

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2018

Remarks on the Drug-Free Communities Support Program and an Exchange With Reporters

August 29, 2018

The President. Well, thank you very much. It's an honor to be here today with community leaders from across our country whose incredible work is helping young Americans live a drug-free life. So important. And I want to congratulate the people in the room—done an incredible job. Nothing is easy, right? Nothing is easy, but you've done an incredible job.

Today my administration is providing a record \$91 million to support the Drug-Free Communities initiative. Grants will be awarded to more than 730 community groups in all 50 States—that's a lot of groups; that's a lot of people—impacting more communities than ever before. We've never done anything to this extent. We've never done anything this large or where we reached out to so many people. Great people.

The Drug-Free Communities program is a proven success, cutting alcohol and prescription drug abuse by an average of nearly 20 percent among high school students and participating communities. That's a 20-percent reduction, which is pretty much at the top of the pack. Incredible what they have been able to do.

You should all be extremely proud of your life—really, this is going to be a life's work and a very important life's work. So great going.

I also want to thank Deputy Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, somebody who really takes it to heart and very strongly. We speak, and he is in love with what he does because of the results that he's getting. And that's Jim Carroll.

Jim, thank you very much. I appreciate it.

Office of National Drug Control Policy Acting Director James W. Carroll. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Countless Americans are affected by the dangers of substance abuse. Many of us have a friend, a colleague, or a loved one who has struggled with dependency. I have. I had a brother who had a very big alcohol problem. He was a great guy. A great life—great potential, the best looking person. I have to admit, he was much better looking than me. [*Laughter*] But he was the best looking guy, had the best personality. But he had an addiction to alcohol. It's all an addiction. And it really destroyed his life. It was very tough, a very tough thing for our family.

Sadly, in 2017, an estimated 134 Americans died each day from opioid-related overdoses—134 people a day. My administration supports ongoing bipartisan efforts to pass legislation to combat the opioid crisis. We're dedicated to ending this crisis. And we will end this crisis, or at least, we will get it down to a level, Jim, where we can do things and maybe go from there. But we're getting it down to a level that's a lot lower than people thought possible at the time.

In 1 year, we reduced high-dose opioid prescriptions by 16 percent. We increased funding by \$6 billion to combat the opioid crisis. That's a record. We got that approved just last year, and the money is now starting to flow through the system. We declared a public health emergency, and launched a nationwide public awareness campaign. We are expanding treatment and recovery support services.

We are holding drug traffickers accountable for their crimes. We are really going after the traffickers; I have always said that's the biggest thing. And frankly, the punishment is getting

stronger and stronger. Maybe, at some point, we'll get very smart as a nation and give them the ultimate punishment.

In few moments, we're going to hear directly from the incredible coalition leaders and youth representatives that are with us today. But, first, I'd like to ask a great friend of mine who has been with us for a long time, and somebody that's really done a beautiful job, Deputy Director Jim Carroll, to say a few words.

Jim, please.

Acting Director Carroll. Thank you Mr. President. It's a great honor to serve as the head of National Drug Control Policy for you. What is also a great honor is being able to work with the communities and to work with these community leaders throughout the country.

I go around the country, and in fact, I go around the world with some of the programs that you are putting in place. And what we are seeing is, quite frankly, people who are a bit surprised by the level of commitment that you have shown. And quite frankly, it's not just the financial commitment that we are talking about today, with the record number of dollars being put toward these resources, the record number of communities. Sixty million people are living in a drug-free community.

But candidly, Mr. President, I think that they have been overwhelmed by your personal commitment, by your passion and compassion on this subject. When I'm out on the road, that's what I hear our people have really taken to heart: the words that you have given them, in addition, of course, to the resources. But they really understand.

So I'm very eager for you to meet 6 of the 731 today, led by General Dean.

The President. That's right.

Acting Director Carroll. And so thank you for allowing me—you told me, at the beginning, to be relentless. And you meant it across all three: to be help with—relentless on education and prevention, relentless on making sure people get treatment, and of course, be relentless on interdiction and on stopping the drugs.

And thank you for your support. We're doing all three.

The President. Thank you very much, Jim. It's beautiful.

General, how about saying a few words, please?

Community Anti-Drug Coalition of America Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Arthur T. Dean. Thank you, Mr. President. It's an honor to be here. Thank you for your commitment and for honoring us by announcing these grants today. Since I left the Army, I have been serving and have had the pleasure to serve as a chairman and CEO of Community Anti-Drug Coalition of America. It's been 20 years come this Friday.

[*At this point, Mr. Dean continued his remarks, concluding as follows.*]

We currently, over the 20 years, have built 731 of these coalitions. And CADCA's goal would be to have one of these multisector coalitions in every county in America. And I would like to work with you and your administration so that we can continue to have every county in America having one of these coalitions that are going to help them build down their substance abuse rates. And we know that's possible, and we thank you for your leadership.

The President. Thank you, General. That's very nice. And we will be working together for a long time.

Mr. Dean. Thank you so much. Thank you.

The President. Thank you. Thank you.

Mr. Dean. We look forward to it. Now I want to introduce a young lady who is sitting to your right. She first met us when she was a freshman in high school. She came to our National Youth Leadership Academy where we train over 2,000 young people every year——

The President. Good.

General Dean. ——to take this fight back to their community.

Because we were impressed with her, we asked her to become one of our trainers. She did that. She just graduated high school. She is headed off to Loyola College.

The President. Good. That's a good school.

Mr. Dean. She's traveled with me internationally as well. And she is a great example of what young people are doing in their communities to fight this issue. And I wanted her to give you a short summary of what she's doing.

The President. Great. Go ahead.

Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America youth advocate Ananya Pati. Thank you, Mr. President. So my name is Ananya Pati. I'm from Chicago, Illinois. And I've been working with our coalition for approximately 4 years now. And they have been DFC-funded for a majority of those years.

And with them, we have been able to see a statistical decrease in the use of alcohol, marijuana, and tobacco. And through CADCA, as General Dean mentioned, I have the ability to collaborate with youth across the country who, likewise, have been funded by the DFC grant.

[*Ms. Pati continued her remarks, concluding as follows.*]

And truly, the ONDCP's DFC grant is one of kind because we are giving power to the local communities to do what they deem necessary. And so I truly wanted to thank you for giving all that power and trust to the local communities to deal with these local problems.

The President. Thank you. That was so beautifully done. Wow, I almost want to applaud. [*Laughter*]

Well, see, now, with all of these people, you're going to become very famous. And you'll probably end up being a television star, and you'll forget all about me. Right? [*Laughter*]

Thank you, darling. I appreciate it. Really beautifully done.

Ms. Pati. Thank you.

The President. Would you like to say something?

Scott County, TN, resident Jacob Hughett. Oh——

The President. That's a tough one to compete with. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Hughett. You've have a point there, Mr. President. My name is Jacob Hughett, I'm from Scott County, Tennessee.

The President. Good.

Mr. Hughett. And I'm honored to be here. I have to tell you, I'm the least deserving person to be able to represent my county. And for the past 5 years, I've wanted to do nothing but help my community. And without organizations like STAND and CADCA and the people like Mr. Carroll and General Dean, it wouldn't have been possible. STAND altered my life.

[*Mr. Hughett continued his remarks, concluding as follows.*]

On my dad's side, he wasn't encouraged to go to school. He has an eighth-grade education. And the life that my parents made for themselves—my dad is a maintenance man for the local school system, and I'm proud of him.

The President. Good.

Mr. Hughett. And my mother is a teacher with three degrees. And my entire life, my dad has pushed me and encouraged me to get an education, and my mom has taught me how to use it. And I have to tell you, without—if a coalition like STAND had existed when they were children, their lives would have been way different. And I will not stop advocating for my county until every child has had the same opportunities that I've been blessed with.

I want to thank you for your time.

The President. Well, I have to tell you, I think he maybe did just as well. [*Laughter*]

Ms. Pati. I agree.

The President. And he had no idea this was coming. [*Laughter*] You had a little idea; he had no idea. That was a great job. Thank you very much, and say hello to everybody, okay? Tell them we're proud of you. That's a beautiful job.

How about you?

Raymond Coalition for Youth representative Savannah Cooney. Hi, okay, I am Savannah Cooney. I'm from Raymond, New Hampshire. That's in southeastern New Hampshire. I'm with the Raymond Coalition for Youth, and my biggest—if I could give you one thing—my experience being in a coalition and the work I've done, is that the youth voice is vital if we're going to try to work on prevention.

[*Ms. Cooney continued her remarks, concluding as follows.*]

And, coming from New Hampshire, we do have a—and the whole country does have an opioid crisis. And as though—although we are working directly with that, we are very certain that, if we keep working with the alcohol and marijuana prevention with teens, that is really where we're going to find—that's the start that then becomes an opioid crisis.

So although we have to work directly with the opioid crisis, working with the prevention of using drug—alcohol and marijuana is just as important—

The President. Right.

Ms. Cooney. —because that's where it all starts.

The President. Great job.

Ms. Cooney. And thank you for your time.

The President. That's really nice. So it really is having an impact?

Ms. Cooney. Yes.

The President. That's great. Great job.

Ms. Cooney. Thank you.

The President. Thank you very much. Please.

Jackson County Anti-Drug Coalition representative Sarah Purvis. Hello, I'm Sarah Purvis. I'm with the Jackson County Anti-Drug Coalition in West Virginia.

All I'm going to say is, with this grant, we have seen such a major change among our youths in our county, and it's been, like—it's crazy, because we see it all the time, and we see people change their minds, and we see people change their lives because of what we're doing. And—yes. It's just great.

The President. Thank you. Great place, West Virginia. I just left.

Ms. Purvis. [Laughter] Yes.

The President. Incredible people.

Well, thank you all very much. You're really very inspirational. We're going to stay around and talk a little bit. And we'll let the media leave. I hope you miss the media when they leave. [Laughter]

But I really appreciate those few statements because they were really beautifully delivered and said. And I know they're said from the heart. So thank you all very much.

Thank you, everybody.

White House Counsel Donald F. McGahn II

Q. Mr. President, any comment on Don McGahn? Mr. President, any comment on Don McGahn?

The President. He's a good man. Very good man. Don?

Q. Yes. On Don McGahn?

The President. Excellent guy. Yes, Don McGahn is a really good guy. Been with me for a long time; privately, before this, he represented me. He's been here now—it'll be almost 2 years. And a lot of affection for Don.

And he'll be moving on, probably the private sector. Maybe the private sector. And he'll do very well. But he's done an excellent job.

White House Counsel Donald F. McGahn II/Department of Justice Special Counsel Robert S. Mueller III

Q. Any concern about what he said to the Mueller team?

The President. No. Not at all. Not at all.

Q. Trade talks with Canada, Mr. President. How are trade talks with Canada going?

The President. I knew he was going, also. You know, as you know, I had to approve it. So we didn't plan the executive——

Q. And you were aware of what he said? You're aware of what he said?

The President. No. I don't have to be aware. We have a—we do everything straight. We do everything by the book. And Don is an excellent guy.

Yes, go ahead.

Canada-U.S. Trade/U.S.-Mexico Trade Agreement/European Union/China

Q. Trade talks with Canada, Mr. President. How are they going? Do you expect something soon?

The President. I think they're going really well. Canada is here right now. They were here until late in the evening. They came to see us. They wanted to meet us. They want to be a part of it.

The deal we made is a fantastic deal. It's gotten great reviews with Mexico. Trade deal. Right now we call it the U.S.-Mexico trade agreement, and we'll see whether or not Canada gets into it. Otherwise, we'll do something separately. Or we won't do anything, which is okay too.

Canada-U.S. Trade/European Union/China/U.S. Economy

Q. Are you optimistic?

The President. I think so. I think Canada very much wants to make the deal, and I think it's going to be obviously, very good for Canada if they do. And I think it's probably not going to be good at all if they don't.

We have a very good relationship. They came yesterday to the White House, and we negotiated late into the evening. They're in the White House right now. We're negotiating with them right now, and they want to be a part of the deal. And we gave till Friday, and I think we're probably on track. We'll see what happens.

But in any event, things are working out very well. A lot of trade deals are working out well. The European Union, which really has major barriers to trade. You don't know what barriers are, but it's not good. Not fair for our farmers and others. Those barriers will be coming down.

And as you know, we're in the midst of a very big trade dispute, to put it nicely, with China. And I think we're doing very well.

You know, our economy has picked up in terms of worth. There's a lot of money for everyone sitting around this table, but we picked up about \$10 trillion, General, since my election. And we're doing record business, record stock market, record everything. And also, record unemployment, which—you know, from the standpoint of a lot of people, we are talking about prison reform and other things. But when people come out of prison now, they can actually get jobs. And they're really liked by a lot of the employers. Many—we've had tremendous success. We've never had that before.

Part of the reason is, the job market is so good. So, all of a sudden, employers are hiring people that maybe they would have not have given a chance to. And now they're hiring people and it's worked out incredibly well. You're one of the great advocates——

STAND Coalition Executive Director Trent Coffey. Incredibly well. Yes. Incredibly well.

The President. I know. Very—it's never been like this. So it's—and I have to tell you, I know employers that have hired people and given people a second—and in a couple of cases, a third—chance, in all fairness, and they are so happy. Not in all cases, but nothing is in all cases. They are so happy with so many of the people. They said: "We'll never lose them. They'll be with us for a whole lifetime."

So it's a beautiful thing to see what's happening. And again, with Canada, I think we're doing very well.

Florida Gubernatorial Race

Q. Did you hear what Ron DeSantis said about Andrew Gillum down in Florida? That—what Ron DeSantis——

The President. No, I didn't.

Q. —a candidate that you endorsed. He said that it's not time to "monkey" around with the economy down in Florida. DeSantis——

The President. No, I didn't hear it, honestly——

Q. He might have made a racist comment——

The President. Yes, I didn't hear that, Jim [Jim Acosta, CNN]. I mean I've been now—I've been actually working on the deal with Canada. So I have not heard it.

I'll tell you what, I know Ron DeSantis——

Q. Do you still support——

The President. ——Ron DeSantis is extraordinary. Harvard, Yale—brilliant. Ran an incredible campaign. Really beat a lot of people that he wasn't supposed to beat, because he came into the race, and a lot of people didn't know him.

He's an extreme talent, and he will make a fantastic Governor of Florida. So I think Ron is—he's extraordinary in so many different ways. I haven't heard that at all, no.

Federal Government Response to Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico

Q. Mr. President, Puerto Rico—Mr. President, on Puerto Rico, do you still believe that the Federal Government's response to the hurricanes last year——

The President. Yes, I think Puerto Rico—I think we did a fantastic job in Puerto Rico. We're still helping Puerto Rico. The Governor is an excellent guy. And he is very happy with the job we've done.

We have put billions and billions of dollars into Puerto Rico. And it was a very tough one. Don't forget, their electric plant was dead before the hurricane. If you look back on your records, you'll see that that plant was dead. It was shut. It was bankrupt. It was out of business. They owed tremendous amounts of money. They had it closed up.

And then, when the hurricane came, people said, "What are we going to do about electricity?" That wasn't really the hurricane; that was gone before the hurricane. But we've put a lot of money and a lot of effort into Puerto Rico. And I think most of the people in Puerto Rico really appreciate what we've done.

You know, Texas healed quickly, and the people were incredible. Florida healed quickly, and everybody worked very hard. Puerto Rico was actually more difficult because of the fact it's an island. It's much harder to get things onto the island. With Texas, you're land based. With Florida, you're land based. Puerto Rico was a very difficult situation.

I only hope they don't get hit again, because they were hit by two, right in a row—and, really, the likes of which we have never seen before. But the people of Puerto Rico are great people. They work very hard. But Puerto Rico, I would say, was by far the most difficult of the group.

And you know, right now, FEMA and all of the people that worked so hard there, they were very brave, and they have done some job. But Puerto Rico had a lot of difficulties before it got hit, and we're straightening out those difficulties even now.

Hey, thank you very much, everybody.

North Korea/China

Q. Any comment on North Korea, Mr. President?

The President. I think we're doing well with North Korea. We'll have to see. I think part of the North Korean problem is caused by our trade disputes with China. China has been taking out about \$500 billion a year from the United States for many years. So we can't let that happen.

So when we started working a little bit against China—and we have a great relationship with China. I have a great relationship with President Xi. I think he's a terrific man, a terrific person. But we have to straighten out our trade relationship, because too much money is being lost by us.

And as you know, China is the route to North Korea. Ninety-three percent of the product and various things that go into North Korea go in through China. So I think that now that we're in somewhat—I don't like to call it a trade war. And I think, you know, our country is doing very well, but China is having a very, very tough time.

And I think that China makes it much more difficult in terms of our relationship with North Korea. Now I knew that, but I couldn't wait any longer. When I got in—I've been talking about China for a long time. When I came into office, I purposefully didn't do much, with respect to the trade on China, because I wanted to see if we could work out North Korea. But when you're losing four to five hundred billion dollars a year, and it's going to China and coming away from our country and our taxpayers, I can't let that go on.

So we are being very strong on China. I think it's all going to work out. Our country has gone up, and they are—you know, they're having a hard time. So I think——

North Korea/China

Q. It doesn't sound like North Korea is holding up their end of the deal that you had out of Singapore.

The President. Well, we're going to have to see. But I think China probably has a great influence over North Korea. I have a fantastic relationship with Chairman Kim, as you probably know. And we're just going to have to see how it all ends up.

But I had to move on China, from the standpoint of trade, because it really was not fair to our country. We were just pouring money. For many years, Presidents had closed their eyes. And I'm talking about not President Obama, I'm talking about many Presidents. And they closed their eyes, and hundreds of billions of dollars a year was pouring out of the United States and taxpayers and everything else.

So we had to do that.

Trade/Public Opinion Polls

Q. Even if the tariffs have a negative impact on your voters, on your supporters?

The President. No, I think we're going to have a very positive impact. I mean, if you look at the polls—based on the polls, it's positive. Based on the polls, it's the highest in the Republican Party—I guess, forever or for a long time.

And it's been—I don't do it for the polls. Honestly—people won't necessarily agree with this—I do nothing for the polls. I do it to do what's right. I'm here for an extended period of time. I'm here for a period that's a very important period of time. And we are straightening out this country.

And one of the biggest things we want to straighten out is what the people in this room represent: That's drug abuse and alcohol abuse and all of the problems. And I think it's something that maybe a lot of people don't talk about. You know, we'll talk about other things. But, to me, this is just as exciting as creating space force or sending rockets up or doing so many of the things that we're doing.

So I really don't—and I can tell you this, Jim—I don't do anything for polls. I do it—I enjoy looking at polls; it's interesting to see. But ultimately, I always make a decision based on what's right and what's wrong.

Q. Can I ask you about Google, Mr. President? Can I ask you about Google?

2018 Congressional Elections/Violence

Q. What did you mean about violence around the midterms? You said something about violence——

The President. Well, I just hope there won't be violence. I can tell you that——

Q. Why would there be?

The President. I can tell you that—because that's the way, I guess, if you look at what happens, is a lot of—there's a lot of unnecessary violence all over the world, but also in this country, and I don't want to see it.

Yes.

Social Media

Q. May I ask you about Google, sir?

The President. Google.

Q. What would you like the Federal Government to do about Google?

The President. Well, I think that Google and Facebook and Twitter, I think they treat conservatives and Republicans very unfairly. I could tell you that I have personal experience; I have a lot of people on the various platforms. Dan would tell you probably over 100 million, over 125 million. What is the numbers, Dan, here? Dan? What is it?

White House Director of Social Media Daniel Scavino, Jr. You're at about 160 million across all the platforms: Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat.

The President. One hundred and sixty million people. I have numerous—yes, numerous platforms. But that's a lot of people. But I can tell you when things are different. And all of the sudden, you lose people. And you say, "Where did they go?" They've taken off.

Now I don't know if it happens to the other side, but I can say that, with respect to Google and Twitter and Facebook, there is a big difference. And in fact, I hear that they're holding hearings in Congress over the next couple of weeks. And I think it's a very serious problem, because they're really trying to silence a very large part of this country. And those people don't want to be silenced. It's not right. It's not fair. It may not be legal. But we'll see. We just want fairness.

Social Media

Q. Do you think—do you want to regulate them more? Is that what you're looking for?

The President. We're just going to see. We're just going to see. You know what we want? Not regulation; we want fairness. If we have fairness, we're all very happy.

But you're talking about a tremendous amount. I mean, I'm President. They got me here. You're talking about a tremendous number of people. We want to see fairness. Very important.

Thank you all very much.

Prime Minister Justin P.J. Trudeau of Canada

Q. Have you talked to Prime Minister Trudeau, Mr. President? Have you talked to——

The President. I did.

Q. You did?

The President. I spoke to him yesterday. We had a very good talk. I spoke to him a couple of times.

Q. And you feel that, before the end of the week, you can bring Canada in the agreement?

The President. I don't know—hey, he called me. I didn't call him.

Q. Okay. And it was a positive call?

The President. He was very nice. He couldn't have been nicer. We'll see what happens. I love Canada.

Q. I like to hear that.

The President. And you know what? I love Mexico too.

Q. Which one is better?

The President. I like them both the same. [*Laughter*]

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:40 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Governor Ricardo A. Rosselló Nevares of Puerto Rico; and Chairman of the State Affairs Commission Kim Jong Un of North Korea. A reporter referred to Florida gubernatorial candidates Rep. Ronald D. DeSantis and Mayor Andrew Gillum of Tallahassee, FL.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Drug-Free Communities support program, meeting with President; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters :: White House.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Carroll, James W.; Coffey, Trent; Cooney, Savannah; Dean, Arthur T.; DeSantis, Ronald D.; Hughett, Jacob; Kim Jong Un; McGahn, Donald F., II; Obama, Barack; Pati, Ananya; Purvis, Sarah; Rosselló Nevares, Ricardo A.; Scavino, Daniel, Jr.; Trudeau, Justin P.J.; Xi Jinping.

Subjects: Canada : Prime Minister; Canada : Relations with U.S.; Canada : Trade with U.S.; China : North Korea, role; China : President; China : Relations with U.S.; China : Trade with U.S.; Commerce, international : Free and fair trade; Drug abuse and trafficking : Addiction treatment and reduction efforts; Drug abuse and trafficking : Education and prevention efforts; Drug abuse and trafficking : Interdiction efforts; Drug abuse and trafficking : Opioid epidemic, efforts to combat; Economy, national : Improvement; Elections : 2018 congressional elections; Employment and unemployment : Unemployment rate; Europe : European Union :: Trade with U.S.; Florida : 2018 gubernatorial election; Florida : Hurricane Irma, damage and recovery efforts; Google Inc.; Homeland Security, Department of : Emergency Management Agency, Federal; Law enforcement and crime : Parole and ex-convict reintegration programs, improvement efforts; Mexico : Trade with U.S.; North Korea : Chairman, State Affairs Commission; North Korea : International diplomatic efforts; Puerto Rico : Energy infrastructure, strengthening efforts; Puerto Rico : Governor; Puerto Rico : Hurricane Maria, damage and recovery efforts; Texas : Hurricane Harvey, damage and recovery efforts; White House Office : Assistants to the President :: Counsel; White House Office : Assistants to the President :: Social Media Director; White House Office : Drug Control Policy, Office of National.

DCPD Number: DCPD201800558.