army Corps has to follow much quicker. And we may have to streamline it because they're in charge of areas of the country that really have nothing to do with the Army Corps so much anymore. So General Mattis is working to streamline that whole procedure. And some jobs are being held up because of the Army Corps of Engineers. They're fantastic people, but we're going to have to speed that up.

This is Gary Cohn's last meeting in the Cabinet and of the Cabinet. And he's been terrific. He may be a globalist, but I still like him. *[Laughter]* He is seriously a globalist, there's no question. *[Laughter]* But you know what, in his own way, he's a nationalist, because he loves our country. And where is Gary?

*National Economic Council Director Gary D. Cohn.* Thank you, sir.

*The President.* You love our country.

*Director Cohn.* I do.

*The President.* And he's going to go out and make another couple of hundred million and—*[laughter]*—then he's going to maybe come back. He might come back. Right?

*Director Cohn.* Yes. Absolutely.

*The President.* We'll be here another 7 years, hopefully. And that's a long time. But I have a feeling you'll be back. I don't know if I can put him in the same position though. [Laughter] He's not quite as strong on those tariffs as we want, but that's alright. [Laughter]

But I want to—no, seriously, on behalf for all of us, I want to thank Gary. He's been great. He really worked with Wilbur, and Steve, and all of the people, Mike. We all worked so hard on it—on the tax cuts. And they have been far beyond, I would say, Gary, our wildest expectations.

*Director Cohn.* Absolutely, sir.

*The President.* I mean, what we thought would be very good has turned out to be unbelievable, great. And people are appreciating it a lot. The Democrats don't know what to do. They're saying, oh, boy—this is turning out to be not good for them. We didn't get one Democrat vote. So I just want to thank Gary.

Before me are some rocket ships. You haven't seen that for this country in a long time. And many of the jobs we're doing—and Mike Pence is the Chairman—many of these jobs we're doing are privately financed. We're letting them use the Kennedy Space Center for a fee.

And, you know, rich guys, they love rocket ships, and that's good. That's better than us paying for them. [Laughter] And I noticed the prices of the last one, though; they said it cost \$80 million. If the Government did it, the same thing would have cost probably 40 or 50 times that amount of money. I mean, literally. When I heard \$80 million—you know, I'm so used to hearing different numbers with NASA.

But NASA is making tremendous strides, and we're using a lot of private money. A lot of people that love—they love rockets and they're rich. So they're going to be a little less rich probably, but a lot of rockets are going up.

And we're really at the forefront. Nobody is doing what we're doing. I don't know if you saw last, with Elon, with the rocket boosters, where they're coming back down. To me that was more amazing than watching the rocket go up, because I've never seen that before. Nobody has seen that before—where they're saving the boosters, and they came back without wings, without anything. They landed so beautifully.

So we're really at the forefront, and we're doing it in a very private manner. At the same time, NASA is very much involved in doing their own projects. But we're bringing that whole space flight back. We'll be sending something very beautiful to Mars in the very near future. And we're going to areas that nobody thought possible—certainly not this quickly. So we're very proud.

So they had these outside. In fact, they were sort of spread much further apart. I said, "Let's bring them a little closer so the cameras can see them." But it's really amazing what's happening with regards to space and our country.

Thank you all very much. Thank you. Thank you very much.

*U.S. Tariffs on Steel and Aluminum Imports/North American Free Trade Agreement/North Atlantic Treaty Organization*

*Q.* Mr. President, when you say you're going to be flexible on tariffs, what do you mean by that?

*The President.* Basically—I'll take that. It's fine. We have—defense is so important. We need steel. We need aluminum. We're negotiating with Mexico. We're negotiating with Canada, and the NAFTA. And depending on whether or not we reach a deal—also very much involved

with that is national defense—but if we reach a deal, it's most likely that we won't be charging those two countries the tariffs.

We have other countries that are very much involved with us on trade, but also on military and working together with military. And we'll be making a decision as to who they are. We have a very close relationship with Australia. We have a trade surplus with Australia. Great country, long-term partner. We'll be doing something with them. We'll be doing something with some other countries. We're going to be very flexible.

At the same time, we have some friends and some enemies, where we have been tremendously taken advantage of over the years on trade and on military. If you look at NATO, where Germany pays 1 percent and we're paying 4.2 percent of a much bigger GDP—not fair. So we have a lot of things going on. I think, General, with NATO, because of my involvement, we've taken in \$33 billion more. Within the next, I guess, year and a half they expect that they have taken in \$33 billion more.

And Mr. Stoltenberg, who is running things, is very thankful. He said it's incredible what's happened since we became involved. And I became involved by complaining, because it was not fair. We were spending 85 percent of the money. And, frankly, good for everybody, but it helps them a lot more than it helps us. Helps Europe a lot more than it helps us.

So, you know, we look at the military equation too. General Mattis, it's very important to him and to me to maintain those great relationships. At the same time, we both want fairness. So we view the trade and we view the military, and to a certain extent they go hand in hand.

*Secretary of Defense James N. Mattis.* Absolutely.

*The President.* And a lot of progress has been made.

And you know, I'm very proud of NATO. Because with NATO, when you see the kind of money that's pouring in that was never going to come in because people were delinquent—states, countries were delinquent. They weren't paying. And now they're paying. Not all of them are paying the fair amount. Some owe billions and billions of dollars of money. They owe billions and billions from past years. They haven't paid it. And that's not fair. They want us to protect, and they want us to be a good partner, and then they're delinquent on payment, or they haven't made payments, or they haven't made payments which are fair.

So we're looking at all of those things, and we're talking about tremendous, massive amounts of money. But that goes along with trade also. Because we're looking at defense, but defense is very much also a part of trade.

So we're going to be very flexible. But, as an example, with Mexico and Canada, we're going to be throwing NAFTA into it. We're negotiating NAFTA right now. I think we're doing quite well. It was always my feeling that I would terminate NAFTA or renegotiate it, one or the other. I guess renegotiating would be easier. But we'll be, perhaps, coming up with a deal on NAFTA fairly soon, or we will terminate NAFTA, and we'll start all over again. Okay?

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you. Thank you.

*U.S. Tariffs on Steel and Aluminum Imports*

*Q.* You sticking with 10 and 25, Mr. President? Sticking with 10 and 25?

*The President.* Say it?

*Q.* Sticking with 10 and 25 on the tariffs?

*The President.* I'm sticking with 10 and 25, initially. I'll have a right to go up or down, depending on the country. And I'll have a right to drop out countries or add countries. We just want fairness, because we have not been treated fairly by other countries.

Thank you. Thank you, John. Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:17 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency E. Scott Pruitt; Nikolas J. Cruz, suspected gunman in the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL, on February 14; Mayor Elizabeth B. "Libby" Schaaf of Oakland, CA; Secretary of Commerce Wilbur L. Ross, Jr.; Secretary of the Treasury Steven T. Mnuchin; Vice President Michael R. Pence; Elon Musk, founder and chief executive officer, SpaceX Corp.; and Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

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*Names:* Cohn, Gary D.; Cruz, Nikolas J.; Mattis, James N.; Mnuchin, Steven T.; Musk, Elon; Pence, Michael R.; Pruitt, E. Scott; Ross, Wilbur L., Jr.; Schaaf, Elizabeth B. "Libby"; Stoltenberg, Jens.

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