



REMARKS

Remarks by President Trump, Vice President Pence, and Members of the Coronavirus Task Force in Press Briefing

— HEALTHCARE

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James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

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THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, everyone. My administration will do everything possible to help those communities get back on their feet. We're speaking with the governors and representatives. FEMA is already on its way, and they got there — as soon as we heard the word, I said, "Get out there." So FEMA is there, and you know the great job that FEMA does. It's, really, something very special.

So we just want to say: Warmest condolences, and we're with you all the way. It's a tough deal. That was a bad, bed level five. That was a bad group. That's as high as it gets. It was a bad

grouping of tornadoes. Something that's something incredible, the power — the horrible, destructive power.

America is continuing to make critical progress in our war against the virus. Over the weekend, the number of daily new infections remained flat nationwide. Flat. Hospitalizations are slowing in hotspots like New York, New Jersey, Michigan, and Louisiana. This is clear evidence that our aggressive strategy to combat the virus is working and that Americans are following the guidelines. It's been incredible what they've done.

You looked at the charts, and the charts are — and the models from early on — predictions were 100 [thousand] and 120,000 people look like. If they did well, they were going to unfortunately perish. And we're going to be, hopefully, way, way below that number. So that will be a sign of people doing things right, but it's still just a horrible thing all over the world. A hundred and eighty-four countries.

This is all a tribute to our wonderful healthcare advisors and experts who have been with us right from the beginning. We appreciate it so much. In fact, Dr. Fauci is here. Maybe I could ask Tony to say a few words before we go any further.

Thank you very much. Tony, please.

DR. FAUCI: Thank you, Mr. President. Just one — a couple of things, and then I just want to make a comment about something that happened yesterday.

You're going to hear from Dr. Birx soon about the numbers that we've been talking about and how things are starting to balance off. And I think the more, as we go by each day, I think we're going to see — and again, I never like to get ahead of myself or of Dr. Birx, but it looks like even though we've had a really bad week last week — remember, when I was speaking to you before, I was saying this was really a bad week — there's still going to be a lot of deaths, but we're starting to see in some areas now that kind of flattening, particularly in a place that was a hotspot like New York. That's the first thing.

The second thing is that I had a really very, very productive conversation with the Congressional Black Caucus this morning, for about an hour, and they really wanted to know what exactly are we going to be doing in the immediate, as well as the long range, about the health disparities and the

discrepancies both in infection and in poor outcome in the minorities in general, but specifically African American.

And, I mean, I made it very clear to them that what we have to do is focus on getting the resources where the vulnerable are, to be able to get testing done, to be able to get the appropriate identification, where proper and where appropriate, to isolate and contact trace if we can, but also to help mitigate in a community that is suffering and suffering much more disproportionately.

So I just wanted to get that out of the way.

The other point I wanted to make is that I had an interview yesterday that I was asked a hypothetical question. And hypothetical questions sometimes can get you into some difficulty because it's what "would have" or "could have." The nature of the hypothetical question was: If, in fact, we had mitigated earlier, could lives have been saved? And the answer to my question was, as I always do — and I'm doing right now — perfectly honestly say, "yes." I mean, obviously. If you — mitigation helps.

I've been up here many times telling you that mitigation works. So if mitigation works, and you instigated and — you initiated earlier, you will probably have saved more lives. If you initiated it later, you probably would have lost more lives, if you initiated at a certain time.

That was taken as a way that maybe, somehow, something was at fault here.

So let me tell you from my experience — and I can only speak from my own experience — is that we had been talking, before any meetings that we had, about the pros and the cons, the effectiveness or not, of strong mitigations. So discussions were going on mostly among the medical people about what that would mean.

The first and only time that Dr. Birx and I went in and formally made a recommendation to the President to actually have a, quote, "shutdown" in the sense of — not really "shutdown" but to really have strong mitigation, we discussed it. Obviously, there would be concern by some that, in fact, that might have some negative consequences. Nonetheless, the President listened to the recommendation and went to the mitigation.

The next second time that I went with Dr. Birx in — to the President and said, “Fifteen days are not enough. We need to go thirty days,” obviously, there were people who had a problem with that because of the potential secondary effects. Nonetheless, at that time, the President went with the health recommendations, and we extended it another 30 days.

So I can only tell you what I know and what my recommendations were. But, clearly, as happens all the time, there were interpretations of that response to a hypothetical question that I just thought it would be very nice for me to clarify because I didn’t have the chance to clarify.

Thank you.

Q The date on that?

DR. FAUCI: Excuse me?

Q The date.

DR. FAUCI: You know, to be honest with you, I don’t even remember what the date was. But I can just tell you the first and only time that I went in and said we should do mitigation strongly, the response was, “Yes, we’ll do it.”

Q And what did he do? Was that the travel restrictions?

DR. FAUCI: No. The travel restriction is separate. That was whether or not we wanted to go into a mitigation stage of 15 days of mitigation. The travel was another recommendation, when we went in and said, “We probably should be doing that.” And the answer was “yes.” And then another time was, “We should do it with Europe,” and the answer was “yes.” And the next time, “We should do it with the UK,” and the answer was “yes.”

Q In this interview, you said there was pushback.

DR. FAUCI: Yeah.

Q Where did that pushback come from?

DR. FAUCI: No, it wasn't — that was the wrong choice of words. You know what it was? When people discuss, not necessarily in front of the President — when people discuss, they say, "Well, you know, this is going to have maybe a harmful effect on this or on that." So it was a poor choice of words. There wasn't anybody saying, "No, you shouldn't do that."

Q Are you doing this voluntarily? Or did the President —

DR. FAUCI: No, I'm doing it —

Q — or Vice President ask you to do this?

DR. FAUCI: Everything I do is voluntarily. Please. Don't even imply that.

Q So, Mr. President, the question is —

THE PRESIDENT: And, by the way, the travel ban, that was earlier. The travel ban was done earlier.

Q You couldn't give us a date when he talked to you.

THE PRESIDENT: And if you look at statistics — I happened to write a couple of them down. If you look at statistics — so, on January 6th — that's long before the dates you're talking about — there were — CDC issued a travel notice for Wuhan, China, a notice, before there was even a confirmed case of the virus in the United States. That's on January 6th. This is all documented. Because we have so much fake news, I like to document things. January 6th, long before the dates we're talking about, CDC issued travel notice to Wuhan — for Wuhan.

On January 11th, we have zero cases in the United States. Zero. We don't have any cases. So there are no cases reported that we know of. This is January 11th. The CDC issued a level one travel notice health — for health, while there were still no confirmed cases. So we had zero cases. People want me to act. I'm supposed to close down the economy — the greatest economy in the history of the world — and we don't have one case confirmed in the United States. That's January 11th.

On January 17th, the CDC began implementing public health entry screenings at three major U.S. airports that received the greatest volume of passengers from Wuhan, at my instructions. There was not a single case of the coronavirus in the United States. So on January 17th, there wasn't a

case, and the fake news is saying, “Oh, he didn’t act fast enough.” Well, you remember what happened. Because when I did act, I was criticized by Nancy Pelosi, by Sleepy Joe Biden. I was criticized by everybody. In fact, I was called xenophobic. I was asking Biden to please define that for me. I was called other things by Democrats and some others — not too many others, actually. So that — by the media, definitely.

Now, on January 21st — this is long before the time we’re talking, because when Tony is talking, I believe he’s talking about the end of February. On January 21st, okay — still early — there was one case of the virus. At that time, we called it the “Wuhan virus,” right? Wuhan. There was one case in the whole United States. We have one case. This is all documented. It all comes from you. A lot of it comes from you people.

On January 21st, the CDC activated an emergency operation center. There was just one case, one person. That’s why that ad was such a phony. There was one person in the United States. You know they used the ad, “There’s only one person...” That statement was made at that time. One case. In the whole United States, one case. I’m supposed to shut down the government? The biggest — the biggest economy in the history of the world. “Shut it down. We have one case.”

Seven cases were on January 31st. Now, on January 21st, there was a case. Not one person had died. You heard that, Steve, right? Not one person.

So we have this massive country, the United States of America. We have the greatest economy in the world — bigger than China’s, by a lot — right? — because of what we’ve done over the last three and a half years, prior to the virus, but including the virus. So we have the biggest economy, the greatest economy we’ve ever had; the highest employment numbers; the best employment numbers; best unemployment numbers also. The best of everything.

So, on January 31st — think of it — not one person has died. Not one. Nobody died. Not one, Jon. I don’t think you’ll find any. This is reported by CDC, confirmed by the news — which doesn’t mean anything to me because they don’t tell the truth. But CDC reported: January 31st, not one person has died.

And I issued a travel restriction from China. Think of it. So nobody died, and I issued. You can’t get earlier than that.

So we have nobody died, and I said, “China, you can’t come in. I’m sorry.” Because I saw what was going on. It wasn’t so much what I was told; it was that I saw what was going on and I didn’t like it. But I didn’t speak to Tony about it. Didn’t speak to very many people about it. I didn’t like it.

So what did I do? Ready? January 31st: In the United States, not one person had died because of the — again, the Wuhan virus. So I issued travel restrictions on that date, even though nobody died, and I got brutalized over it by the press because I was way too early; I shouldn’t have done it. Brutalized by the press. But, you know, sort of — I’ve been brutalized for the last four years. I used to do well before I decided to run for politics. But I guess I’m doing okay because, to the best of my knowledge, I’m the President of the United States, despite the things that are said.

So, then, first mandatory quarantine in more than 50 years, we did. First mandatory in 50 years. The same restrictions that the Democrats and the media called “xenophobic.” Now, Joe Biden said, “He’s a racist.” He called me a racist because I said, “We’re shutting down entry from China. We’re shutting it down.” He called me xenophobic, and he called me racist and other things.

Since then, on a Friday night, two weeks ago, Joe Biden issued a state- — it wasn’t him; he didn’t write it. I’m sure he doesn’t even know that it was issued. But the people from his campaign — who are smart. The people that write those little PR releases are pretty smart, reasonably good. Not the best, but they’re not bad. But they issued a statement, saying that Joe Biden agrees that the Pres- — that President Trump was right to close it down to China. Now, he did that.

Now, he issued it on Friday night. We’ve all heard about that, Jon — Friday nights, right? In fact, his was later Friday night than I ever released mine on Friday night. Okay?

Q (Inaudible) seems pretty late.

THE PRESIDENT: So he did — he did it pretty late. I mean, you know, like at 11 o’clock in the evening or something. You know, that’s pretty late. Anyway. So Joe Biden issued — and it’s one of those things.

But, in February, Nancy Pelosi said we should come to Chinatown. This is late February. “Come to Chinatown. We think it’s very safe. Come here. Let’s all have the big parade — Chinatown parade.” Probably referring to San Francisco. And that’s it.

But I took this action early. And so the story in the New York Times was a total fake. It's a fake newspaper and they write fake stories. And someday — hopefully in five years, when I'm not here — those papers are all going out of business because nobody is going to want to read them. But now they like them because they write about me.

Now, with that, I have a couple of interesting — we have a few clips that we're just going to put up. We could turn the lights a little bit lower. I think you'll find them interesting. And then we'll answer some questions. I'll ask you some questions because you're so guilty, but forget it. But most importantly, we're going to get back onto the reason we're here, which is the success we're having. Okay?

Please, you could put it on. Thank you.

(A video is played.)

So we could give you hundreds of clips like that from governors — including Democratic or “Democrat,” as I call them, governors, which is actually the correct term. We could give you hundreds of clips just like that. We have them. We didn't want this to go on too long, but I just want to say it's — you know, it's very sad when people write false stories like, in that case, I guess it was gotten mostly from the New York Times, which is a highly — I mean, if you had libel laws, they would have been out of business even before they'll end up going out of business. So it's too bad.

But we could have given you — you saw the statements. We have hundreds of statements. Hundreds of statements, including from Democrats and Democrat governors.

And if you look, they were all saying, “We need ventilators. We need...” You don't hear “ventilators” anymore. They have all the ventilators they need, which we were right about. We said, “You're asking for too many. You don't need that.” And, in all fairness, these two people right here — Dr. Birx, Dr. Fauci — they said, “I don't think they need that many ventilators.” And I said, “I agree.”

At one point — and I'm not knocking New York for this, but they were asking — you remember? — 40,000 ventilators. And that's more than they have all over the country. And we got them a lot of ventilators, and nobody has complained.

We got them, as you know, beautiful — we built hospital rooms all over the country. The governor of Louisiana, John Bel Edwards, was very nice. He said, “You know what? You don’t have to build a second hospital.” Because good news is happening. They’re not able to fill the beds. They needed two hospitals. We built one; it was perfect. We’re getting — we’re just starting the other. I called him up. I said, “Do you think we should build the second one? I don’t think you’re going to need it.” He said, “Let me get back.” He got back. We didn’t need it.

With Governor Cuomo, in all good spirit and faith, he wanted to have the Jacob Javits Center done. And we built 2,900 incredible beds. Incredible. Then we make it — we made it COVID — and — or, to be exactly accurate, COVID-19, and — which was a lot of work. We had to change the ductwork. We had to seal up certain areas. We had to put areas of rooftop things over the beds. We did a lot of work. And we had it — but they never really had too much use for it.

And they called also — Mayor de Blasio, rightfully, he called. He said, “Would it be possible to get more medical help?” So, now, not only are we building facilities, we’re — they’re asking us for help because they’re unable to man it. And we got him the help. We got Mayor de Blasio a lot of help.

Then, when the Javits Center wasn’t used much — and then, as you know, the Mercy — and we took the Mercy and we took the Comfort, and we made them both — Los Angeles and New York — we made them COVID-adaptable, which was not easy to do. And we didn’t get almost any people sent there. They didn’t need them at the beginning because they didn’t need it for anything but this because there were fewer accidents, fewer motorcycles, fewer everything.

And what we did was like an incredible job, but they didn’t need them. It turned out — they were there. We were ready. You know the expression? They have an expression: “Ready, willing, and able.” We were ready, willing, and able. What the Army Corps of Engineers did was a miracle. What — what FEMA did was a miracle. What the doctors did.

So I got a call two days ago from the mayor of New York. He said, “Could you help us even more with medical personnel?” And we sent — I think it was 448 doctors, nurses, and respiratory experts. Real experts. And I got a call from the mayor and he said, “I want to tell you: Incredible — these people are incredible.” He said, “They lifted the spirits of the hospital workers from New York City like nothing I’ve ever seen.” He’s — he was unbelievable, what he said. It was really appreciated. And I let them know that. I let the military people — he said, “They went in there so brave, so incredible. They lifted the spirits of everybody.”

We did all of this work, but when you read the phony stories, you — nobody — nobody acknowledges this. And it doesn't have to be acknowledged, from my standpoint, but it does have to be acknowledged from the great work that these doctors, nurses, the Army Corps of Engineers, FEMA — all these people, they've done this incredible job. And they shouldn't be abused because — you take a look at what's happened. Nobody is asking for ventilators, except outside of our country.

Outside of our country, they're calling me — every country. They're calling me. So many countries. And I'm going to try and help them because we have thousands of ventilators being built. But nobody is asking for ventilators. Nobody is asking for beds because we built hospitals. I think we built 20,000 beds in a period of a couple of weeks.

The job they've done is incredible. With all of that being said, I'm getting along very well with governors. And if I wouldn't, Mike Pence had a call today with the governors and it was like a 10. I said, "How was it?" He said, "It's a 10." He was one of my expressions, actually. But he said it was like a 10.

And I'm sure you people were probably on the call, although you weren't supposed to be. But you were sitting in somebody's office listening to it, because every time we have these — and, you know, and you would know that for weeks those calls have been very good. But there wasn't a raised voice. There wasn't even a statement of like, "We think you should do this or that." I heard it was, like, just a perfect phone call. It might not be reported that way. They'll say, "I thought that somebody maybe slightly raised..." Didn't even raise a voice.

My only point of saying this, because I want to get back to why we're here: The press has not treated these incredible people who've done such a great job, they haven't treated them fairly. They're way off. We were way ahead of schedule.

And remember this — because the Times story was a fake — but everything — remember this: Everything we did, I was criticized because I was too early. If I waited longer, it would have been — you would have been critic- — if I went way early, if I went three months earlier, I would have been criticized — you know, criticized for being way too early.

So, with all of that being said, we understand it. I think I've educated a lot of people as to the press. And I would love to be able to say that we have a very honest press. Honestly, Jon, there'd

be nothing I would be more proud of if the press would work — and I don't mind being criticized, but not when they're wrong. Not when people have done a great job.

Yes.

Q Can I just ask you about the video? Because I've never seen a video like that played in this room. It looks a bit like a campaign ad. Who — who produced that video for you?

THE PRESIDENT: That was done by a group in the office, and it was done just by — we just put some clips together. I could give you — I'll bet you I have over 100 more clips even better than them. They were just pieced together over the last two hours. That was just — oh, we have far better than that. That's nothing compared to some of them.

Q But this was produced here in the White House by —

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah, this was done by Dan and a group of people, and they just put it together in a period of probably less than two hours.

Q Why did you feel the need to do that?

THE PRESIDENT: Because we're getting fake news, and I like to have it corrected. They're saying what a great job we're doing, and the media — these are the governors of California, governor of New Jersey, governor of New York.

Look, in New York, we work very close with Andrew. In New York, ventilators — we're going to be probably — we didn't — they didn't have a problem. We got them tremendous numbers of — thousands, but we got them a tremendous number of ventilator. You don't hear ventilators are a problem. Beds were going to be a problem. I mean, I'm happy about it. The Javits Center, which is incredible, is almost empty because they don't need them. That's good news, not bad news. I'm — you know, I'm not saying, "Gee, I wish more people were there." I don't want more people there.

We brought in the boat. We brought in the Comfort. And the Comfort was originally not supposed to be for this at all — the coronavirus. It was not supposed to be for that at all. They called, they said, "Could we have it?" That was a number of weeks ago. We said, "We don't think you need it, but if you need it, we'll do it." Then they said, "Could you get the medical personnel to run the

Javits Center? Could you get the medical personnel to run the ship?” We said, “If it’s necessary, we will.” And we did. There were military personnel. That’s the ones that Mayor de Blasio was so great to, in terms of his statements. I mean, I really appreciated his statements. He was so impressed with them, and I am too. The level of genius and bravery. They’re great people, the military people.

And we pieced that together — I would say it took less than two hours. It was done in house.

Steve?

Q But just to be clear, this was produced by government employees, by people here at the White House — this campaign-style video here?

THE PRESIDENT: I wouldn’t use the word “produced.” All they did was took some clips, and they just ran them for you. And the reason they did is to keep you honest. Now, I don’t think that’s going to work. It’s not going to have any impact. But just think of it: You heard the clips, you heard what I said. They said I acted late on closing down the country.

Some people wish we never closed it down. Now, if we didn’t, we would have lost hundreds of thousands of people. You know, interestingly — so I’m — I’m against that. We did the right thing. Everything we did was right. If we would have closed down —

Q You don’t think you made any mistakes along the way here? You think everything you did was right?

THE PRESIDENT: Well — well, look, governors should have had ventilators; they chose not to have them. We were able to get them ventilators. You haven’t heard — other than, you know, there was a lot of panic, a lot of screaming, “We want ventilators.” They got the ventilators. You don’t have that anymore. And the surge is supposed to be coming now. And if they do need ventilators, Jon, we’ve got almost 10,000 that are ready to rock. We have people standing with those ventilators right now. If you needed 2,000 in New York, which you don’t, but if you did, we can have them here in less than 24 hours. We’re ready to rock. This was a great — this was a great military — and beyond that — operation.

Let's get back to the regular. Shouldn't we get back to the regular? We could talk about this, but all I'm doing is this: I could have given you — like, those are four or five clips that we just played for you. I could have given you hundreds of people — I mean, Gavin was on television two days ago with one of your competitors, singing praises. He says, "Look..." You know, the question was asked in a negative way. He said, "Look, I know what you want to say but — want me to say, but he's been really good. It's hard for me to say that. In fact, it's impossible for me to say it." Gavin Newsom, the governor of California.

I have many clips from many — I have some clips from Anthony, that I didn't want to put up, which were really good. I think Anthony would be the first one to say, when I closed the country to China, when I closed the — the China ban, whatever you want to call it — Anthony said I saved a lot of lives by doing that. I mean, am I correct? I don't want to put words in Anthony's mouth, by the way, and I like him.

Today, I walk in and I hear I'm going to fire him. I'm not firing — I think he's a wonderful guy.

Q But why did you tweet something that said "Fire Fauci"? Why did you —

Q You retweeted the hashtag #FireFauci.

THE PRESIDENT: I retweeted somebody. I don't know. They said "fire." It doesn't matter.

Q Did you notice that when you retweeted it?

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah, I notice everything.

Q So you retweeted it even though it said, "Time to fire Fauci"?

THE PRESIDENT: No, no, that's somebody's opinion. All that is is an opinion.

Q But you read it and you elevated it.

THE PRESIDENT: No, I was called about that. I said, "I'm not firing him." In fact, if you ask your friends in the office — in the public relations office, I was immediately called upon that. And I said,

“No, I like him. I think he’s terrific.” Because this was a person’s view. Not everybody is happy with Anthony. Not everybody is happy with everybody.

But I will tell you, we have done a job, the likes of which nobody has ever done. The mobilization, getting of equipment, all of the things we’ve done — nobody has ever done a job like this.

We have 50 governors — and territories, by the way. People don’t ever mention that we have territories. We have 50 governors and territories, and many of those governors are Democrats, and they can’t find anything to complain about. And honestly, many of them didn’t do their jobs. I’ll let you know someday — let’s see what happens — but I may let you know who’s not doing their job. I can tell you the ones that are good, both Republican and Democrat, and the ones who don’t know what they’re doing. But we help some of the ones that don’t know what they’re doing. They should have had their own stockpiles. And now, if they want, we can build them stockpiles of ventilators.

The hardest thing is a ventilator, because it’s expensive, it takes a while to get. We got them, and nobody believed we did.

Now, many of the governors were asking for far too many. And we said they were asking for far too many. We talked and we said — you said very strongly that they just don’t need that many. You said they don’t need that many beds — Deborah.

So that’s it. Steve, go ahead.

Q To be clear, you and Dr. Fauci are on the same page?

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah, we have been from the beginning. I don’t know what it is exactly. But if I put somebody’s opinion up — you know, I don’t mind controversy. I think controversy is a good thing, not a bad thing. But I want it to be honest controversy.

Now, when I got a call — I got a call not very quickly; nobody, you know, saw that as being any big deal — they said, “How are you doing with Dr. Fauci?” I said, “I’m doing great.” And I didn’t talk to Dr. Fauci, even until we just got here. Dr. Fauci asked one of the people if he could get up and speak, and he did.

Q So he said that once you —

THE PRESIDENT: And they totally misinterpreted him. I saw what they did.

Q Can I — can I ask you? He said the question was hypothetical. But what he was just acknowledging is that lives would have been saved if the mitigation practices were put into place earlier. That seems obvious. Do you not agree with that?

THE PRESIDENT: Here's the thing. No, no. What he really is saying though: "But how could you have done it?" Look, I just went over stats with you. Right here. Right here.

How do you close it up? You have no deaths and no cases on January 11th. Doctor, would you recommend closing the United States of America?" "Oh, this must be terrible. How many cases do we have?" "None." How many deaths do we have?" "None."

January 17th — go back another week. On January 17th — this is 10 days before I did the — little bit less than 10 days before I did the ban. I did a ban on China. You think that was easy? I then did a ban on Europe. And a lot of people said that was an incredible thing to do, because you look at Spain — and, by the way, we're doing very well because when you look at all of those flat graphs and you add it all up, the United States is very low, and per capita we're very low. We're doing very well.

But how do you close up the United States of America? So, on January 6th, no deaths. On January 11th, no deaths. And no — no cases. On January 17th, no cases, no cases, no deaths. I'm supposed to close up the United States of America when I have no cases?

Q You didn't close down until the middle of March. "Should you have closed it down earlier?" — that's the question.

THE PRESIDENT: I closed down from China.

Q It's not about January.

THE PRESIDENT: Excuse me, I closed it down from China. And, by the way, some people think I should have waited longer and maybe ridden it out. I disagree with them. Okay? But it was

thought of. I mean, that was an alternative. You know, there are a lot of people that would have said, “Let’s ride it out.” Now, I’ll give you the good news. If I would have done that, it would have been, I think, catastrophic because their numbers are, Anthony, 1.6 to 2.2 million people would have died if we tried to do that.

And I did this last time: Cut it in half. Don’t say 2.2 million. Cut it in more than half. Say a million people died — well, that’s much more than the Civil War. Cut it in half. Take the million and cut it in half; that’s 500,000 people would have died. Now, that number we would have reached. Okay? That would have been easy to reach if we did nothing. So we did the right thing, and our timing was very good.

But here’s the one thing — and you have to say this — when you ask me, “Why didn’t you do this?” — how come when I did the ban on China and some very, very — instituted some very tough things, how come Nancy Pelosi, a month later, is in Chinatown, saying, “Let’s all march. This is not going to happen”? How come we have many of the experts from CNN and many other networks — if you call CNN a network; I don’t, personally. But we have CNN, we have many other places, and they’re all saying, “He doesn’t need to do it. He doesn’t need to do it.”

All I’m saying is this: How do you close down the greatest economy in the history of the world when, on January 17th, you have no cases and no death; when on January 21st, you have one case and no death? One case. Think of it. Now, we’re supposed to close down the country?

But here’s what happened: When, on January 31st, I instituted the ban, Joe Biden went crazy. He said, “You don’t need the ban. You...” He didn’t go crazy. Like, he has — he didn’t even know what the hell the ban was. But he — so he didn’t go crazy. But he did say —

Q Your ban bought you time.

THE PRESIDENT: He did call me xenophobic.

Q What did you do with that time?

THE PRESIDENT: Wait a minute. He called me xenophobic; he called me a racist because — he has since apologized and he said I did the right thing. So when you say, “Why didn’t you do this?”

Every Democrat thought I made a mistake when I did it. I saved tens of thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands of lives, by doing that.

Q But what did you do with that time that you bought? The argument is that you bought yourself some time and you didn't use it to prepare hospitals, you didn't use it to ramp up testing. Right now —

THE PRESIDENT: You're so — you're so —

Q — nearly 20 million people are unemployed.

THE PRESIDENT: You're so disgraceful. It's so disgraceful the way you say that.

Q Tens of thousands of Americans are dead.

THE PRESIDENT: Let me just — listen.

Q How is this sizzle reel —

THE PRESIDENT: I just went over it.

Q — or this rant supposed to make people feel confident —

THE PRESIDENT: I just went over it.

Q — in an unprecedented crisis?

THE PRESIDENT: Nobody thought we should do it. And when I did it —

Q But what did you do with the time that you bought?

THE PRESIDENT: You know what we did?

Q The month of February. That —

THE PRESIDENT: You know what we did?

Q That video has a gap. The entire month of February.

THE PRESIDENT: What do you do — what do you do when you have no case in the whole United States when you —

Q You had cases in February.

THE PRESIDENT: Excuse me. You reported it: zero cases, zero deaths on January 17th.

Q January.

Q January, February — the entire month of February.

THE PRESIDENT: January. I said in January.

Q Your video has a complete gap: the month of February.

THE PRESIDENT: On January 30th —

Q What did your administration do in February with the time that your travel ban bought you?

THE PRESIDENT: A lot.

Q What?

THE PRESIDENT: A lot. And, in fact, we'll give you a list — what we did. In fact, part of it was up there. We did a lot.

Q It wasn't in the video. The video had a gap.

THE PRESIDENT: Look. Look, you know you're a fake. You know that. Your whole network — the way you cover it — is fake. And most of you — and not all of you — but the people are wise to you.

That's why you have a lower — a lower approval rating than you've ever had before, times probably three.

Q Twenty million people now are unemployed.

THE PRESIDENT: And when you ask me that questions —

Q Tens of thousands of people are dead, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Let me ask you this: Why didn't Biden — why did Biden apologize? Why did he write a letter of apology?

Q I don't think the unemployed people right now care about why Joe Biden didn't apologize to you, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: Why did the Democrats think that I acted too quickly? You know why? Because they really thought that I acted too quickly. We have done a great job.

Q So get us the list of what you did in February.

THE PRESIDENT: Now, I could've — I could've kept it open. And I could've done what some countries are doing. They're getting beat up pretty badly. I could have kept it open. I thought of keeping it open because nobody has ever heard of closing down a country, let alone the United States of America. But if I would have done that, we would have had hundreds of thousands of people that would right now be dead.

We've done this right. And we really — we really have done this right. The problem is the press doesn't cover it the way it should be.

Go ahead. One more question. Steve, go ahead.

Q There's a debate over what authority you have to order the country reopened. What authority do you have?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I have the ultimate authority, but we're going to get into that in a minute. We're going to just finish this up. We're going to tell you about other things that we've done right.

But I will say this: Had we said, "Let's just keep going and let's not do a closing" — whether it's 2.2 that they, at one point, predicted as an outside or 1.6 at a lower number; you cut it all the way down to 6- or 7- or 800,000; take just a fraction of the number that could have happened, it literally would have been more than the Civil War. It would have been a disaster.

So, the minimum number was 100,000. And I think — I feel pretty good that we're going to be substantially below, Anthony, the 100,000. And I hope we will.

All right. So, today, the Department of Health and Human Services is announcing five new contracts to procure large numbers of additional ventilators under the Defense Production Act, which we used a lot, by the way — which you didn't like to talk about — in addition to the 1,300 we received today. We received, today, 1,300 additional ventilators. Now, we're probably not going to need them, but we can add that to our stockpile, which is very big, and we can move it around should the surge take place and should it be a very substantial surge. We're ready to — we're ready to rock.

The contracts are with General Electric, Hillrom, Medtronic, ResMed, and Vyair, combined with the DPA contracts that we announced last week with General Motors and Philips and two other contracts with Hamilton and ZOLL. We're adding 6,190 ventilators to the Strategic National Stockpile, of which we have a lot already — thousands — close to 10,000. But this will be added by May 8th, another 29,000 by the end of May. And more than 120,000 total we will have by the end of the year.

Now, we're going to help other countries. We're going to help states if they need it. We may help some states' stockpile. You know, they're supposed to buy their own stockpile. They have state stockpiles. They're supposed to be using that. And unfortunately, most of the states weren't there. And a lot of people didn't want to talk about it, but they weren't there. We will talk about it at the right time, if you want to. I — at this point, I'm more focused on getting past this nightmare of an epidemic or a pandemic — anything you want to call it. We got to get past it.

No one who has needed a ventilator has not gotten a ventilator. Think of that. You know, you heard all about ventilators, ventilators. "We need ventilators." Because they didn't have them. Because

the states should have had them. No one who has needed a ventilator has not gotten a ventilator. No one who has needed a hospital bed has been denied a hospital bed. That's not even really our responsibility.

Now, if we can help, we're going to do it. But that's where the Army Corps of Engineers did such a great job. We built over 20,000 beds. In fact, we built thousands more than we've actually needed to be safe. We wanted to be safe and we really — they rose to this incredible occasion.

I mean, we built more beds than we thought. We thought, in Louisiana, we were going heavy. And again, when I called the governor, I said, "Maybe we shouldn't build that second hospital, because we don't want to build it if you don't need it." He called back, he said, "I don't think we're going to need it." They had 1,000 rooms, 1,000 beds, and they used a lot of them, but they didn't need the other one so we stopped it because we don't want to waste.

But we're prepared to build thousands more should we need it. I don't think we're going to need it because it looks like we're plateauing and maybe even, in many cases, coming down.

In addition, we've ordered a total of 60 mobile decontamination [sic] — -contamination systems. So the decontamination system from Battelle, in Ohio, is an incredible thing because it takes the masks, and up to 20 times you can decontaminate a mask. And I've been asking from the beginning: "Why can't we sterilize and sanitize these masks?" And it turned out we can. And there was a great company in Ohio, they sent us some great equipment, and they're doing that now.

And now we're going to have more than 33 million N95 masks per week will be cleaned, decontaminated, and it'll be great. It's something that, frankly, I think people should have thought of a long time ago.

Five more flights landed today as part of the Project Air Bridge — our massive air lift operation to bring personal protective equipment into the United States, which has now delivered nearly half a million N95 masks, 370 million gloves, 25 million surgical masks, and 4.9 million gowns. So, we have millions of gowns, gloves, masks, all surgical equipment coming in should the states need it.

Now, the states — the states are supposed to be buying their own stuff. But should they need it, we are ready to give them, because we're building up our stockpile again like crazy.

Remember, I — and you saw the stories. I inherited — this administration — Mike, myself, the whole administration, we inherited a stockpile where the cupboards were bare. There was nothing. And I say it and I'll say it again: Just like we didn't have ammunition, we didn't have medical supplies, we didn't have ventilators, we didn't have a lot of things that should have been had. And you can read your own stories on that because you know what happened: They didn't want to spend the money. But we did.

To date, we've facilitated the supply of more than 38 million N95 masks nationwide. This week, we'll be sending 2 million N95 masks to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The Vice President will go into more detail. He's got great detail on that, and I think it's a pretty amazing story. We have a lot of masks already in stock, and we have more coming.

We're further expanding hospital surge capacity in key areas of the opening, and we have a portion of certain VA hospitals and non-veteran coronavirus patients, including at the East Orange, New Jersey Medical Center, as well as facilities in Manhattan and Brooklyn. They're ready. They're able. They're beautiful. Hopefully, we won't need too many of them because, frankly, we built everything that the governors wanted. And in many cases, it's too much. We told them it was too much, but we wanted to err on the side of caution.

The United States has now conducted nearly 3 million tests for the virus. Three million — the most of any nation. We are performing approximately 150,000 tests every single day and our rate of testing is especially high in areas hardest hit by the virus, if you look. And that's really — and it has hit some areas — the virus — very, very hard. For example, per capita testing in New York is higher than the rest of the world.

The NIH, CDC, and FDA are also currently validating several antibody tests that will allow us to determine whether someone has already had the virus and potentially become immune to infection. We're looking at that. The antibody tests are going to be very interesting, over the next short while. A lot of things are being developed, as we speak.

In the race to develop effective treatments, the drug company Gilead announced that its drug, remdesivir, has shown promising results — very promising — in compassionate use settings. In addition, the FDA has just granted emergency use authorization for a device that removes certain proteins from the bloodstream, possibly preventing a patient's immune system from overreacting to the virus and damaging vital organs, which is a big problem.

Furthermore, over the last seven days, my administration has deployed roughly 28 million doses of hydroxychloroquine from our National Stockpile. We have millions of doses that we bought and many people are using it all over the country. And just recently, a friend of mine told me he got better because of the use of that — that drug. So, who knows? And you combine it with Z-Pak, you combine it with Zinc — depending on your doctor's recommendation. And it's having some very good results, I'll tell you.

I think if anybody recommended it other than me, it would be used all over the place, to be honest with you. I think the fact that I recommended it, I probably set it back a lot. But it's a lot of good things that are happening with it. A lot of good tests.

Scientists are also pursuing a blood therapy known as convalescent plasma. Convalescent plasma. This therapy uses antibodies from the blood of recovered patients to treat those who are sick. And this is something that actually is a very old procedure, but it's done in a very modern way.

During this difficult time, we're also working to ensure that the 2020 Census is completed safely and accuracy. We may be asking for an extension because, obviously, they can't be doing very much right now. They wouldn't even be allowed to do it. So, the Census, we're going to be asking for a delay — a major delay, I think. How can you possibly be knocking on doors for a long period of time now?

The Census Bureau recently made the decision to temporarily suspend its field operation data-collection activities to help stop the spread. In addition, while millions of Americans continue to complete their questionnaire online, the Census Bureau has asked Congress for a 120 extension. I don't know that you even have to ask them. This is called "an act of God." This is called a — a situation that has to be — they have to give in. I think 120 days isn't nearly enough.

My administration is also taking bold action to help American workers. On Friday, Americans began receiving the cash payments authorized by a historic \$2 trillion relief bill.

By the end of the week, nearly 80 million Americans will receive a total of \$147 billion. And from what the Secretary of the Treasury tells me, that's very much on time and going very nicely. He'll be speaking in a moment. And payments — these payments go directly into the banks and the bank accounts of these people. Millions of additional payments will follow. The typical family of four will receive \$3,400. That's for a family of four. That's something.

Additionally, through our Paycheck Protection Program –which is a tremendous success, and they should extend it and increase it. This has been a tremendous success. So successful that the banks are taking a little bit longer to distribute the money, but it's going rapidly.

We've now processed over \$200 billion in loans to help small businesses retain their workers. Now we urgently need lawmakers to set aside the partisan agendas and to replenish this program with new funds because it's really something that has been an incredible success. And they need more money to keep it going to take care of these business and keep them — keep them open.

I want to thank the many governors, health professionals, scientists, and business leaders for their incredible hard work and input over the past month, and even long beyond a month, Mike, I would say. You know, we've been working together with a lot of for, it seems like, forever.

I've been having many discussions with my team and top experts, and we're very close to completing a plan to open our country, hopefully even ahead of schedule. And that's so important.

We will soon finalize new and very important guidelines to give governors the information they need to start safely opening their states. My administration's plan and corresponding guidelines will give the American people the confidence they need to begin returning to normal life. That's what we want. We want to have our country open. We want to return to normal life. Our country is going to be open, and it's going to be successfully opened. And we'll be explaining over a very short number of days exactly what is going to be.

We've also, as you probably heard, developed a committee. We're actually calling it a number of committees with the most prominent people in the country, the most successful people in the various fields. And we'll be announcing them tomorrow.

This weekend, the United States also helped facilitate an unprecedented agreement among the 23 nations of OPEC Plus — that's OPEC plus additional energy-producing nations — representing many of the world's largest oil-producing countries to stabilize oil markets. And we have, in fact — and I think you've seen a big stabilization over the last couple of days.

Together, countries around the world will cut oil production by approximately 20 million barrels. People are saying 10 million, but we think that the number that they'll actually hit is going to be

closer to 20 million barrels a day. And that will help a lot with saving jobs all over Texas and Oklahoma and North Dakota and many of other — other of our big energy states.

This historic action will help nearly 11 million American workers who are supported by the U.S. oil and gas industry. It's a very monumental agreement. I want to thank Saudi Arabia and the King of Saudi Arabia, the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia — both. I want to thank President Putin of Russia. And I want to thank a very good friend of mine — a man who's become a friend of mine: The President of Mexico showed great flexibility. President López Obrador. He showed great flexibility and — and tremendous intelligence doing what he did. It was not that easy for him. And I want to thank Mexico and the president. This is a very historic deal. Very historic. So we'll see how it all goes.

In this time and challenge — and we are certainly in a time probably like we haven't been in many, many decades — we are strengthened and sustained by the bonds of love and loyalty that unite all Americans. I'm so proud of the American people.

Everywhere you look, you see the patriotism of our people shining through and the courage of our doctors and nurses on the frontlines, and the dedication of our food supply workers, and in the commitment of every citizen to achieving victory over the virus. That's what's going to happen. It's going to happen sooner than people think. And we're going to be smart about it. Very, very smart about it. We're going to be safe about it. We're going to be listening also to the great doctors and medical professionals.

Together, we're beating back the invisible enemy and we're paving the way for great resurgence. Really, a great resurgence for American prosperity. Our country wants to go back. They want to go back to work. They're going to go back safely, and that's what we want.

I'd like now to ask Vice President Pence to say a few words, followed by Dr. Fauci and Dr. Birx. I think before we — before we do this — because I know there's an emergency where they want Steve to come. So what I'll do is I'll ask Steve to come up — Secretary of the Treasury. You can talk a little bit and then maybe take a couple of questions about what's happening. Tell them the success we're having.

Thank you very much.

SECRETARY MNUCHIN: Thank you, Mr. President and Mr. Vice President. As you announced, we are very pleased that we are ahead of schedule on delivering the economic impact payments. These are what was known as the checks in the mail that we want to deliver in direct — direct deposit.

This is ahead of schedule. We started processing those last Friday. We expect that over 80 million hardworking Americans will get the direct deposit by this Wednesday. And we know how important that is to all of those hardworking Americans, many of which are at home, not working at the moment.

If you do not receive them by Wednesday — on Wednesday, we will be launching at IRS.gov. Click on IRS.gov, go to “Get Your Payment.” If you filed a tax return in 2018 and ’19 — or ’19 — have that information available. You’ll be able to ID yourself, you’ll be able to put in your direct deposit information, and within several days, we will automatically deposit the money into your account. We want to do as much of this electronically as we can. It’s very important in this day and age. It’s more secure, and you don’t have to go to the bank.

If you’re a Social Security beneficiary, you do not need to do anything. You will get a direct deposit. If you have not filed and did not need to file a 2018 and ’19 return, you can go to IRS.gov now and enter your information and authenticate yourself. So again, we are very pleased that that is ahead of schedule.

I’d also like to announce the progress we’re making on the new SBA program, the PPP. Let me just remind everybody: This is a brand-new program that is now one week old.

We have distributed and confirmed \$230 billion of loans to over 4,600 lenders participating. That is multiples and multiples of anything that the SBA has ever done in — in one year, before. And I especially want to thank the broad-based community banks that are participating. Again, over 4,600 banks.

If you haven’t had your loan processed, you will get it processed this week. As the President said, we’ve gone back to Congress and asked them for more money to make sure that every business has access to this.

Let me also comment for the states. We are distributing out half the money, this week, to the states. That’s a week ahead of time. And we’ll deliver the other half of the money to the states next

week.

And then let me just finally comment, we've been very — working very closely with the Federal Reserve. Last week, we announced expanded facilities and new facilities that total \$2.3 trillion of liquidity. And in particular, I'd just like to highlight a Main Street lending facility that will be for companies between one worker and 10,000 people — so mid-sized businesses — and also, a municipal facility for states and local governments to be able to access funds given the shortages that they have.

So with that, I'm happy to answer any questions

THE PRESIDENT: You have any questions for Steve, please?

Q Secretary Mnuchin, thank you, sir. Both Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader Schumer have said that they're in negotiations with you right now on additional funding for these small-business loans, for that package. Leader McConnell, though, has said that nothing should be added to the package. They should just be specific to small-business loans. What is the opinion of your administration? Should there be some sort of horse-trading here or should it just be small business loans?

SECRETARY MNUCHIN: Well, the President's view and the Vice President's and my view is this was a bipartisan program. This SBA program, it wasn't a Republican program, it wasn't a Democrat program; it was a bipartisan program. We've committed to small businesses. We should top up that program now. I know the Democrats want to talk about more money for hospitals and states. Right now, we're just sending the money out to the hospitals and states. They haven't come close to using that money. And I know the President and Vice Presidents have said once we get the SBA done, we can go into another funding bill.

The President has talked about potentially adding infrastructure and other things. We think there is a likelihood we will need more money, and we will — we will sit down and try to get a bipartisan bill. But this is important we deliver on small businesses. Fifty percent of the people work for small businesses.

Q Thank you, sir.

Q What's the emergency that the President said you had to go for? The President said you had an emergency meeting —

THE PRESIDENT: Negotiation.

Q Over this bill?

SECRETARY MNUCHIN: Yeah, well — or because we don't want to run out of money. We've used about \$220 billion of the \$350 billion. We don't want to run out of that money. We don't want to create panics that people won't get it. So that's why we want to — we want to top that up, and we've asked for another \$250 billion for that program.

And again, let me just remind you, every dollar we spend in this program, we save a dollar of unemployment insurance. So even though we're asking for \$250 billion, it really won't cost that much.

Q Could I follow up?

Q What are your — do you have concerns about lifting the guidelines too soon? And what's the economic impact? I understand the economic argument for getting people back to work, obviously. But what's the economic risk of lifting them too early and seeing then a spike in cases again?

SECRETARY MNUCHIN: Well, of course there's economic risks in both directions. We reviewed with the President today a very broad list of over 100 business people that are going to help advise the President on what needs to be done to reopen the economy.

We want to make sure — and again, the combination of economic impact payments, small-business payments, enhanced unemployment insurance — the President made very clear, we want to make sure that hardworking Americans have liquidity while we wait to reopen the government.

Q So do you believe the government should be re- — or that the country, excuse me, should be reopened on May 1?

SECRETARY MNUCHIN: I've had discussions with the President. I know he's considering it, and I believe he's going to make a decision later in the week.

THE PRESIDENT: We have to do — everything has to be safe. We want safe.

Q What is your advice to the President?

SECRETARY MNUCHIN: My advice is: As soon as it's ready to open and based upon the medical professionals, and — and again, we're working very closely with the President and outside business leaders to develop a plan.

Q I just wonder — I wanted to ask you, Mr. President, what you think — what — if you could sketch for us what reopening the economy looks like. Do you think it's going to be everything open? Or do you think —

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I'll be doing that over the next few days because we'll probably be making a statement about that and exactly what it looks like.

I know what that looks like, but I also want to get the advice, in a sense. We have some of the — the biggest from every business on this council. We're actually setting up a number of different councils or committees, I guess you could call them. And we have a lot of smart people. I think that they will give us some also good advice. But, no, we want to be very, very safe. At the same time, we got to get our country open.

Q Yeah, I understand that, Mr. President. Do you think there is a possibility then that what you do is you open it incrementally? Do you think people will go back to restaurants, to concerts, the cinema?

THE PRESIDENT: I do think so. Eventually, they will. Yeah.

Q And let me ask one final —

THE PRESIDENT: I think eventually they will do that. And I think we're going to — boom — I think we're going to — I think it's going to go quickly. Our people want to get back to work, and I think there's a pent-up demand like there hasn't been in a long time.

And that's why — and that's why you see the stock market — I mean, to think that the stock market is at the level it is right now, with all that this world and this country has gone. And look at the European Union, how badly decimated they've been. Look at other countries. Look at China, by the way. I've seen the numbers. Look at China. Look at how these countries have been just decimated by this.

And to think that the stock market is at this tremendously high number. Not that much — you know, it was looking a little bleak for a while, but it — it hit a certain point and then started going up. I think that's a great tribute to the fact that there's a demand.

Yeah.

Q Mr. President, thank you, sir. In regards to some of your tweets earlier today, and I think it was Steve's question, my question to you is: What provision in the Constitution gives the President the power to open or close state economies? And then —

THE PRESIDENT: Numerous provisions. We'll give you a legal brief if you want.

Q And then — we'll be looking forward to that, sir. But following up: What happens if you say, for instance, "We want states to reopen but California or New York do not open"? What would you do then?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think everybody wants to open. I mean, I guess, you know, that could happen, but I don't think that would happen.

Go ahead please.

Q It's been states that have closed, ordered schools closed. It's been states that have ordered businesses like restaurants and bars closed.

THE PRESIDENT: That's because I let that happen because I would have preferred that. I let that happen. But if I wanted to, I could have closed it up. But I let that happen and I like the way they've done it. And the seven that remained really in sort of a semi-lockdown — if you look at those states, they've really done a very good job. They're very much different from a New York or from other places where they've been hit very hard.

Q So you're prepared then to bigfoot states and say, "I order you to open your schools, I order to force kids to be able to go"?

THE PRESIDENT: Go ahead, please. Yeah.

Q Yes, Mr. President. Following up on that, there are two consortiums of states today — California, Oregon, and Washington on the West Coast; Northeastern states — totally representing about 100 million people, who have said they're going to cooperate and decide when to reopen those states.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, they can decide, but —

Q Does that undermine what you're trying to do?

THE PRESIDENT: No, not at all. Let me just tell you — very simple. I'm going to put it very simply: The President of the United States has the authority to do what the President has the authority to do, which is very powerful. The President of the United States calls the shots.

If we weren't here for the states, you would have had a problem in this country like you've never seen before. We were here to back them up. And we're backing — and we've more than backed them up. We did a job that nobody ever thought was possible. It's a decision for the President of the United States.

Now, with that being said, we're going to work with the states because it's very important. You have local governments, they're pinpointed. It's really — you talk about — it's like a microchip. They are pinpointed. We have local government that hopefully will do a good job. And if they don't do a good job, I'd step in so fast. But no, they can't do anything without the approval of the President of the United States.

Q But, Mr. President —

THE PRESIDENT: Go ahead, please.

Q So if some states refuse to reopen and you order them to, the 10th Amendment of the Constitution says all powers that don't reside in the President or Congress reside in the states. How do you overcome that?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, if some states refuse to open, I would be — I would like to see that person run for election. They're going to open. They're going to all open.

Q So that's a valid (inaudible).

THE PRESIDENT: I think that's something that's not going to happen. They want to open. They have to open. They have to get open. Every one of those states, the people want to go and they want to —

Now, some will be — are in a different situation. You have — I won't name states now, but I will over the next two or three days. I'm going to be very specific. But you have some states where this is not the kind of a problem than it is in New York or Louisiana or Michigan or other places that got hit very hard. Illinois got hit very hard. But all states want to open and they want to open as soon as possible. But they want to open safely and so do I.

Yeah, please.

Q Thank you, Mr. President. Today, the French President Emmanuel Macron said that he will keep the shutdown in France until the middle of May. Does that mean that the U.S. will keep the ban from flights from —

THE PRESIDENT: No, France got hit very hard. France got hit very hard. And again, he has to do what he has to do. He's a friend of mine. But France — Spain has just been decimated. You look at what's happened in Italy, it's a very well-known fact, what happened in Italy. No, they were hit very hard.

Q Question for Secretary Mnuchin: Has everybody that you would like to have — the 100 business people on the Economic Council — have they all been invited already? Have they all agreed to be —

SECRETARY MNUCHIN: They ha- — they haven't been invited yet. We've just reviewed the names with the President —

THE PRESIDENT: It's a group.

SECRETARY MNUCHIN: — today, for him to sign off on.

Q And are they from all sectors? Energy —

SECRETARY MNUCHIN: Yes, there's — basically, there's verticals. So every single area of the economy we wanted to be represented.

Q Great. One other thing. Is there anything else that needs to be done to work on industry — oil industry jobs — to save oil industry jobs after the deal this past weekend?

SECRETARY MNUCHIN: Well, I think there's always things. So we're working with Larry Kudlow. I mean, we have —

Q Anything specifically that needs to be done?

SECRETARY MNUCHIN: We have — we have economic plans for every single part of the economy. Obviously, in the case of the oil industry, they've been hit especially hard because you've had both the supply issue and you've had the demand issue.

Q Have you — have you figured out the bailout money for the airlines, with the allocations for the airlines?

SECRETARY MNUCHIN: So I'm pleased to say we've worked very hard. I think, as you probably have seen, we've put out a press release that we have now had discussions with almost all the airlines. I've personally had discussions with all the major airlines' CEOs. We specifically created an exception for small airlines that we could process very quickly. And I think you'll see, very quickly, decisions coming out. I'm very pleased with the discussions we've had.

THE PRESIDENT: We've had very good dis- — really just good discussions.

Q Mr. Secretary?

SECRETARY MNUCHIN: Yes.

Q Do you still see a need for a phase four stimulus? Or is this push to reopen —

THE PRESIDENT: Steve, I just want to say we have had —

Q — the economy in lieu of that?

THE PRESIDENT: — discussions — wait, excuse me. One second, please. We've had very good discussions with the airlines. Very good discussions.

Q And is it possible to reopen the economy on May the 1st?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't want to say that. You'll be hearing over the next few days.

Q Mr. President —

Q Is phase four going to be later than that, Mr. President?

SECRETARY MNUCHIN: Let me — let me just comment — I'm going to answer your question.

Q Mr. Secretary, do you see a need for a phase four? Or is this push in lieu of another stimulus?

SECRETARY MNUCHIN: Okay. So again, let me just comment — I mean, Congress, on a bipartisan basis, approved an unprecedented amount of money to help American workers and American business because it was no fault of their own that business was closed down. We had been very diligently executing on that. You know, everybody said it was going to take months to get people money. We are executing very quickly. We created a whole new SBA program in a week.

Our job right now is to execute the \$2.3 billion, which we can add several trillion dollars with the Fed.

The one area we are particularly concerned about is the Small Business program. Quite frankly, it's even more incredibly popular and successful than we anticipated. So the President wants to be very clear: We have money for that. And once we get done with that, we will review with the President. If there is more money that needs to be — to support this economy, to support hardworking Americans — we will work with Congress to get that in time.

THE PRESIDENT: And, Steve, do you want to talk about phase four?

SECRETARY MNUCHIN: So, phase four, the President has talked about infrastructure for a long period of time. We've talked about — to the extent that the hospitals need more money because of the medical issues, we'll monitor that. We want to make sure there are incentives for restaurants, entertainment — people to get back to those types of things. So we'll be looking at, very specifically, provisions to stimulate parts of the economy. Some of them may be money issues. Some of them may be regulatory issues.

Q Mr. President, just to clarify your understanding of your authority vis-à-vis governors — just to be very specific: For instance, if a governor issued a stay-at-home order —

THE PRESIDENT: When you say “my authority” — the President's authority. Not mine, because it's not me.

Q If I could just ask the question —

THE PRESIDENT: This is — when somebody is the President of the United States, the authority is total, and that's the way it's got to be.

Q It's total? Your authority is total?

THE PRESIDENT: It's total. It's total.

Q Your authority is total?

THE PRESIDENT: And the governors know that.

Q So if a governor —

THE PRESIDENT: The governors know that. No, you have —

Q If a governor issues a stay-at-home order, you —

THE PRESIDENT: — a couple of bands of — excuse me. Excuse me. You have a couple —

Q Could you rescind that? Could you rescind that order?

THE PRESIDENT: You have a couple of bands of Democrat governors, but they will agree to it. They will agree to it.

Q What if it was a Republican governor?

THE PRESIDENT: But the authority of the President of the United States, having to do with the subject we're talking about, is total.

Yeah, please, go ahead.

Q Mr. President, one of the things you —

THE PRESIDENT: Go ahead, please.

Q One of the things you — one of the things you spoke — we saw in your video about was the travel ban from Europe. As part of reopening America, do you want to reopen the borders so that people from Europe, from the UK —

THE PRESIDENT: At the right time.

Q How soon do you think we are from —

THE PRESIDENT: And a very good question, actually.

Well, I'm going to have to take a look. I wouldn't say Italy is doing great right now, and I wouldn't say Spain is doing great right now. And we just heard that France is extending its stay-inside order, right? Their stay — they've extended it — I just see that — and, I think, for a short period of time.

But no, when they're back. We want to do it very quickly, but we want to make sure everything is good.

No, right now we have a very —

Q Weeks, months?

THE PRESIDENT: Right now we have a very strong ban. We're going to keep it that way until they heal.

Q Weeks, months? What would you —

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I can't tell you that. I can't tell you that. I have to see: How are they doing? I mean, France just went for another two days — for another two weeks. We have to see.

Jon.

Q So Dr. Fauci said that you took his advice on the question of mitigation. He made the recommendation. You accepted it. You put into place. As you make this next decision, which, as you have said —

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I'm not sure who — Jon, I'm not sure who really gave me advice on the ban. I think I took —

Q No, not on the ban. I'm talking about the mitigation.

THE PRESIDENT: I think I took my own advice on the ban. I don't know.

Q — the social — the social distancing, I'm talking about. The shutting down.

THE PRESIDENT: Okay.

Q Not of travel, but of activity. So my question is: As you make this next decision, which you have said may be the most difficult or important decision of your presidency, will you assure the American people that you will again take the advice of the doctors — of Dr. Fauci, of Dr. Birx? Will you take the advice of the health experts before you do that?

THE PRESIDENT: I will and many other people also. But I will absolutely take their advice.

Q But would you go against them?

THE PRESIDENT: Please go ahead.

Q Yes, Mr. —

Q Would you go against their recommendation? If they say you need another 15 or 30 days, would you —

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think it would be likely because I think we're not very far from being on the same page.

Please.

Q Yes, Mr. President, one thing that Governor Cuomo said today is that states do not have the capacity to do the mass COVID-19 testing ahead of a reopening as —

THE PRESIDENT: Well, they have to do it. Look, they're supposed to be doing it.

Q He says he can't purchase the diagnostic tests or equipment —

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah, I know. I know.

Q — and needs federal help. So will the states get that?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, they — they may need help, but —

Q Will they get it?

THE PRESIDENT: But they're there. They're on ground. They've got local mayors, local representatives. They have people that do it.

Q But he needs the supplies.

THE PRESIDENT: And what we did last time is unprecedented. We literally rebuilt tests. We — we rebuilt a whole industry because we inherited nothing. What we inherited from the previous administration was totally broken, which somebody should eventually say. Not only were the cupboards bare, as I say, but we inherited broken testing. Now we have great testing.

I just left the top executives at Abbott. Who would have thought that would have happened, where they have such a great test as that?

And, in fact, what I'll do — I think, unless you have any further questions for the Secretary of the Treasury — do you have anybody for Steve? Anybody?

Q Mr. Secretary Mnuchin —

THE PRESIDENT: Is that for the Secretary of the Treasury or for me?

Q For Secretary Mnuchin, yeah. Yes, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: Because if it's for me, we can wait.

Q It's for Secretary Mnuchin.

THE PRESIDENT: We have to get him back to work, okay?

Q Yes, sir. For Secretary Mnuchin, a question —

SECRETARY MNUCHIN: Yes.

Q — from one of my colleagues who's not able to be in the room. They're curious about the SBA rule that prevents small casinos from getting some of this relief. Is that something that you're taking a look at? Is there going to be a change to the —

SECRETARY MNUCHIN: So, no — not small casinos, but there are such things as small taverns and restaurants that have literally, you know, small gaming things. And we are coming out with some additional guidance on that. But I want to be clear: It's not small casinos.

Q Thank you, sir.

Q Secretary Mnuchin?

Q Secretary?

SECRETARY MNUCHIN: Yes.

Q There was a letter that some House Republicans sent this weekend, about the liquidity for a mortgage servicers.

SECRETARY MNUCHIN: Yes.

Q Are — can you explain what you're looking at on that front?

SECRETARY MNUCHIN: Sure. So I think I commented on this a week or so ago. We had a subcommittee task force at FSOC that specifically studied this issue. We have all the appropriate people on it. Ginnie Mae has automatically taken some action. We've had conversations with the FHFA as to what they're going to do for Fannie and Freddie. And we've said that to the extent they need certain authorities from the Treasury, we will accommodate that.

So we're — we're very aware of the issue. Quite frankly, we've been studying this issue way before COVID and had concerns about some of these non-bank servicers not being well capitalized. But we're going to — we're going to make sure that the market functions properly.

Q Thank you, sir. We have seen, in a number of these relief bills, that Democrats and Republicans have been able to push forward different non-coronavirus-specific funding priorities. Are you trying to keep funding specific to coronavirus? And then, if there are going to be other additions — for instance, a change to labor rules is something that many on the left wanted. Some of the right are wondering if they should also — if you should also be pushing for, you know, their preferred add-ons.

SECRETARY MNUCHIN: Well, I think our expectation has always been this is COVID related. Some people have a rather broad view of what "COVID related" is, because it has impacted almost every single business. I mean, I think, we've — the President has talked about the Kennedy Center, which is a good institution. Obviously, that was not the major priority in the bill, but they were hit with COVID related.

So — but, no, the President has instructed we want to be very specific in the next bill. It's COVID-related items.

Q It's been reported —

THE PRESIDENT: Well, we didn't want to do the Kennedy Center, just so you understand. And that that was done — the Democrats wanted it in. We didn't want that, but they wanted it in. And we had to agree in order to get something done for the workers. But we want this to be for the workers and for companies that employ the workers. That's what we're looking for. We're not looking for extraneous nonsense.

Q It's been reported that you argued, at the time the China ban was being discussed, that that was too disruptive to the global economy. Is that accurate?

SECRETARY MNUCHIN: Let me be clear: I had nothing to do with the China ban. I wasn't on the task force at the time. I'm not even sure I was — I think I was traveling at the time. But I never had any — I was not part — I did become very active, and after the China ban, but that report in the New York Times was not accurate.

Q You did not weigh in beforehand?

SECRETARY MNUCHIN: I was not part of the task force at that time, and I was — I was not involved. As a matter of fact, I think I may have been traveling.

Q Secretary Mnuchin, there's a proposal made by Senator Hawley to get direct payments to employers to pay people who have been laid off and to keep people on payroll. Does the administration support that proposal?

SECRETARY MNUCHIN: Well, again, that is the PPP. The PPP is basically sending money to small business — 50 percent of American workers — to keep those people paid. And it's the most efficient way. Every dollar, as I said, we do through that, it's one less dollar of unemployment. And more importantly, we want those people to have — be associated with the business. So as soon as the President is ready to open up the economy, those businesses are together. We don't want those businesses to fall apart. That's why this is such a successful program, and we want Congress to put more money in.

THE PRESIDENT: But are you talking about unemployment? You're talking about the unemployment?

Q (Inaudible) Senator Hawley.

THE PRESIDENT: Sending it indirectly to the states? We would have preferred that it was sent directly to the people. The Democrats wanted it to be sent through the unemployment system. And, you know, I've talked to you about it: We have 40-year-old equipment in many of those systems. They're run by the state. But I'm hearing they're getting the money out anyway.

SECRETARY MNUCHIN: So, some — some of them are, and some of the states aren't, and we encourage — you know, we're working with the states to try to update their computers, but it's a — it's a long haul.

THE PRESIDENT: Okay? Thank you, Steve.

SECRETARY MNUCHIN: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Phase four, Steve. Phase four. Come on, Steve.

Q A quick question about something you just said. You said, "When someone is President of the United States, their authority is total." That is not true. Who — who told you that?

THE PRESIDENT: Okay. So you know what we're going to do? We're going to write up papers on this. It's not going to be necessary, because the governors need us one way or the other, because ultimately it comes with the federal government. That being said, we're getting along very well with the governors, and I feel very certain that there won't be a problem.

Yeah, please. Go ahead.

Q Has any governor agreed that you have the authority to decide when their state opens back up?

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't asked anybody because I don't — you know why?

Q Because no one has — no one has said that.

THE PRESIDENT: Because I don't have to.

Go ahead, please.

Q But who told you the President has the total authority?

THE PRESIDENT: Enough. Please.

Q You mentioned the Vice President's call with the governors today. Governor Hogan of Maryland has urged your administration to ask Congress for \$500 billion to help stabilize budgetary shortfalls created by coronavirus.

THE PRESIDENT: It's nice of Governor Hogan, very much. We appreciate Governor Hogan's statement.

Q Governor Cuomo said the CARES Act ignored state government shortfalls.

THE PRESIDENT: Cuomo.

Q Do you support that request?

THE PRESIDENT: Which one? What did he say?

Q He said the CARES Act ignored the budgetary shortfalls.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, they're looking at things in phase four, where they have — you know, where they talk about states, and they're also talking about hospitals. They're talking about states who have been battered, and they're also talking about hospitals. And we're certainly willing to look at that.

Q Will you urge Congress on their behalf?

THE PRESIDENT: You know, we'll see what we all come back with. But they are talking about states and they're talking about hospitals.

OAN.

Q Thank you, Mr. President. The Governor of Michigan, Gretchen Whitmer, has on Thursday signed an executive order banning the sale of non-essential goods. If other states follow —

THE PRESIDENT: The sale of what?

Q Non-essential goods. She has banned the sale of non-essential goods. Many are calling this draconian, unconstitutional. As President, do you think that if other states were to follow her example in the coming weeks, that the federal government should intervene?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I don't think that's going to happen. I think it's very extreme. But she's doing it, and I think it's going to be over a long way before we have to start thinking about it too much. It is strong. It's a very strong position to take. But they're making a lot of progress in Michigan, so let's see how it all works.

Q What is the status of the funding for the World Health Organization?

THE PRESIDENT: We're going to be talking about that very soon. I'm getting a full report. I'm not happy with the World Health Organization. I'm not happy with the World Trade Organization either. We've been ripped off by everybody.

And we have — this country, for so many years, has been ripped off by everybody, whether it's a World Health or World Trade. And they're like — I call them the "Bobbsey Twins." They'd look at our country — for years and years, we had people that did nothing about it. We're doing a lot about it. So we'll have a report.

And we'll also — we're also talking about the World Trade Organization. But we've made a lot of progress there. We're now winning cases for the first time, because they know I'll leave if we don't get treated fairly.

This country — our country — was at a point where we rarely, if ever, won the lawsuits within the World Trade Organization. But now we're winning a lot of them, because they know I'm not — I'm not playing games. We will pull out if we have to. We just won a 7-billion-dollar lawsuit, which was very nice.

Q Do you expect a decision this week on cutting funding for the WHO?

THE PRESIDENT: Uh, yeah. I would say, by the end of the week, I'm going to make a decision on that. Yeah. There's a lot of — right now, there's a lot of things happening.

Q On China — why are there no consequences for China, for the misinformation that they shared?

THE PRESIDENT: How do you know there are no consequences?

Q Because you've said. Well, you've been asked, and it appear that there were no —

THE PRESIDENT: How do you know there are no consequences?

Q What are the consequences, Mr. President, for the misinformation —

THE PRESIDENT: I wouldn't tell you. China will find out. Why would I tell you?

Q But people are concerned that they stonewalled, that they gave misinformation —

THE PRESIDENT: No, you started off by saying, "Why are there no consequences?"

Q Because you've been asked this a few times, so I'm following up on your response. Why are there no consequences for China?

THE PRESIDENT: How do you know there are no consequences?

Q Because we've asked you —

THE PRESIDENT: You're going to find out.

Q — and you've said — you've said that didn't want to have an consequences because you suggested trade.

THE PRESIDENT: I wouldn't tell you. You'd probably be the last person on Earth I'd tell.

Q So you're saying there will be consequences?

THE PRESIDENT: Go ahead. Uh, yeah, please.

Q Mr. President — actually, this is a question for Mr. Vice President. Do you agree with the President's statement and his understanding of federalism, that his power is total — like in the way he described it? Is there anything you'd like to add or any context you'd like to add to the way he was discussing that?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I support the President's leadership under the national emergency declaration that he signed.

And we're standing before you today, the first time in American history, when all 50 states have issued emergency declarations, and the territories. This is an unprecedented time in the life of the nation.

And fortunately, as the President has reflected and our health experts will continue to reflect, because the American people have heeded the President's Coronavirus Guidelines for America; because state governors have taken those and implemented them, even in states where there was not a significant outbreak; and implemented additional measures as we provided them with data about cases and best practices — we're making real progress as a country.

Q But it sounds like you think his power is a little bit more circumscribed than totally.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, make no mistake about it: In the long history of this country, the authority of the President of the United States during national emergencies is unquestionably plenary. And you can look back through times of war and other national emergencies. And as the President said, we'll happily brief that.

But in the days ahead, what the President has charged us to do is to work with our health experts. We're going to bring together an extraordinary group of American business leaders to counsel the President. And then, working with the CDC, we're going to produce new guidelines, based upon the data, for every state and territory in this nation. We're going to give them guidance. And, as the President has indicated, we'll continue to respect the leadership and partnership that we forge with every governor in America.

But this is an unprecedented time. But I have to tell you: When you look at the fact — despite the heartbreaking loss of more than 22,000 Americans — when you look at the fact of what the health experts told us this could be, I think I only can feel a sense of gratitude to the American people, gratitude to the extraordinary team that has counseled this President, the steps that President Trump has taken, the policies that governors have implemented all across America.

I mean, we were discussing today, at the task force, that when you look at the European Union as a whole, they have nearly three times the mortality rate that the United States of America has today. And that is a tribute to our extraordinary healthcare workers, their dedication, their tireless work. But it's also a tribute to the fact that the American people put into practice the mitigation efforts that the President counseled the nation to do on the advice of our best scientists, now more than a month ago, and our hospitals were not overwhelmed and are not overwhelmed at this hour.

And I have to tell you that standing here today, I couldn't be more proud to stand alongside this President and to be a part of this team that has served the American people during this challenging hour.

And I just say to you: To every American looking on, as we see the numbers leveling and maybe even beginning to go down, I just encourage you to keep doing what you're doing. Because of the sacrifices that Americans and American families have made through these mitigation efforts, you're saving lives and you're seeing our nation through this time.

THE PRESIDENT: Go ahead.

Q Sir, did the states tell you — you've been talking to the governors quite a bit — did those coalitions of states on the West Coast and in the Northeast, did they tell you what they are going to be announcing before they announce it?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Governor Phil Murphy and the governor of Connecticut expressed today that they were going to be speaking on a — and discussing on a regional basis what their recommendations would be. And we assured them today —

Q Did they alert the White House about that, though, sir?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: We assured them today on our conference call with, I think, 48 governors that were with us today for the better part of an hour and a half — we told them that what the President would be producing — has directed to be produced are additional guidelines for the states, certified by the CDC, that would inform those governors and local communities and mayors about the best way forward, based on the unique circumstances that those states and those communities are facing.

I think what's clear is the American people have seen the experience in Washington State, where this really all began for us; and in California; and now, the extraordinary challenges in the Greater New York City area, including New Jersey and Connecticut; the challenges in New Orleans and Louisiana and Detroit, still Chicago, parts of Houston.

But they're also seeing that, in each one of those cases, that the mitigation efforts are truly working. And so we'll — we'll work with those — we'll work with those states. And in some cases, it'll make perfect sense for them to work together on a regional basis.

Q Any idea why they didn't let you know ahead of time what they were planning?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, you don't know that. You don't know that.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: But — but the President — the President will be —

Q (Inaudible.)

THE PRESIDENT: You don't know that. I'm sorry.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I'm sorry, I didn't hear your question.

Q Mr. President, can you tell us? Did they let you know?

THE PRESIDENT: You don't know that. No, you made a statement. You don't know that.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I didn't hear your — I didn't hear your statement. I'm sorry.

THE PRESIDENT: And we would — and we would like to have their cooperation. And we are going to have their cooperation. They will cooperate perfectly. Watch.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I — and let me just affirm what the President said. We heard it again today in what I think was our ninth conference call with governors is: I think every American would be proud to see the partnership that this President has forged with governors across the country. I mean, it is an extraordinary statement.

And you'll see some data when Admiral Polowczyk gets up in just a few moments, but the flow of resources from around the world that we've moved into areas that have faced challenges — I mean, this President has directed us to ensure that every state has what they need, when they need it. And the spirit that I heard again from Republicans and Democrat governors today was reflective of that partnership.

And as we move forward to the President's goal of reopening America, we expect the same kind of partnership in the interest of the nation.

THE PRESIDENT: All right, go ahead, with the face mask. Go ahead.

Q Sir, if you can hear me through the mask —

THE PRESIDENT: Barely.

Q Can — can you —

THE PRESIDENT: I hear you well, actually.

Q — the — the District of Columbia argues that they were shortchanged in the most recent funding bill because they were treated as a territory instead of as a state. Will that be made right in phase four?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, we're looking at that certainly. I heard that complaint, but the mayor seems to be very happy with everything we've done.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: She was on today.

THE PRESIDENT: I mean, she's actually — and she was on today, saying very good things.

Okay, yeah. Go ahead in the back.

Q Mr. President, you talked about this being the most difficult decision that you are going to have to take about whether to reopen the economy. I wonder how much it weighs on your mind the thought that if there is a second wave, you've reopened the economy and you might have to shut things down again.

THE PRESIDENT: It does. And I hope that won't happen. I certainly hope that won't happen, but it does weigh on my mind.

Okay, in the back, go ahead. You had one. Go ahead.

Q Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: Go ahead, please.

Q Thank you. Okay, thank you. A question for one of my colleagues who wasn't able to be here. China deployed an aircraft carrier into the South China Chi [sic] — South China Sea this weekend, amid claims by Chinese state media that COVID has reduced U.S. military readiness in the region. What kind of responses are you thinking of? Will you have a response to this action?

THE PRESIDENT: China has their own difficulties. We have a relationship with China that — we're not happy with certain things that happened over the last period of time, as you know, and I've been very explicit on that. But we know all about that.

And, no, China is — we've seen what they did. We've seen many other things that they've done, both pro and con. And we'll be just fine.

Q On Abbott, you said something earlier, where you said that you're putting together the economic task force and that you thought that the recommendations were happening earlier than expected. Did you mean to suggest that it could be before May 1st that you start recommending that states open?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't want to say that, but we're going to be putting out guidelines and recommendations fairly quickly. In a few days.

Q You're not ruling out that it would be before?

THE PRESIDENT: I'm not going to say. But, look, certain states are doing very well. Certain big parts of the country are doing very well. They're doing, really, very well. And so we're going to be putting out recommendations and guidelines very soon.

Steve?

Q And would these new guidelines be — would they fit each area or would they be a uniform set of guidelines?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, you're going to see. I — I don't want to tell you now, but right now we have a very strong indication that we know, pretty much — we have some good ideas.

I also do want to get — I want to have — we'll have video conference or at least a conference call with a lot of very good people, having to do with certain fields, whether it's energy or whether it's entertainment and restaurants, et cetera, et cetera.

We have to get people back into restaurants. We have to do what we have to do. Whether it's deductibility or not, we'll see, but it should be deductibility. You'll get them back so fast. I mean, they used to have deductibility. The restaurant business, it — it was one of the hot businesses. And then they ended it a long time ago, many years ago. But we may need that to get people back into the restaurants.

Please.

Q Yeah. Michelle Obama, today, got behind mail-in voting nationwide as a possible solution to the — on states. She said it shouldn't be a partisan issue. Have your advisors told you that that could save lives? And (inaudible)?

THE PRESIDENT: Absentee ballot, are you talking about? Absentee ballot?

Q Yeah, and on a massive scale because of the coronavirus.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I don't know what she did. I mean, I didn't see that. When did that happen? Today?

Q Yeah, she's part of — that's a nonpartisan group.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I wish her luck. I wish her a lot of luck.

Please, go ahead.

Q On Abbott Labs, you said you had long —

Q Yes, Mr. President. There's a little bit of confusion about your phone calls yesterday with President Putin. The Kremlin is saying that you discussed current issues of ensuring strategic security. That wasn't referred to in the White House readout. Can you enlighten us —

THE PRESIDENT: We discussed many things. We did discuss China. We discussed many different things, but we — it was primarily a call on the oil, as you can imagine. And they were very helpful in getting a stabilization price, a stabilization of the number of barrels. I think the number is going to be closer to 20 — maybe 15, but closer to 20 than it is going to be to 10. And I think it was a very important call.

I also spoke with the King of Saudi Arabia and that was a very important call. And the bottom nine is OPEC Plus. It's called OPEC Plus because there are other states also, other nations. We came to a very good agreement.

Please.

Q You have —

THE PRESIDENT: Go ahead.

Q What was the part about strategic security? Was that —

THE PRESIDENT: I would say mostly we were talking about China. We were talking about their borders. And we're talking about our borders a little bit — our borders with Mexico. Because, as you know, Mexico is a big part of the deal. And Mexico really — it was very complex from the standpoint of Mexico. It was not an easy deal for Mexico. And the President — we appreciated a certain amount of flexibility. But we talked about borders, we talked about China, we talked about Mexico.

Q But “strategic security” sounds more like arms treaties.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I mean, I — we did talk about the arms. Yes, we did. That was a very important part of the call actually. Yeah, good point.

Please.

Q So, on Abbott Labs, you said testing is going great. We know that they have — these machines have been sent to some of the governors, but some of them are saying they don't have the materials to actually conduct the tests.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, they have to get the material. You know, the governors have to get the material.

Q The cartridges.

THE PRESIDENT: Now, if they can't get it, they're going to see us.

Q The government is — the federal government is distributing those cartridges.

THE PRESIDENT: I'm talking about the local governments. I'm talking about governors have to get the material. Now, they have machines. In fact, we — we're going to go into — I'd ask Mike to go into it as soon as I leave. They have very powerful machines that they don't know they even have. I'm not talking about Abbott; I'm talking about the governors. They have machines that are used for this —

Q The hospital labs.

THE PRESIDENT: You know what I'm talk- — do you know what I'm referring to?

Q Yeah, they have the two different machines.

THE PRESIDENT: Very big, very powerful machines where, in a certain state's case, they're only using 10 percent of their capacity and they didn't know it. That happens to be Illinois.

Jon, please.

Q Okay, well, real quick. Real quick. These 15-minute tests that you've sent out, these new ones that you had in the Rose Garden, they say — including Governor Sununu in New Hampshire — that they don't have the cartridges to actually conduct the test. So when will they get those cartridges?

THE PRESIDENT: What do you think the answer to that is?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: We're rapidly — we're rapidly increasing the numbers, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Rapidly increasing the numbers.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: And Deb will speak to (inaudible).

Q Can we look into when?

THE PRESIDENT: Rapidly increases. Well, pretty quickly.

Q They can — they can do 50,000 a day, right?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, you have other machines where they can really work.

Q Can they go up beyond that?

THE PRESIDENT: And a lot of the states have the big machines that can do a lot. They didn't even know they had them. They didn't even know that they had them. And Mike is going to be talking about that.

Q And you remember you mentioned, several weeks ago, the — that Google was putting together that website where they would handle the drive-through testing?

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah. Google and Apple.

Q Have you — have you given up on —

THE PRESIDENT: You mean Google and Apple combination.

Q Have you — have you moved past that, because you said —

THE PRESIDENT: No. A lot of people don't like it from the standpoint of constitutional rights. I mean, a lot of people don't like it and some people think it's great. No, they are working on that, as I understand.

Q How about the testing website? Remember you said a website for Google and —

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah, no, I know that. I know that. I know.

Q And it's only operating in, I think, five counties in California right now. Is that —

THE PRESIDENT: That's right. No, Google is looking at it, but Google is also working with Apple or looking at something. We have the greatest companies in the world looking at things that, in a year from now, everything that we're looking at now is going to be obsolete. That's how good it is.

We have things happening that are unbelievable. I saw a presentation today that I can't talk about yet, but it's incredible. Plus, I think they're doing — Tony — I think they're doing very well in the vaccines. They're working hard on the vaccines and I think you'll have an answer for vaccines. I believe that there's some great things coming out with respect to that. Now you need a testing period, but you're going to have some great things.

Please.

Q Sir, on the contact tracing that Google and Apple are doing — so a different subject, on the contact —

THE PRESIDENT: No, no. This is — this is the Google and Apple. I don't know if it's a partnership or what, but they're working on some —

Q Correct. So there was the one —

THE PRESIDENT: They're working on more than one element. They're working on a couple of different things, Google and Apple. Google is also working on something, as you know, having to do with testing. I believe they're doing that in a singular fashion.

Q So my question is not about the drive-through testing website. Not that.

THE PRESIDENT: Okay.

Q On Google and Apple's contact tracing that they want to —

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah. Yeah.

Q — they've got this process now where they can put, you know, contact tracing on your phone.

THE PRESIDENT: I know.

Q If you opt in, you can be alerted if you've been —

THE PRESIDENT: That's right.

Q — in contact with someone with the coronavirus. Do you — how do you feel about that?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, it's an amazing thing, but a lot of people have some very big constitutional problems with it. You know that. It's an amazing thing and it would be — actually, as you know, other countries are thinking about using something similar but not as good.

Q Which other countries are thinking about something similar?

THE PRESIDENT: I hear Singapore is. Singapore is. No, Singapore had a little bit of a setback because they had a — they had a break. You know that, and — but they'll take care of it. I know — I know the folks in Singapore. They're doing a great job and they're going to put it back very quickly. But Singapore and other countries are looking at other things, and some countries are doing other things.

Q Would you prefer that Americans use some other system?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I don't want to get into that because we have a whole constitutional thing. We have more of a constitutional problem than a mechanical problem, but we will be making a determination on that. That's something we're going to be discussing with a lot of people over the next four weeks. That would be a very accurate way of doing it, but a lot of people have a problem with it.

Yeah, please. Go ahead.

Q A testing question, maybe for Dr. Fauci as well. Can you talk about where the antibody test is and how quickly that will be (inaudible)?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, it's moving along. I think I can speak because I — I have to leave. Moving along quickly, moving along well. It's a test that's been going along for many, many years, except now we have very modern, very incredible versions of it. But that's moving on. The antibody test have — moving along very well.

Okay, anymore COVID-19? COVID-19?

Yeah, Steve.

Q One soldier on the Theodore Roosevelt has died. Has — have you determined the status of Captain Crozier, the former commander?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, that's going through the Navy, as I understand it. The Navy is going to be making decisions on all of that. And they had a break in — I don't think the ship should have been stopping in Vietnam when you have a pandemic, to be honest with you. You know, I don't think the

captain should have been writing letters. He's not Ernest Hemingway, as I said before, and he shouldn't have been writing letters.

And I don't think — I don't know who gave the orders to stop in Vietnam. But they stopped in Vietnam and all of a sudden they get on, and now you have over 500 sailors and — and people on the ship that are affected. I don't know whose idea that was, but that wasn't such a good idea in the middle of a pandemic.

Yes, please. Jon. Go ahead, Jon.

Q Just one last — on this question of constitutionality, I'm just wondering what changed your view because —

THE PRESIDENT: Nothing changed it. No, no, I know exactly what you're going to say. Nothing changed it. The fact that I want to rely on states or maybe will or maybe have, and the fact that we've gotten on — that's one thing. The fact that I don't want to use the power is another thing. Look —

Q But you said from the standpoint of the Constitution —

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, Constitution.

Q — you thought it should be up to the governors.

THE PRESIDENT: Constitutionally. You can look at constitutionally. You can look at federalism. You can look at it any different way. Jon, the fact that I don't want to exert my power is much different. We have the power.

You asked, "Does the federal government have the power?" The federal government has absolute power. It has the power. As to whether or not I'll use that power, we'll see. I would rather —

Q So if New York wants to stay closed down, you can —

THE PRESIDENT: Jon, I would rather work with the states, because I like going down to a local government. That's why with — I guess it's now seven states not eight that — because South

Carolina did — you know, they went away from what we discussed the last time. So that's why I looked at the individual states; they're doing a very good job. They're really doing a very good job. I'd rather have them make the decision.

Now, the fact that I'd rather have — that's fine. But I have the absolute right to do if I want to. I may not want to. We have a very good relationship. Now, we'll see what happens.

If you notice, the few states you're talking about, they're all with Democrat governors. But if governors are doing a good job and they control it better — because you don't have somebody in Washington saying, "Set up a testing site in the parking lot of a Walmart." And we're in Washington and they're in a state that's very far away. That's really — it should be and it should have always been. And I've always said it was.

But the relationship we have now with the states and governors is very good. And we'll be announcing, over the next very short period of time, exactly what we're going to be doing.

Okay, a couple of more. Go ahead.

Q On coronavirus and Joe Biden: He's the presumptive Democratic nominee. Do you have any plans yet on when you'll start sharing, or when the White House will start sharing some of that information about the coronavirus? Your presidential daily brief?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, nobody has called about coronavirus, about — from their standpoint. Look, they had the H1N1, which is swine flu, and that was a big failure. That was a tremendous failure. They had a lot of failures. And you take a look at what — you take a look at the history. And, you know, 17,000 people died. And you talk about late? They were so late — they were late like it never even existed. That was a — that was a big problem. Caused a lot of other people a big problem too.

So, you know, if Joe Biden would like a briefing, I'd certainly get him a briefing. I don't know what he'd do with it.

Yeah, please.

Q So, are Jared and Ivanka on — serving on the new task force? And how are you going to balance —

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q What?

THE PRESIDENT: No, they're not. No.

Q Okay.

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah. Yes, go ahead, please.

Q I just want to clarify. So, in earlier conversation, there was a description of multiple different councils or tasks — task forces. Can you just explain exactly what the structure is and who is going to be on it?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, you have Mike's task force, which is the White House Task Force, which really brought us up to this point brilliantly, I must say. Dealt with governors and dealt with governors all the way through. And I was on many of those calls. And every call got better and better and better. It was hostile at the beginning. By the time we finished — I mean, today's call was a very good call, a very friendly call. I think everyone is online.

And again, you don't have anybody driving you crazy, saying they're not getting ventilators, they're not getting all of the different things, they need more beds. They have a lot of beds right now.

Q (Inaudible) hospitals who — doctors who say they don't have the supplies that they need.

THE PRESIDENT: And we always err — and I think it's important for you know — we always erred on the sake of "Give them more." Even when we didn't think — we didn't think New York needed the beds that they were asking for. We didn't think they needed the ventilators that they asked for. And we were right.

Now, on ventilators, we're ready to march. I told you this: We're ready to march. We have 10,000 ventilators. We're ready to move them anywhere in the country when we need them, if we need them. We're also building a lot of ventilators, and that's going to be used at some point, I believe. You know we're going to have stockpiles, including state stockpiles if they want to work out some kind of an arrangement with us. But we're also going to help other countries, whether it's Italy, or

Spain, or other — France is having a big problem. They all desperately need — Germany too — they need ventilators.

So we're going to have a lot of ventilators. We have a lot — you heard the numbers — we have a lot coming next week. Next week, we have a tremendous amount coming.

Okay, final question. Steve.

Q And on the task force — I'd asked for the task — how the task force is going to be structured. Is it one —

THE PRESIDENT: No. Then we have — in addition to that, we have a number of committees. We'll have a transportation committee. We're going to have a manufacturing committee. You'll see it tomorrow.

We're also having a religious leaders committee. We have a great group of religious leaders. We're having committees with religious leaders. You've been seeing what's going on with the churches, and all of that. And we're going to have a faith leaders committee.

And so we have — we're going to have a few committees. I'll call them "committees," and then ultimately we're going to make decisions. So we're going to make decisions fairly quickly, and I think they're going to be the correct decision. I hope so.

Steve.

Q So you form the economic task force tomorrow. When do you want them to have recommendations for you?

THE PRESIDENT: Soon. Soon. And they already know what I want.

Q Next week or —

THE PRESIDENT: And so, when we form — when you say "form," I don't have to give them instructions. These are very sophisticated people. These are the best people in their fields. So I

don't have to say, "Gee, let's — we just met and we're going to meet in two weeks and here's what we're..." I said, "Here's what I want." We've already told them. And they're the —

Q What did you tell them you want?

THE PRESIDENT: — the best names in the various businesses and professions and religions. I mean, they're — these are the greatest names. The people that, I think, probably know the best.

So, we've called them and we're going to be speaking to them very soon. And we want them to have — if it's questions, or statements, we want them to have that for us. And we will have either a response, or maybe — I mean, ideally we're going to be learning from them. And we'll be able to do that and put them — put everything we learned from those calls into our new guidelines.

So we're going to have new guidelines coming soon. I think it's going to be very good. I think it's going to be very smooth. And I hope it's going to be very safe.

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

Q Any thoughts on Stanley Chera, sir? Any thoughts on Stanley Chera —

THE PRESIDENT: Stanley Chera is a friend of mine for a long time. He's a great real estate person — passed away. Was a great real estate person. Great. Great. Sort of a legend in New York real estate.

He called me a couple of weeks ago, said he tested positive. Stanley is in his early- to mid-80s, I guess. And Stanley went to the hospital and he never came out. He went into a coma. He was unconscious for a long period of time and he never made it. A great man. He left — very charitable, really a great philanthropist. A very, very successful person in Manhattan, in the real estate business. So I got to know him a lot.

He was so excited when his friend from New York became the President of the United States. He was like — like a young boy. And he was not a young boy, but he was like a young boy. He was so excited. He thought we'd do such a good job and he was so happy. And he — he was very proud of what we've done in this administration.

But he was tested positive, and unfortunately he — he didn't make it. It's a very — to me, it's a very sad thing.

Thank you all very much. Thank you.

Q Thank you.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mr. President. As the President mentioned, the task force today spoke to 48 of the nation's governors. On that call, we reflected on the fact that all — all 50 states had emergency declarations in place, which was a first for American history; \$5.2 billion had been distributed to the states under the Stafford Act. And it was a productive call and reflective of President Trump's ongoing direction for us to work closely with the states to make sure the states in the areas most impacted by the coronavirus have what they need, when they need it.

We spoke about the issue of testing and supplies. And I'm going to ask Dr. Deborah Birx to come forward, as well as Admiral Polowczyk, to reflect on both of those topics for you. Dr. Birx has been leading an effort from the task force from early on, on rapidly expanding testing.

It was early on that the President formed that public-private partnership with commercial labs. And as we stand here today, more than 2.5 million tests have been performed. And when we add in the estimates of labs that we have to assume, with reasonable protections — projections have not yet reported into the CDC, we think that number could be closer to 3 million tests that have been performed.

As has been mentioned, the new 15-minute test, we are — we are working closely with Abbott Laboratories — that the President and our team met with today here at the White House — to rapidly increase the availability of cartridges. Abbott is producing roughly 50,000 cartridges a day. FEMA acquired an initial supply of that and distributed those to the states, but we're working with the states to not only distribute what's being made, but also work with other suppliers to create additional cartridges.

A point that I'll ask Dr. Birx to expand on in just a moment is the fact that — beyond the new 15-minute test by Abbott Laboratories; beyond what we expect to be a new antibody test, which may well be approved by the FDA in just a matter of days; and an antibody test that would be produced at the rate of 20 million tests a month — the reality is that those commercial laboratories that the

President brought in here, the better part of two months ago, and initiated that public- and private-partnership which have been producing hundreds of thousands of tests every single week.

But as Dr. Birx and our team have apprehended, we believe, at this point in time, that of the Roche equipment that is out there that does the high-speed testing — and we informed governors of this today — we think that that some 20 percent of that capacity is not being used.

And with regard to the Abbott m2000 systems, we told the governors today that we think 75 percent of that laboratory capacity that exists in the United States today is not being utilized by our governors. So we sent a very clear message to governors today to reach out to their hospitals, reach out to their labs to identify the presence of the Roche Amplicor 500 and the Abbott m2000 to get those activated.

We literally estimate that, although we're doing over 110,000 tests a day in the United States, that if our — if our governors and state labs would simply activate the machines that are already there, we could double the amount of testing in the United States literally overnight. And so, I know that governors' teams watch these briefings, and we'll remind them very respectfully again to identify those labs. And we have a — we have a team that now is deploying, reaching out to labs to see if we can activate all of those labs.

Secondly, on the subject of supplies — I've said it a couple of times from this podium today, but let me say it one more time: President Trump's direction to us, in dealing with the states on personal protective equipment and ventilators, has been to make sure that states have what they need, when they need it. And we recognize that while we all watch the overall curve of the coronavirus in America — understandably, the national numbers — the reality is this outbreak has taken place in its own individual curves: first, on the West Coast; then the New York City area; then Louisiana, Michigan; and now we continue to contend with it in Chicago and Houston and other metropolitan areas. It has given us the opportunity to ensure that personal protective equipment and ventilators are made available on a critical basis.

And I have to tell you: We're incredibly proud of the effort and the partnership with states that has us standing here today that no one who has required a ventilator has been denied a ventilator in the United States of America.

At this point, we have just short of 7,000 ventilators in the Strategic National Stockpile. But as — as Admiral Polowczyk will detail, we're already beginning to receive newly manufactured ventilators. We'll get another thousand in this week. By the middle of May, we'll literally have another 8,000 ventilators available for deployment around the country.

I'm going to let him describe to you the specific detailing of those resources. But — but I want to — I want to share these numbers, most especially for our healthcare workers around the country in the areas most impacted by the coronavirus, so that you know the resources are surging into the hospital systems at the point of the need, and we will continue to do just that.

So let me recognize Dr. Birx to reflect on the data and also on, maybe, some comments on testing. And then Admiral Polowczyk, if you can step up and then you'll describe the supplies. We'll hear from Dr. Fauci again, and then take a few questions.

DR. BIRX: Great. Thank you, Mr. Vice President. I don't know if we can get the first slide on cumulative cases? Yes, thank you so much.

I wanted to show you a different way of looking at it today. Obviously, we look at case counts per 100,000 Americans in each of our states and metro areas, but I wanted you to see, in absolute numbers, how much the New York, New Jersey metro area dwarfs all other metro areas.

And so you can't even see Chicago, Detroit, or Boston. All of those metro areas are under 25,000 cases. You can see that the New York, New Jersey metro area is about almost 250,000 when you bring those cases together — almost a log more. And that's why you hear us talking a lot about the metro area of New York and New Jersey; and the counties of Rockland and Westchester and Suffolk and Nassau and Bergen, New Jersey; and why we're so focused on getting resources to that metro area.

If I could see the next slide, then. So if I take New York and New Jersey metro area out, this is the other metro areas that we have been tracking very closely. I wanted to show this to you so that you could see how those curves are already starting to plateau.

So, if you look at Detroit, if you look at Philadelphia, if you look at Louisiana — Louisiana is in green. Detroit is in gray. You can see across the board, across these metro areas — across metro areas with — have a higher concentration of individuals, this is what the American people in these

large cities have done, where it is more difficult often to socially distance. And we're just really impressed by the work of the mayors and the governors to make this happen.

I also wanted you to see this because you can clearly see Chicago and Boston. And so, Chicago is in the orange and Boston is in the yellow. They are crossing Detroit. And that's why we have been very much focused on the needs of those areas. And there is one — and Providence is also in that category. It's difficult for them to — for you to see you them because they're much further down on the slide.

But the highest — if you look at the axis on this slide — it's 25,000. The axis on the last slide was 300,000. And so that's why I really want people to understand each of these epidemics, minor — these small epidemics in each of the metro areas — we're tracking independently, as well as any epidemics and outbreaks that are happening in some of our other states.

So I just wanted you to have that perspective of how significant the New York, New Jersey issue is and why we've been tracking that so closely. But I also wanted to assure all of the other states that we're tracking them also very closely and really working with the governors and mayors and across — and that's why I wanted you to see that not only are the curves flattening in some of those major metropolitan areas, but they're starting to decrease. And this is what we're very excited about. These are cases. We also know that mortality will lag. And so we're really tracking also the number of individuals who have succumbed to the COVID-19.

I also wanted to really note here that, yes, our mortality is less when you combine European countries equal to the size of the United States. And I think this is really two things: One, it's the incredible work of the American people, that it's also the incredible work of our healthcare providers, and the system of each of these hospitals that have the resources and the ability to respond to the needs of the COVID-19 patients. And I think you can really see the superb healthcare delivery that is happening by the low mortality.

Just to mention really quickly about testing — because you've heard me before talk about it, and then it was a little bit misquoted and misaligned — but there are multiple Abbott machines, so I'm going to be very clear, having spent years in the laboratory. The high-throughput machines, which are the Roche 6800 and the 88- — I think it's the 8800 on Roche — and the Abbott M2000 — these are the machines that run between 500 and 1,000 assays at a time.

The Abbott company worked really hard, three weeks ago, in getting a million tests out there to be utilized. And they can make a million tests a week for all of our laboratories that have these platforms. And, so far, to date, somewhere around 250,000 tests have been utilized in three weeks' worth of work. And that's why we've really been appealing to the — to the laboratory directors to really bring all those machines on.

Last week, Dr. Fauci and his incredible team of researchers have agreed to really reach out and find additional Roche and Abbott high-throughput machines that are in research institutions and doing critical research work, to bring them online also to supplement the other laboratories' work, to create a mosaic and a complete strategy that brings together the high-throughput platforms, with the medium-throughput platforms, with what are the low-throughput but rapid platforms — which is this ID NOW.

ID NOW is not going to be the answer to the number of tests that we need over the next few weeks. Those run a test every 15 minutes, and we can get about 55,000 cartridges a day.

But I just got done saying that these other machines — of which we have hundreds of — can run 500 to 1,000 in a single timeframe. And so we need to bring all of these assays together. And a team has been created to call every single laboratory and every single research institution across the United States to define the complete capacity in every single state. Because it shouldn't be our expectation that every governor understands exactly everything that's in his state, but we have to understand everything in every state in order to be able to meet the needs of the American people as we increase testing.

Now, I know you all know that, in three weeks, we went from 300,000 tests total to 3 million tests total, in three weeks. We know that we have to further increase that. That has been done really by HHS and Admiral Giroir and the team up there. And we're going to supplement that team to really bring on all of the additional resources and platforms that we have in the United States of America, just like we did with ventilators to bring all of the capacity to bear so that we can also continue to increase testing.

Also, of course as these epidemics are si- — decrease, you can also be able to use more and more testing for surveillance. But I do want to call out the 19 states that aren't ever represented in these graphics in — by and large. The states have been continuing to do containment and outbreak investigation.

And I've been able to talk to many of those states. And I just remind all of us, when I talked to each one of these state health officials, where they are finding outbreaks are in nursing homes. And so we really knew to — need to continue to protect and we continue to test in nursing homes, because we know that that's a particularly vulnerable group and it's a group we're often — now that we're beginning to understand asymptomatic transmission.

No one is intending to pass the virus on to others, but we know, in essential workers around the United States, people are unknowingly infected and then passing the virus on. And so those are the ones that were very interested in finding. And you might say, "Well, how do you find them because they don't have symptoms?" And so this is where we really have to increase surveillance in a very deliberate and understand way.

And so we're really looking what are sentinel surveillance sites. I think we can see where there's outbreaks, because once people have symptoms, you can see them. But where do you do sentinel surveillance so that you find them before they have symptoms. This is what we have done for decades in HIV, and it's what's allowing us right now to really control the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Sub-Saharan Africa, because we're finding people when they're asymptomatic and treating them when they're asymptomatic. So this is something we know how to do and it's something we're working very closely with CDC and others on to make sure that we can bring that full capacity to the American people.

So these are just some insights and what we're working on. We're continuing, obviously, to track every single county and community.

And then, finally, I'm going to call on one additional group. There's a group out there of our HIV/AIDS activists and community workers that understand these tests that I've been talking about, these DNA — these RNA-based tests. Because they often get viral loads in HIV. But they will know how to explain this to the community, about sampling and what it means to run those assays. They are essentially virologists. They understand all of these assays. They also understand the antibody assays, because it's the antibody assays that they counsel and utilize in HIV testing across the United States.

And maybe it will be our translator to the American public and to their local mayors. They understand these tests. They're — essentially understand all the virology and all the immunology. And I'm really asking all of them to help us communicate what these tests are so the community is

ready for them. Because antibody tests measure something very different than the viral load in the front of your nose that we're using for diagnosis. And so, really being able to understand all of those tests, when to use them, how to use them will be really critical. But the great thing is, in the United States of America, we have these community groups that understand these tests very well, and we'll be able to discuss them at every level with their community.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I'm going to call Admiral Polowczyk up in a minute, but I have to call on Dr. Tony Fauci.

Let me — let me — let me just say something really straight from my heart, if I can. I lost my dad 32 years ago today. April 13th is always a tough day for our family. And this morning, when my brothers and sisters were sending around pictures of dad, like we always do, I just thought of the families of the more than 22,000 Americans that we've lost.

And I just want to tell you that you're on our hearts, and you're in the prayers of millions of Americans as you — as you deal with this heartbreaking loss, as well as families that have family members that are struggling with serious illness.

But let me just encourage everyone that, in the midst of that loss, because the American people have been putting these mitigation measures into practice, there are families that are still together today. And I just want to encourage you here at roughly the halfway point of "30 Days to Slow the Spread," to take — take that to heart. In no way minimize the losses that we've experienced as a nation and as families, but — but to be encouraged to know, when you see those numbers on the vast majority of states, that because of what the American people are doing, it's working.

And Dr. Fauci and Dr. Birx, and the entire team, continually asked us to remind the American people, and we do so again today: Keep doing what you're doing with the "30 Days to Slow the Spread," and we will hasten the day that we heal our land.

Dr. Fauci?

DR. FAUCI: I just want to make one comment that related to a question that was asked, and then we'll have questions. I don't want to take too much time. The idea about how we would evaluate, from a purely public health standpoint, about what I call reentry into some sort of normality. As health people, I don't know anything about, nor do I ever claim to know anything about,

economics. There are going to be people that know a lot more than I do, who are going to give advice about all of the committees that the President was talking about.

But the one thing we do know as health people, as physicians and scientists and public health people — as I mentioned, I think over the weekend, on one of the shows, is that some people may think it's going to be like a light switch, on and off. You know, we're either out and we're in. It's just not going to be that way because we have a very large country and there are different impacts. As you see, New York is very different from other parts of the country, from the Midwest, from the mountain region, California and Washington, different than New Orleans.

So as we discuss and consider the public health aspects, it likely would be something that I refer to as sort of like a rolling reentry. It's not going to be one size fits all. So I don't know what it's going to be yet because we still have time to look at it.

Dr. Birx, who does an amazing job with showing you the data and the charts — that's going to likely influence some of the recommendations that we will make. But I can assure you there will be recommendations that will be based purely on public health. And the President will get a lot of other input from others, but we'll give the honest, public health recommendation.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Tony. Admiral? Admiral Polowczyk will give an update on supplies and then we'll take a few questions.

REAR ADMIRAL POLOWCZYK: Thank you, Mr. Vice President. Can I have the ventilator slide back up? I'll just start from there. All right, thank you.

So you start with what's in the stockpile this morning. And then here's the contracts that we'll be delivering over the next few weeks. And we added 8,600 ventilators to the pool we already had. That's the — that's the math that you — that you get there. That's a — that's included the DPA action with GM.

And we'll say that we've also issued what would be called "rated orders" with all of these vendors to allow them front-of-the-line privileges, so to speak, with — within their supply chain. So these — there's — we've, you know, written the contract. This is the 100,000-plus ventilators we're talking about, and then continue to work with them to ensure that the ventilators actually show up. So

there's a continue to work there. And as we did that, we realized that downstream supply chains needed some additional Defense Production Act work as well.

If you go out to the air bridge — 80 flights scheduled, 37 complete, 43 on the — on the horizon. And you can see the numbers of material that's been brought in to supplement the volume that's needed.

Now, I'm going to go through a series of slides of New York first. So, Dr. Birx provides me what I will call as a geographic reference to align the supply chain. So all of those cities — you'll see a little bit of a theme here. I'll be talking about a lot of the — a lot of the cities and geographic areas.

I aligned the supply chain to those geographic areas to try to get as much there, while we realize the rest of the nation needs supplies as well. And then we aligned to the supply chain to site of care: public hospitals, VA, private hospitals, nursing homes, first responders, acute care, and on down the line.

So the last business week — so, Monday of last week through Friday, Saturday of the past week — these are the mass materials that came into the New York, New Jersey metro area, and you can see the volumes there.

So if you go to Detroit, we talked about their hotspot. Here's the volumes of deliveries going into Detroit for that same time period.

If you can go to Chicago. And I'm going to run through this kind of quick, but you can see that the geographic alignment, the places that Dr. Birx has talked about is where we're concentrating supplies.

You can go to New Orleans, to give you an understanding. Washington D.C., right? So now I can talk about that. Today was a — you know, a very, kind of, early entry into the Washington, D.C., Baltimore — right? — positioning supplies ahead of need, we hope, in Washington.

Go to Baltimore, and you can see trying to — the volumes there, trying to get ahead of that. And then Philadelphia is next.

And then now the next slide is a nine-city roll-up. And so to save a little time, I did not include Boston and Houston in there. So you can see the volume of material flowing through a commercial network air bridge, their supplies, into geographic regions and then — and then further prioritize to site of care.

Now, final topic: N95 masks. So the Department of Defense announced a DPA action this weekend. That came over from DOD on Friday, into the White House, approved on Saturday. And contract awarded today \$131 million, five companies: 3M, Honeywell, Owens & Minor, Moldex, and Draeger.

You know, the CARES Act was signed before the — before March was end — towards the end there. So essentially two weeks from that money being put into the Title III authority for DOD. This action takes us from a baseline of what — what was being produced domestically of about 30 million masks upwards to, as we go through the fall into the end of the winter, 120 million masks domestically.

So, currently, we're filling some of that demand from overseas sources. Right? And so the additive masks here, through this, will ramp up, lower dependence on overseas sources, and that — that will essentially secure a big piece of the supply chain.

Five companies, six — six cities: Smithfield, Rhode Island; Phoenix, Arizona; Del Rio, Texas; Lexington, North Carolina; Sheboygan Falls, Wisconsin; and Aberdeen, North Dakota — all either producing more fabric or increasing production facilities to have that ramp up.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Great. Great job. Thank you, Admiral.

And can we put that slide — I guess it's still up. This is for just the week ending April 11. We have distributed or directed the distribution of 5.3 million N95 masks, 5.5 million surgical masks, 110 million gloves. We shared that mostly just to make sure our healthcare workers know that the resources are flowing, we're going to continue to flow them, but this is just the numbers for this week and don't include, for instance, what the President announced.

I was able to tell Governor Tom Wolf of Pennsylvania today that, next week, they'll be receiving 2 million N95 masks to support some of the healthcare challenges that they're facing in the broader Philadelphia area.

So, with that, we'll be happy to take a couple of questions. Go ahead.

Q Thank you so much. One for the Admiral and then one for Dr. Fauci, if you don't mind.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yeah. Please.

Q Admiral, wouldn't it have been useful, as you're going through, you know, all of those supplies that are now making their way into the system — you talked about having to buy foreign products, you know, as we're catching up and making it — wouldn't it have been useful if it hadn't taken until mid-March for the government to start placing bulk orders for these kinds of supplies?

REAR ADMIRAL POLOWCZYK: Okay so, I came over from the Pentagon the 20th of March, so I'll speak from the 20th March on now. We're using the Defense Production Act. I think you'll see much more use of that as we go forward. You know, we make —

Q Sir, but my question is about the timing here and that lost time that the President earlier today denied.

REAR ADMIRAL POLOWCZYK: I know. And I'm not — I'm not equipped to talk about — other than from about the 20th of March forward. I just — I wasn't — I was over at the Joint Staff. I wasn't involved.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Okay.

Q And I wanted to ask Dr. Fauci —

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Dr. Fauci.

Q — you know, you said that you'd be, you know, giving the President your recommendations, you and Dr. Birx, coming up with a plan that you guys are comfortable with. Are you willing, once the President has made his decision, are you willing to come here and tell us, tell the American public, what you actually had recommended to him and whether he followed through with what you recommended?

DR. FAUCI: I'm not really — what do you mean? Like —

Q So when the President stands up here, whether it's, you know, May 1st — whatever day it is — and outlines his plan, are you willing to stand up here after him and tell us all, tell the American public, what it was that you had recommended he do if there is a difference?

DR. FAUCI: You know, I have to think about that because, you know, when you have conversations with the President, sometimes they really should be confidential in what you give him because he's going to have to make his own choice.

I'd have to think about that.

Q So that way we would know whether he was actually listening to the health advice that he's being provided.

DR. FAUCI: Right. Yeah. He is. I mean, he — I can tell you one thing: He'll listen. But I think what's going to happen — you know, I don't know for sure — is that he will get input from a number of individuals representing a number of aspects of society; one of them will be health. The only thing that I can tell you is that I will give him the advice based on evidence, my observation of what the best public health approach would be.

Q Dr. Fauci?

DR. FAUCI: Yeah.

Q Just to go back to where we started today, which was with the President's seeming frustrations with some of the reporting about his early decision-making process in January and February.

As I'm sure you know, the reason we, in the press, do that kind of reporting is so that the next President that comes along, has to deal with a pandemic, can learn some of these lessons.

What — having watched this unfold up close, what do you think were the mistakes that were made early on that a future President could learn from? With the benefit of hindsight, of course.

DR. FAUCI: You know, I —

Q Because no President gets everything right, obviously.

DR. FAUCI: I understand. I don't want to use the word "mistakes," because when you're in the — in the fog of war when you're doing something, you have to make decisions. You get input from a number of individuals. It's always a moving target. And I just don't want to be — have anything taken out of context because I already had one of those already in the last couple of days — (laughs) — so I don't want to go through it again.

I wouldn't say "mistake." Could things have done better? Of course. I mean, nothing is perfect. And you could always do better. But, I mean, I hesitate to say something is a "mistake."

Q But with the benefit of hindsight, with that caveat, what could have been done better?

DR. FAUCI: Well, I mean, I can't — I can't comment about anything outside of my own field. But the thing that, when I think back on, was evolving, in my mind, was something that was a virus that was much worse than what I had thought it was going to be, based on what we had learned early on, when it was first felt to be something that just jumped from an animal to a human, and really didn't have much capability of going human to human. And then, all of a sudden, you find out that not only was it not just animal to human, but there were a lot of — that's probably the way it started.

But then, as you go back and you realize there were probably a lot of infections, that maybe if we had dealt into that a little bit more, we could have learned that not only is it affecting human to human, but it's transmitting really efficiently.

When I question myself — I'm not perfect; maybe I — I wouldn't say made "mistakes," but maybe I should have really tried to delve into that a little bit more about what was going on, but the information wasn't as forthcoming as I would have liked.

And then, all of a sudden, when you find out that you're dealing with something that is not only what had been your worst nightmare — because people ask me that: "What is your worst nightmare?" — a brand-new virus that's respiratory transmitted, that has a high degree of transmissibility, that has a high degree of morbidity and mortality. You know, is that a mistake? Maybe I should have been able to realize that earlier. I'm not sure it was a mistake; it was just an evolving thing that we finally realized and said, "Whoa, this is really worse than we could have imagined."

AIDE: All right. Last one, guys.

Q When you met with Abbott Laboratories today, what did you ask them to do? What did they say they could do?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, we spoke with Abbott Laboratories today about how we can increase significantly the production of cartridges for the 15-minute test. Because, remember, we're — we are — we're not only scaling to rapidly expand testing across the country today. And it's one of the reasons why you heard me and Dr. Birx say that we are — we have an entire team now that's going to be working with governors and with laboratories around the country to identify the machines that already exist today and that could be activated in doing tests.

But we also — we also want to work with Abbott Laboratories for the longer term. Because if the current trend lines hold — and I hope and I literally pray that we will soon find ourselves on the downslope of the coronavirus in this country — this epidemic, in its current form, will come to an end.

But as we make decisions in the days ahead to reopen America, what President Trump also wants to do is have a policy in place to stay open. And having the kind of surveillance testing available around the country so that CDC can do the immediate contact tracing, when you have a positive test, so that we can deploy resources like the new Abbott 15-minute test specifically to nursing homes.

We spoke today to Governor Baker in Massachusetts, to Governor Hogan in Maryland, both of whom who have been very innovative implementing federal guidelines for preventing the spread of infectious disease at nursing homes, and we commend them for that. But being able to increase the manufacture of those devices so they can be deployed going forward in the months ahead is also a focal point of our efforts.

So, rapidly continuing to expand testing today. And the governor of Louisiana told me today that they had tested at the highest per capita — according to his numbers — of any state in the union. And we congratulate him for that. But making sure that, going forward, we'll have the infrastructure of testing all across America to deal with the coronavirus should it return in the future.

With that, let me — let me bid you all a good evening. And we will be back tomorrow. And —

Q Mr. Vice President —

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Okay. Go ahead.

Q I just have a question about these cartridges and this timeline because the New Hampshire governor says the federal government is in charge of distributing those — FEMA is. So what is the timeline for when they'll have enough of them? Because they say they don't have enough. Illinois said they didn't have enough. So what's the timeline that you're working with?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yeah, let me — let me let Dr. Birx address that. But there's a — there was an initial tranche that we purchased. There's some 18,000 Abbott Laboratory machines around the country, and FEMA acquired a certain amount that were immediately distributed across the states.

But now Abbott Laboratories is literally producing some 50,000 a day, and those are available in the open market. And we're also going to be working with Abbott and with the states to deploy those resources.

And we're also working with other manufacturers to increase the production of cartridges. But if there's more to that that you want to add, Deb, we'll make it the last.

DR. BIRX: No, that was perfectly said. I just want to — sometimes you ask those questions, and I always want to make sure that people understand.

So, a third of them went specifically to Indian Health Service and to these states that have smaller epidemics. Two thirds of it went into the public market, mostly targeted to the places where there is high disease. But only two thirds went that way so that people could purchase them directly, and one third went to the Indian Health Service and to the smaller states that really need these.

And so I think what we're trying to do now is balance the entire testing framework of medium-, low-, and high-throughput machines to give everyone the maximum flexibility, state by state, based on what the needs are at that moment.

If there's an outbreak and you have to do 5,000 tests, you're not going to do them on an ID NOW machine that takes 15 minutes for every negative, but you're going to do it on your high-throughput machine. So making sure everybody knows where everything is and what is being run

will be really critical moving forward, because we can't leave anything not on –everything has to be on the table in order for us to be able to dramatically increase testing yet another — we went up by a log in three weeks. So if we're going to increase again, it's going to have to be getting every piece of equipment on

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Let just again say thank you all for your time and attention. And thanks to every American who's joined us tonight.

I just want to encourage you we're going to continue to lean into this effort, to expand testing across the country, to deploy supplies to our incredible healthcare workers that have done such an amazing job in the midst of the coronavirus epidemic.

But my last word, on behalf of the President, on behalf of our entire task force is: It's "30 Days to Slow the Spread." And I know we're almost at the halfway point, and I know it's been a month of these mitigation strategies, but I hope as you look on, as you see the progress that's made on the West Coast, the beginnings of real progress in the Greater New York City area, Louisiana, Detroit, and elsewhere — I hope it will only steel your resolve to continue to do your part to slow the spread, because we'll get through this, but it'll take all of us to continue to do it.

So thank you to the American people for all your efforts, and we'll see you tomorrow.

END

8:12 P.M. EDT