

**Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters in Dallas, Texas**

*July 9, 2014*

*The President.* Hello, everybody. Just had a good meeting with Governor Perry, local officials, and faith leaders to talk about the steps that we have taken and that we need to take to address the humanitarian situation on the border. And I want to thank everybody who's been involved for taking the time to talk to me.

It's important to recognize two things. First, the surge of unaccompanied children and adults with children are arriving at one sector of the border, and that's the Río Grande Valley. Second, the issue is not that people are evading our enforcement officials. The issue is that we're apprehending them in large numbers. And we're working to make sure that we have sufficient facilities to detain, house, and process them appropriately, while attending to unaccompanied children with the care and compassion that they deserve while they're in our custody.

While we intend to do the right thing by these children, their parents need to know that this is an incredibly dangerous situation, and it is unlikely that their children will be able to stay. And I've asked parents across Central America not to put their children in harm's way in this fashion.

Now, right now there are more Border Patrol agents and surveillance resources on the ground than at any time in our history. And we deport almost 400,000 migrants each year. But as soon as it became clear that this year's migration to the border was different than in past years, I directed FEMA to coordinate our response at the border. Members of my Cabinet and my staff have made multiple trips to facilities there. And we're also addressing the root of the problem. I sent Vice President Biden and Secretary Kerry and Secretary Johnson to meet with Central American leaders, as well as working with our international partners to go after smugglers who are putting their kids' lives at risk.

And earlier this week, Mexico announced a series of steps that they're going to take on their southern border to help stem the tide of these unaccompanied children.

Last week, I sent a letter to Congress asking them to increase penalties on smugglers and to give us flexibility to move migrants through the system faster.

Yesterday I asked Congress to fund these efforts. About half of the resources would go to border security, enforcement, and expedited removal of people who don't qualify for a humanitarian claim. About half would go to make sure we're treating children humanely. We'd also make investments to further tackle the root problems in Central America.

So right now Congress has the capacity to work with us, work with State officials, local officials, and faith-based groups and non-for-profits who are helping to care for these kids. Congress has the capacity to work with all parties concerned to directly address the situation. They've said they want to see a solution. The supplemental offers them the capacity to vote immediately to get it done.

Of course, in the long run, the best way to truly address this problem is for the House of Representatives to pass legislation fixing our broken immigration system, which, by the way,

would include funding for additional thousands of Border Patrol agents, something that everybody down here that I've talked to indicates is a priority.

And the Senate passed a commonsense, bipartisan bill more than a year ago. It would have strengthened the border, added an additional 20,000 Border Patrol agents. It would have strengthened our backlogged immigration courts. It would have put us in a stronger position to deal with this surge and, in fact, prevent it.

So let me just close by indicating the nature of the conversation that I had with Governor Perry, which I thought was constructive. Governor Perry suggested four specific areas of concern. He was concerned about how many patrol agents were directly at the border. He was concerned that some of the positioning of Border Patrol agents is too far from the border to be effective in deterring folks from coming in as opposed to simply apprehending them. I indicated to him that what he said sounded like it made sense and that, in fact, if we pass the supplemental, we would then have the resources to carry out some of the very things that he's requesting.

On a broader policy level, he indicated concern that right now kids who come to the border from Mexico are immediately deported, but because it's noncontiguous, folks who are coming from Central America have to go through a much lengthier process. I indicated to him that part of what we're looking in the supplemental is some flexibility in terms of being able to preserve the due process rights of individuals who come in, but also to make sure that we're sending a strong signal that they can't simply show up the border and automatically assume that they're going to be absorbed.

He also expressed concerns about how the immigration judicial system works, how the administrative processing works, how long it takes and the fact that oftentimes, people appear, are then essentially released, with a court date that might be 6 months out or 9 months out, and a sizable number, not surprisingly, don't show up.

I indicated to him that if we had more administrative judges, more administrative capacity, we can shrink those wait times. This administrative practice predates my administration and, in fact, has been going on for quite some time, and a lot of it has to do with the fact that there's not enough capacity, both in terms of detention facilities, but also in terms of judges, attorneys, space in order to process these things more quickly and expeditiously.

So the bottom line is, actually, that there's nothing that the Governor indicated he'd like to see that I have a philosophical objection to. I've asked Jeh Johnson to contact his head of Health and Human Services when he comes down for the sixth time at the end of this week to coordinate and make sure that some of the suggestions that the Governor has are technically feasible and what kind of resources might be needed. But what I emphasized to the Governor was the problem here is not a major disagreement around the actions that could be helpful in dealing with the problem. The challenge is, is Congress prepared to act to put the resources in place to get this done?

Another way of putting it—and I said this directly to the Governor—is, are folks more interested in politics, or are they more interested in solving the problem? If they're interested in solving the problem, then this can be solved. If the preference is for politics, then it won't be solved.

And I urged the Governor to talk to the Texas delegation, which is obviously at the heart of the Republican caucus both in the House and has great influence in the caucus in the Senate. If the Texas delegation is in favor of this supplemental—which, by the way, does not

include some things that I know many of them object to around dealing with undocumented workers who have been in this country for quite some time; this is just a very narrow issue, this supplemental, in terms of dealing with the particular problem we have right now—if the Texas delegation is prepared to move, this thing can get done next week. And we can have more Border Patrol agents on the border, as the Governor has requested; we can shorten the timetables for processing these children or adults with children, as the Governor thinks is important; we can make sure that some of the public health issues that were raised in the meeting that I just had are addressed so that we've got enough folks vaccinating and checking on the health status of these children to make sure that not only are they safe, but also our communities are safe.

The things that the Governor thinks are important to do would be a lot easier to do if we had this supplemental. It gives us the resources to do them. And so the only question at this point is, why wouldn't the Texas delegation or any of the other Republicans who are concerned about this not want to put this on a fast track and get this on my desk so I can sign it and we can start getting to work?

I suggested to the Governor, he has, I suspect, some influence over the Texas delegation, and that might be helpful to call on them to pass this supplemental right away.

The final point I'll make is, I just want to thank some of the faith-based groups that I just met with, as well as mayors, commissioners, local officials. Dallas has been incredibly compassionate in looking at some sites, some facilities in which they can accommodate some of these children. And I indicated in hearing the stories of churches that are prepared to not just make donations, but send volunteers to help to construct some of these facilities or fix them up, and their willingness to volunteer in providing care and assistance to these children, I told them thank you, because it confirmed what I think we all know, which is the American people are an incredibly compassionate people, and when we see a child in need, we want to care for them.

But what I think we all agreed on is, is that the best thing that we can do is to make sure that the children are able to live in their own countries safely. And that's why it's going to be important, even as we solve the short-term problem here, for us to be able to direct attention and resources and assistance—as we're doing, but not at a sustained and high enough level—back in Honduras and Guatemala and El Salvador and other places so that parents don't think that somehow it's safer for their children to send them thousands of miles just so that they don't get harmed.

With that, I'll take a couple of questions. Yes, go ahead.

*Calls for the President To Visit the U.S.-Mexico Border/President's Meeting With Governor J. Richard Perry of Texas/Immigration Reform Legislation*

Q. Mr. President, there are increasing calls not just from Republicans, but also for some Democrats for you to visit the border during this trip. Can you explain why you didn't do that? And do you see any legitimate reason for you to actually do that at some point, or do you think those calls are more about politics than anything else?

*The President.* Jeh Johnson has now visited, at my direction, the border five times. He's going for a sixth this week. He then comes back and reports to me extensively on everything that's taking place. So there's nothing that is taking place down there that I am not intimately aware of and briefed on.

This isn't theater, this is a problem. I'm not interested in photo ops; I'm interested in solving a problem. And those who say I should visit the border, when you ask them what should we be doing, they're giving us suggestions that are embodied in legislation that I've already sent to Congress. So it's not as if they're making suggestions that we're not listening to. In fact, the suggestions of those who work at the border, who visited the border, are incorporated in legislation that we're already prepared to sign the minute it hits my desk.

There's a very simple question here, and that is, Congress just needs to pass the supplemental. There is a larger issue that I recognize involves a lot of politics, which is, why aren't we passing comprehensive immigration reform, which would put an additional 20,000 Border Patrol agents and give us a lot of additional authorities to deal with some of these problems? That should have been done a year ago, should have been done 2 years ago. It's gotten caught up in politics. And I understand that.

One of the suggestions I had for Governor Perry was that it would be useful for my Republican friends to rediscover the concept of negotiation and compromise. The Governor's one concern that he mentioned to me was, is that setting aside the supplemental, I should go ahead and authorize having National Guard troops surge at the border right away. And I—what I told him is, we're happy to consider how we could deploy National Guard down there, but that's a temporary solution, that's not a permanent solution. And so why wouldn't we go ahead and pass the permanent solution or at least a longer-term solution? And if the Texas delegation said, for us to pass the supplemental, we want to include a commitment that you're going to send some National Guard early, we'd be happy to consider it.

So this should not be hard to at least get the supplemental done. The question is, are we more interested in politics, or are we more interested in solving the problem? If we're interested in solving the problem, then there's actually some broad consensus around a number of the issues. There may be some controversies and differences between Democrats and Republicans on some of the policy issues, but on a whole bunch of this stuff, there's some pretty broad consensus. Let's just get that done. Let's do the work.

#### *President's Meeting With Governor Perry/Immigration Reform Legislation*

Q. Mr. President, did the Governor give any indication that he would ask the Texas delegation to get behind the supplemental? And it sounds like you are concerned that this supplemental will fall victim to partisan politics.

*The President.* Well the, I think it's fair to say that these days in Washington, everybody is always concerned about everything falling victim to partisan politics. If I sponsored a bill declaring apple pie American, it might fall victim to partisan politics. I get that.

On the other hand, this is an issue in which my Republican friends have said it's urgent and we need to fix it. And if that's the case, then let's go ahead and fix it.

As I indicated to Governor Perry—he suggested, well, maybe you just need to go ahead and act and that might convince Republicans that they should go ahead and pass the supplemental. And I had to remind him I'm getting sued right now by Mr. Boehner, apparently, for going ahead and acting instead of going through Congress. Well, here's a good test case. This is something you say is important, as I do. This is an area that you have prioritized, as I have. Don't wait for me to take executive actions if—when you have the capacity right now to go ahead and get something done. I will sign that bill tomorrow. We're going to go ahead and do what we can administratively, but this gives us the tools to do many of the very things that Republicans are seeking.

At the same time, I will just repeat that if we got a comprehensive bill done, it doesn't just solve this problem for a year, it solves it potentially for 20 years. And I would urge those who, who so far at least, have failed to act on the comprehensive bill to take another look at it.

Q. So it didn't sound like he made any promises then.

*The President.* I didn't get any promises, but it was a constructive conversation. And I just want to emphasize that I think that it was a good exchange of ideas. And he did have some specific suggestions in terms of how we align border agents that I've asked Jeh Johnson to take a look at, because I think there may be ways in which we can use the resources that we already have more effectively than we're currently doing. And I think it is important that we make sure we've got a strong Federal-State collaboration on the issue.

I'm going to take just two more questions, then I got to get going. Go ahead.

*President's Meeting With Governor Perry/Immigration Reform Legislation*

Q. Mr. President, Governor Perry put out a statement shortly before you spoke, saying that he "pressed"—his verb—you to secure the border.

*The President.* Yes.

Q. Does that statement in any way indicate that he's interested in compromise?

*The President.* I'm interested in securing the border. So as I explained, as far as I could tell, the only disagreement I had with Governor Perry was, is that he wanted me to go ahead and do it without Congress having to do anything.

We'll do what we can administratively. I think the useful question not simply for the Governor, but for John Boehner and Mitch McConnell and the other members of the Texas delegation is why wouldn't you go ahead and pass a bill to give us additional resources to solve the very problem that you say is urgent?

Jackie.

*Child Migration From Central America to the U.S./Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Policy/Immigration Reform Legislation*

Q. Mr. President, there's been a number of Republicans who have said that DACA, the deferred action Executive order from 2012 that you signed, is to blame, that it was an invitation——

*The President.* Right.

Q.—that these other children are now taking up on. What do you say to that?

*The President.* If you look at the pattern of immigration into our country, we are at actually a significantly lower level in terms of overall immigration flow—illegal immigration flow than we were when I took office.

I think that the challenge we have that has really caused a spike is the significant security challenges in these Central American countries themselves and the fact that you've got smugglers who are increasingly recognizing that they can make money by transporting these folks, often in very dangerous circumstances, to the border and taking advantage of the compassion of the American people, recognizing that we're not going to simply leave abandoned children who are left at our doorstep, but that we've got to care for them and provide them some basic safety and security while we determine where we can send them.

But I think one of the most important things that we're going to have to recognize—this is not going to be a short-term problem, this is a long-term problem—we have countries that are pretty close to us in which the life chances of children are just far, far worse than they are here. And parents who are frightened or are misinformed about what's possible are willing to take extraordinary risks on behalf of their kids. The more that we can do to help these countries get their acts together, then the less likely we are to have a problem at the borders.

And the fact of the matter is, is that DACA and comprehensive immigration reform generally would allow us to reallocate resources precisely because all the budget of DHS, instead of us chasing after families that may have been living here for 5 or 10 years and have kids who are U.S. citizens and are law abiding, save for the fact that they didn't come here legally, if they have to earn citizenship, paying taxes, learning English, paying a fine, going to the back of the line, but they are no longer an enforcement priority, that suddenly frees up a huge amount of resources to do exactly the kinds of things that many Republicans have been calling for us to do and that we've tried to within the resource limitations that we have.

All right? Thank you, everybody. Appreciate it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6 p.m. at Dallas Love Field airport. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh C. Johnson; and Texas Health and Human Services Executive Commissioner Kyle L. Janek.

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