

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2020

Remarks on Signing the Supporting Veterans in STEM Careers Act and an Exchange With Reporters

February 11, 2020

The President. Okay. Thank you very much. We are today signing the Supporting Veterans in STEM Careers Act. It's a big deal, and the people behind me have been so involved: our Senators, our Congressmen. We're missing a few great Senators, because we're approving, I think, five judges today. And Marco Rubio was very much involved in this process and helped everybody very much, and so I want to thank him.

But we're taking action to increase access to education and job opportunities in science, technology, engineering, math, and computer science for our amazing veterans and our military spouses, their military spouses.

I'm grateful to be joined today by Secretary Robert Wilkie and Senators that are just fantastic people. And they've worked for us so hard, and this is one of the many things they've been doing. They just came from a great vote for those judges, some of the judges. There'll be five today.

Senator Kevin Cramer of North Dakota—thank you very much, Kevin. Senator John Hoeven of North Dakota. And they're going to be bringing their tremendous football team to the White House very shortly, because they won the championship for their division, and it's a big deal. And they've won it for a lot of years, right?

Senator John H. Hoeven III. Eight out of nine. Go Bison!

The President. So what's going on in North Dakota that you won it so much?

Sen. Hoeven. It's a great program. I mean, eight out of nine. They've got a 30-some-game winning streak going.

The President. Yes.

Sen. Hoeven. And our first game next year is Oregon at Oregon, so it's going to be a lot of fun.

The President. Well, that's a good time.

Senator Kevin J. Cramer. They wanted to test that theory of winning too much. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Hoeven. Yes. They like that winning.

Sen. Cramer. Yes. So far, not.

The President. They're winning so much they can't stand it anymore, right? [*Laughter*] No, but we look forward to seeing the team.

Sen. Hoeven. Thanks very much for inviting us.

The President. We did it last year, and we look forward to it. We had LSU here. We'll have—we're going to be having the Super Bowl Champion very soon. They're really looking forward. A great coach. Andy Reid is a great coach. And he's been a great coach, and now he's got that big one, and that was an amazing game. But they'll be coming very shortly.

I want to thank Senator Jerry Moran, who is a friend of mine, who has been incredible in every way. And we really—when I think of Jerry, we did a lot of work together, but the thing he

did that—I don't know if people even know it, Jerry—but something that couldn't be done for 44 years, they say, and that's Veterans Choice.

Senator Gerald W. Moran. Thanks, Mr. President.

The President. That's his crowning glory, right? So I want to thank you, Jerry. That was incredible. I mean, it really—Jerry was so, so knowledgeable. Active, but knowledgeable. A lot of people are active; not a lot of people are knowledgeable. *[Laughter]*

And they got Veterans Choice. And that's one of the reasons, I think, the VA is doing so well, because people don't have to wait around for 6 weeks to see a doctor. They go out, they get the doctor, we pay the bill, and it works out incredibly well. It's been a tremendous success.

Representative Brian Babin. Thank you very much, Brian.

Representative Brian Babin. Yes, sir.

The President. Thank you, Brian. Thank you.

Rep. Babin. It's good to be here. Good to be here, Mr. President.

The President. Michael Waltz. Thank you, Michael.

Representative Michael G. Waltz. Yes, sir. Thank you, sir.

The President. Thanks, Michael.

Rep. Waltz. All right.

The President. Great job. And you're going to say a few words, a couple of you, if you want.

Andy Barr of Kentucky. Andy Barr, thank you very much. Hi, Andy. Good job today. I watched you at the hearing with our wonderful, high-interest man. He likes high interest rates, right? The Federal Reserve. He likes high interest rates.

Neal Dunn, thank you. Thank you, Neal.

Representative Neal P. Dunn. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

Roger Marshall from Kansas.

Representative Roger W. Marshall. Mr. President, congratulations. Another win for the veterans.

The President. This is a good win. This is a really good—and, B.J. Lawrence, I want to thank Veterans of Foreign Wars. Right?

Veterans of Foreign Wars Commander-in-Chief Vincent "B.J." Lawrence. Thank you, Mr. President. Good seeing you.

The President. Thank you very much. Here, let me have a hand there. Great job you're doing.

Mr. Lawrence. Thank you, sir.

The President. Lou Celli and the American Legion.

American Legion Executive Director of Government Affairs Louis J. Celli. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you, Lou. Thank you, Lou, very much.

And Nate Anderson, Concerned Veterans for America.

Concerned Veterans for America Executive Director Nathan Anderson. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you very much. Thank you. Thanks. Good job. A young guy. [Laughter]

Jared Lyon. We have a Derek Lyons. [Laughter] I said—where is Derek Lyons? He's around here someplace, right?

White House Staff Secretary Derek S. Lyons. Back here, sir.

The President. But I said—terrific lawyer. Look at him back there. They're off just with two letters, right? One on the first name; one on the second name. But Jared Lyon, thank you very much. Student Veterans of America.

Student Veterans of America National President and Chief Executive Officer Jared Lyon. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you very much. Great job.

Mr. Lyon. Thank you, sir.

The President. Thank you.

Mona Dexter, Hiring Our Heroes.

Hiring Our Heroes Senior Director of Operations and Communications Mona Dexter. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. And that's a fantastic thing you do. Thank you, Mona. I hear it goes well.

And Elizabeth O'Brien, and that's Hiring—working along with, Mona—Hiring Our Heroes. So thank you.

Hiring Our Heroes Senior Director of Military Spouses Elizabeth O'Brien. Thank you, sir. Appreciate it.

The President. Thank you very much. Appreciate it very much. Great job.

So this has been long in the making. They've wanted to do this for a long time. The bill directs the National Science Foundation to work with other Federal agencies to expand veteran eligibility for STEM-related programs and encourages veteran participation in these critical fields. Incredible work, and it's so good for our veterans. Our veterans are doing so well because of what we just spoke of with Jerry—with choice. It's amazing.

And the other thing, Jerry, we can talk about is Accountability. I guess if you were going to, say, maybe rate them, Choice is probably number one, but Accountability something—nobody thought it was possible to do that. And now if people don't take care of our veterans, they can be dismissed; they can be terminated.

And we had to work through civil service. We had to work through the unions. We had to work through a lot of things, but between you and Jerry and some of the people here, we got that done, too. So we have accountability done. And, I guess, you've let go—how many—Robert, how many?

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert L. Wilkie, Jr. Over 8,000.

The President. Over 8,000 people that weren't taking care of our vets.

Secretary Wilkie. Yes, sir.

The President. And they've been replaced with people that love our vets and love our country. But we had some people that were terrible. We had sadistic people. We had people that stole. We had a lot of people, and you couldn't get rid of them, and now you just say, "You're fired. Get out."

My first year in office, I signed legislation to encourage employers to hire American veterans who have risked their lives protecting us. The unemployment rate among veterans has reached a record low. Veteran homelessness has fallen by more than 5 percent.

And totally and permanently disabled veterans have their Federal student loan debt—and you saw that we discharged their loan debt. These are veterans that are very, very seriously disabled. And they go to war—they have loan debt before they go, and then they have a horrible thing happen to them, and then you'd have people coming after them for the money.

And I'll tell you what: That was a discharge of loan debt, and I haven't heard one person say anything negative about it. And they leave—I mean, in almost all cases, they leave and they're healthy. They go to war, they come back, and they have problems. But they had gone to college, or they had gone to school. And we discharged that debt, and it's been a very great thing to do. It's something that everybody wanted to do, and very few people fought us on that.

The signing of this bill takes us one step closer to giving our veterans and their families the support that they so richly earned and deserve. And I want to thank you, and I want to thank the great people behind me, because it was really them more than anybody else.

And we had a couple of people that we were having a hard time with. I was able to call a couple of people, and we got their vote. But this was a tremendous thing that we have.

And I'm going to ask a couple of people—because this was just given to me by one of the folks. So when the United States—the market is setting a record. We set another record today. That will be the 144th time in a 3-year period that I'm President. So, for 144 days, Kevin, we set a record stock market, which, to me, means 401(k), and it means jobs. That's what it means to me. To other people, it means other things. But it means we have a great economy.

And we have \$4 trillion companies. One is Microsoft, one is Apple, one is Google, one is Amazon. So you have Amazon, Google, Apple, and Microsoft. And so you have an "M," you have an "A," you have a "G," and you have an "A." You have "MAGA."

Rep. Babin. MAGA!

The President. Who would think of that, John [John Roberts, Fox News]? Huh? Look at that, John. You better report that tonight on Fox—that great Fox. [Laughter] Not what it used to be, John, but it's still pretty good. [Laughter] Not what—not like the old days, John. They put more Democrats on Fox now than they put Republicans, but that's all right. I think they get it.

Q. It's a big country, sir.

The President. We have big crowds. But you've been great, John.

So I think, maybe before we sign, I'd like to have a couple of the folks, if they'd like. And maybe we'll start with Robert, who's done a fantastic job at the VA.

Secretary Wilkie. Yes, sir.

The President. You can talk a little bit about it.

Secretary Wilkie. Well, thank you. Thank you, sir. This is really important. You know, when we—when we look at America's warriors, most of them, by the time they're 25, they've probably made more life-altering decisions than most Americans make in a lifetime.

And when you look at sailors and airmen who are mixing complex chemicals for fuel, for ships or planes or artillerymen who are using complex calculus to send rounds downrange, they're the ones we need in science, technology, engineering, and math. They're the ones most ready to do it because they've actually done it in real life. And this is important for them, and this is important for their families. It's a great step forward.

The President. And you've done a great job.

Secretary Wilkie. Thank you, sir.

The President. You know, a constant—I shouldn't say this to these people, but you used to in the old days—in all fairness, before Trump, but always for a little while until we got Choice and Accountability done—every night, there'd be stories, these horror stories about the Vet—you know, the VA. And you'd have these horrible stories. Now it's running so well, and I want to thank you for the great job you've done.

Participants. Here, here!

The President. And You're not finished; you have a lot of plans.

Secretary Wilkie. No, I have a lot to do.

The President. I know that. Thank you very much.

Secretary Wilkie. Thank you, sir.

The President. Kevin, how about you?

Sen. Cramer. Well, I would just say, I think it's interesting that you pointed out the MAGA companies, and these are some of the companies that are going to be looking for the type of talent that this program is going to help encourage.

The President. Right.

Sen. Cramer. And it's great when you have a booming economy, but the biggest challenge is the workforce. And here, you're merging a supply and a demand and more supply, which is, I think, a winning situation all the way around.

Thank you. Congratulations.

The President. And, you know, Kevin won a race that was unwinnable. The opponent he beat was unbeatable. They said the only man that might do it—we discussed it, John—

Sen. Hoeven. Yes. Yes, we did.

The President. —is Kevin Cramer. And couldn't get him to do it. Finally, he decided to do it. His wife is an incredible woman. And he decided to do it. And I think you won by, like, 12 points or something, right?

Sen. Cramer. Every time you talk, it gets a little better, so—[laughter]. It was——

The President. He won by a lot.

Sen. Cramer. It was 11. It was 11.

The President. Eleven? Well, that's not bad. That wasn't too bad.

The President. Anyway, well, great job, and we appreciate it.

Sen. Cramer. It was pretty good. Thank you.

The President. You've been fantastic. Really fantastic. John? Please.

Sen. Hoeven. Well, absolutely. There's a real shortage in these areas. So we're talking science, technology, energy—or engineering, mathematics. And so this is a double win, right? This is a win for our veterans, and this is a win for our economy, because we need people in these professions.

In North Dakota, we're a big ag State, we're a big energy State; we're tying it together with technology. What better way to do it than to help our vets get this STEM education and then get them in these great jobs?

Again, double win for our veterans, for our economy.

The President. And you're a great football State too. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Hoeven. Yes, we really are. Bison! Go, Bison. Absolutely.

The President. Thank you. Hey, Jerry, why don't you say something, and we'll finish off with the signing.

Sen. Moran. Thank you, Mr. President. First, let me thank you. From even before you were being sworn in, you prioritized veterans. You promised that you would serve those who served our country as President of the United States, and you have done so. You have been a champion for those who served our Nation. And your Secretary, Secretary Wilkie, has been a great ally in that regard. He is somebody that we appreciate working with.

I'm honored now to chair the Senate Veterans Committee. I will do my best to do my duty to those who serve. It's an honor to stand here beside those who not only served their country, but now spend their time serving other veterans.

And so we're a team, and we'll work hard to make certain that those who served our Nation get the respect. This particular bill—any time we can provide jobs, economic opportunity for veterans, we're doing something certainly good. But as our committee focuses on mental health and suicide, one of the best things that can happen to someone who is in the community, somebody who has returned home from battle, is to be a part of that community.

And earning a living and the self-esteem and the joy that comes from having a job helps us in all our battles in trying to make sure that every veteran, every place in the country has a bright future, that they're living the American Dream.

So, thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you, Jerry. Will you be making some adjust—a little adjustments, one way or the other, to Veterans Choice? Do you see that happening over a period of time?

Sen. Moran. Mr. President, we held a hearing last week in front of the—our committee, in which we had the Deputy Secretary with us to talk about its implementation. We want to do oversight and make sure that it's being done in a way that meets the needs of these men and women and the veterans they serve. So yes.

The President. Fantastic job. Thank you, Jerry.

Sen. Moran. Thank you. Thank you very much.

The President. We appreciate it very much. Mike Pence. Please.

Vice President Michael R. Pence. Well, I don't think there's ever been a President in my lifetime who's done more for the men and women who have worn the uniform of the United States than President Donald Trump. And today is just the latest installment, Mr. President, in keeping the promises you made to the American people in 2016.

We've reformed the VA through Veterans Choice and through accountability. Eight thousand people no longer at the VA because they weren't providing the level of care that you demanded.

But these members of the House and the Senate, Chairman Moran, have a heart for our veterans. And today is just one more installment, in your commitment and the American people's commitment, to make sure that those who served our Nation—and they are our Nation's best—get America's best.

So thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you, Mike, very much. Thank you very much.

Fellas, please, go ahead.

Representative James E. Banks. Mr. President, as a veteran of the war in Afghanistan, your veteran record, as the Vice President said, is second to none. From Accountability at the VA, to the largest investment in modernizing electronic health records, on top of everything else that your administration has done, you're always going to be known as the veterans' President. And I, as a younger veteran—my generation—we appreciate it very much.

The President. I appreciate that. Very nice. Thank you.

Representative Garland H. "Andy" Barr IV. Mr. President, you mentioned the hearing today with the Federal Reserve.

The President. Right.

Rep. Barr. And what we heard today was, with this Trump economy, we have over 7 million more job openings in America than we have unemployed Americans. And many of those job openings are in the STEM fields.

The President. Right.

Rep. Barr. And so, as was mentioned before, this is a twofer. We get to fill these STEM vacancies with the best and brightest our country has to offer these veteran heroes. And, at the same time, we get to fill these jobs, these employer jobs. And this follows on the other bill that you signed last year that enhanced the Forever GI Bill that provides STEM scholarships for these heroes.

The President. Right.

Rep. Barr. So thank you.

The President. Thank you very much. Brian?

Rep. Babin. Hey, Mr. President, as a veteran and also as the ranking member on the Science—the Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics, I can tell you we appreciate your leadership, and I agree that you have been, really, the most pro-vet President that I have seen in my lifetime.

The President. Thank you, Brian.

Rep. Babin. And I just want to thank my colleagues that have introduced this bill. And I was proud to be a cosponsor of it. And STEM is where it's at. And if we want to catch up with our adversaries and stay ahead of them, I should say, then this could—there's no more important thing that we can be doing.

Thank you for what you've done.

The President. Good. Thank you, Brian. Thank you very much.

Rep. Babin. Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

The President. Please.

Rep. Marshall. Promises made and promises kept. Those veterans made a promise to serve our country. Candidate Trump made a promise to take care of the veterans, to rebuild our military. You've kept your promises, Mr. President. Thanks for keeping your promises. We're grateful.

The President. Thank you very much. Appreciate it. Please.

Rep. Waltz. Mr. President, can I just say to those MAGA companies: Talk is cheap. If you want to support your veterans, hire one. Right?

The President. Yes.

Rep. Waltz. Put your money where your mouth is; hire veterans. To Microsoft, Apple, Google, and Amazon: Talk is cheap in this town.

The President. Yes, it's a good point.

Rep. Waltz. If you want to support a veteran, hire one.

And if we're going to keep up with the Chinese, if we're going to stay the world leader, then we have to put our best and brightest from the military and our best and brightest from the private sector.

The President. Good. Very good point.

Rep. Waltz. Great job.

Rep. Dunn. Mr. President, I want to say thank you. But also, I want you—the veterans who are gathered—to know that everybody really is proveteran. I mean, we do love you. We're proud of all the things that you've done.

I'm very grateful to have had the help of virtually everybody standing here, and certainly Secretary Wilkie, to introduce this bill.

I want to call out a few people who also deserve credit for that. One is Senator Marco Rubio. Another is Representative Alexander Lamar, who is no longer—I'm sorry, Lamar Alexander—who is no longer with us. He's—in 2018, he was in the House, and he helped me author that bill. And also, our Democrat cosponsor, Conor Lamb, was on that and helped us get it across the floor this time.

So it's a—it's a real win for the veterans. I'm a veteran, too. And I want to let—close by saying to Secretary Wilkie: I've spent the last 2 days on the MISSION Act and VA; I'm a ranking member of VA Health.

Secretary Wilkie. Yes, sir.

Rep. Dunn. And I have had 2 great days with the VA. I mean, a lot of great improvements for our veterans in health. Thank you very much. And thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you very much.

Would anybody like to say—you're the ones that really should be speaking up. Would you like to say something? Please, go ahead.

Mr. Celli. Thank you, Mr. President. You know, no one knows more than veterans. The American Legion supports, obviously, our Nation and our veterans. And no one knows more than veterans than—what it takes to be technologically advanced. And they have the greatest stake in

making sure that our country is at the forefront of technology when it comes to their weapons systems, when it comes to their information technology, and when it comes to cybersecurity. So this is really a win for every veteran that's out there. Thank you.

The President. Great. Thank you very much. Please.

Ms. O'Brien. Thank you. On behalf of Hiring Our Heroes, thank you to you and to your administration for what you have done. I want to point out this isn't only an opportunity for us to provide paths into STEM for veterans, it's also an opportunity for us to welcome a chronically underemployed and unemployed population in our military spouses and put them to work by upskilling and reskilling them.

Participants. Here, here.

The President. Great.

Ms. O'Brien. So thank you. Appreciate it.

The President. Thank you. Please, go ahead.

Ms. Dexter. Well, as we continue to work to bridge the civilian-military divide in the business community and help build America's workforce with the best and the brightest—you know, reiterating what Liz said—this provides that opportunity to allow the veterans to upskill into what the current roles are, along with, you know, the support of the military spouses and employment.

The President. Thank you.

Ms. Dexter. Thank you.

The President. Great job. Thank you very much. Great.

Folks?

Mr. Lyon. Mr. President, just a big thank you. Student Veterans of America is representing nearly a million veterans who are in college using their GI Bill right now. And the top three majors that veterans are pursuing in college this moment are business, just like yourself, as well as science, technology, engineering, and math, and health-related fields.

So as we look at this post-9/11 era—those veterans who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan—we are looking at the most educated generation of veterans because the solid GI Bill that you have improved with the Forever GI Bill, as well as the Members here have extended, and the great leadership of Secretary Wilkie to implement this law—this is a great opportunity to help transitioning servicemembers enter the workforce and to continue to educate our youth through K-through-12 education in the STEM fields. So just an all-around win, and thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Great job. Thank you very much.

Mr. Anderson. Mr. President, veterans experience unique challenges, and unique solutions are often required to remedy that, so thank you. Thank you, Senator Wilkie—thank you, Secretary Wilkie, for pursuing policies that allow veterans to live healthy, prosperous lives after service.

The President. Thank you very much. Great job. Great job everybody. So let's do the signing, right?

You see a man named Chuck Grassley. You don't get better than Chuck, right? *[Laughter]* That's great. Thank you.

[*At this point, the President signed the bill and distributed pens.*]

Here you go. Go ahead. We'll do it this way, right? So you go ahead; just pass them out.

So thank you very much. This is a great honor. And we'll just do this, because some people like to see this.

[*The President displayed the bill.*]

Can you see that, fellas, okay?

I don't know if they're going to ask questions, but it might not be on this subject.

Q. Mr. President——

The President. It should be on the subject. Go ahead. Ask on stem cells.

Q. On a separate subject, if I can—[*laughter*].

The President. Oh, I'm shocked. I'm shocked. I'm shocked.

Prosecution of Political Consultant Roger J. Stone

Q. Can you—you seemed, from your tweet today, that you were upset about the Roger Stone sentencing. Did you——

The President. Yes, I thought it was ridiculous that—that of that——

Q. Did you ask the Justice Department to change that?

The President. No, I didn't speak with the—I'd be able to do it if I wanted. I have the absolute right to do it. I stay out of things to a degree that people wouldn't believe. But I didn't speak to them. I thought the recommendation was ridiculous. I thought the whole prosecution was ridiculous.

And I look at others that haven't been prosecuted or—I don't know where it is now. But when you see that, I thought it was an insult to our country. And it shouldn't happen. And we'll see what goes on there. But that was a horrible aberration.

These are the—I guess, the same Mueller people that put everybody through hell. And I think it's a disgrace. No, I have not been involved with it at all.

Political Consultant Roger J. Stone

Q. Would you consider commuting or——

The President. I don't want to talk about that now. I think it was a disgraceful recommendation.

Prosecution of Political Consultant Roger J. Stone

Q. What do you think would be appropriate——

The President. They ought to be ashamed of themselves—what they've done to General Flynn, what they've done to others. And then, the really guilty ones—people that have committed major crimes—are getting away with it. I think it's disgrace. We'll see what happens.

Go ahead, John [John Roberts, Fox News].

2020 Democratic Presidential Candidate Former Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg of New York City

Q. I was going to say, Mr. President, you took on Michael Bloomberg—and Brad Parscale, did as well—over stop-and-frisk. Yet, in 2016 and 2018, you praised Rudy Giuliani for the stop-and-frisk program. So what's different about what Bloomberg said from what you believe the program—

The President. Well, I'll tell you what: I looked at it and I watched him pander at a church and practically beg for forgiveness. I wouldn't have begged for forgiveness. I mean, he was doing his job at the time. And then, he—when he went up to the church, I thought it was disgraceful. But I put something out, and it was so—it was pretty nasty. And I thought, you know, I'm looking to bring the country together, not divide the country further.

But when he went up to a church and he apologized for everything he has ever done, that was only for getting votes. And I think probably people understand that.

Yes, please.

India-U.S. Relations/The President's Upcoming Travel to India

Q. Mr. President, you are traveling to India later this month.

The President. I am.

Q. Can you tell us something about—

The President. I am. I spoke with Prime Minister Modi and it's going to be very—I don't know who's going, but it's—he said we will have millions and millions of people.

My only problem is—so last night we probably had forty or fifty-thousand people, far more than anyone else. But when we have 50,000 people nowadays, fellas, I'm not going to feel so good—[laughter]—because he thinks we'll have 5 to 7 million people just from the airport to the new stadium. [Laughter]

And you know, it's the largest stadium in the world. He's building it now. It's almost complete, and it's the largest in the world. And he's a friend of mine. He's a great gentleman. And I look forward to going to India. So we'll be going at the end of the month.

Q. Do you plan to sign a trade deal with the Indians when you travel?

The President. They would like to do something, and we'll see. If we can make the right deal, we'll do it.

Anonymous Author of Opinion Article and a Book on the Trump Administration

Q. Mr. President, do you know who "anonymous" is?

The President. I don't want to say, but you'd be surprised. Would you be surprised. But I don't want to say.

Former National Security Council Director for European Affairs Alexander S. Vindman/The President's July 25, 2019, Telephone Conversation With President Volodymyr Zelenskiy of Ukraine/National Security Council Staff

Q. And can you talk a little bit more about some of the recent departures from the White House, including the Vindman twins and—

The President. No, well—

Q. —and pending departures?

The President. Yes, I obviously wasn't happy with the job he did. First of all, he reported a false call. That wasn't what was said on the call. What was said on the call was totally

appropriate. And I call it a "perfect call." I always will call it a "perfect call." And it wasn't one call; it was two calls. There were two perfect calls. There was no setup. There was no anything. And he reported it totally differently.

And then, they all went wild when I said that we have transcripts of the calls. And they turned out to be totally accurate transcripts. And if anybody felt there was any changes, we let them make it because it didn't matter. So we had accurate—totally accurate—transcripts. And it turned out that what he reported was very different.

And also, when you look at Vindman's—the person he reports to—said horrible things: avoided the chain of command, leaked, did a lot of bad things. And so we sent him on his way to a much different location, and the military can handle him any way they want. General Milley has him now. I congratulate General Milley. He can have him, but—and his brother also.

So we'll—we'll find out what happened. I mean, we'll find out. But he reported very inaccurate things. You'll understand that, John. When you look at his report, and then when you look at what, actually, the exact the words—fortunately, I had the words, because otherwise, we would have had a lot of people lying. And we were able to do it. So fortunately, we had transcripts of those calls.

I think you guys all agree with that. Right?

Sen. Hoeven. Yes, we do.

The President. Wasn't it nice?

Sen. Cramer. It was.

The President. After they said these horrible things and made up these horrible, horrible lies about what was said in the call—and then I said, "Here is the call." I had a transcript. If I didn't have a transcript, it would've been my word against their word.

But there were other people on that call. There were many people on that call—Mike Pompeo. And I know that. When I speak to the head of state of countries, Presidents, Prime Ministers, etcetera—there are always a lot of people on those calls, especially from the other countries, I imagine. I don't know that for a fact, but I know for a fact that we have a lot of people on those calls.

Who would say something wrong? I wouldn't say it wrong anyway, but who would say it wrong when you have—when a call is loaded up with, you know, sometimes as many as 25 people, sometimes as many as 3 or 4 or 2. But there's always people on those calls. I fully know that. But that was a perfect call, and it wasn't reported the way—it was reported, like, "oh it was so terrible." That was a very nice call. That was a very friendly call.

A couple of things: The President, as you know, of Ukraine stated very strongly that there was no pressure, there was no anything, there was nothing wrong. And it was really a very sad state of affairs that our country wasted that much time on nothing—on nothing. And I want to thank our three Senators that are here for agreeing with me.

I mean, you had one grandstander. He's always been a grandstander.

Q. Are there more departures to come?

The President. Oh, sure. Oh, sure. Absolutely.

Q. Mr. President, when you say that——

The President. There always are.

Former National Security Council Director for European Affairs Alexander S. Vindman/President's July 25, 2019, Telephone Conversation With President Volodymyr Zelenskiy of Ukraine

Q. When you—when you say that the military can deal with Vindman any way that they want, are you——

The President. Yes, no, well, that's up to them.

Q. Are you suggesting he should face——

The President. He is now—he's—he's over with the military.

Q. Do you think he needs to face disciplinary action?

The President. That's going to be up to the military. We'll have to see. But if you look at what happened, I mean, they're going to certainly, I would imagine, take a look at that. But no, I think what he did was just reported a false call.

If you look at what he said, and then—and I'll tell you, the one worse was—you look at Shifty Schiff. Take a look at what he did. He made up my conversation. And then, we dropped the transcript, and he almost had a heart attack.

Didn't he say eight "quid pro quos"? Think of it. So eight times I said the same thing, according to Shifty Schiff. If I ever did that—so you say it once. Now you say it again. We're talking about a man that I never even met before. Now you say it a third time, a fourth time, a fifth time, a sixth time, seven times, eight times. Eight times, he said that I asked for the exact same thing in one call.

After the third time, they'd have to take you away, okay? He's a sick person. Schiff is a very corrupt politician and he's a sick person. So he made up—totally made up. And because he's shielded, which a lot of people didn't know—but because he's shielded by the halls of Congress—you know, in terms of what he says—you can say anything you want.

He made up a story; it was total fiction. And then, at the end, he said: "Don't call me, I'll call you." That's a mob statement. Very famous statement in numerous movies, one in particular. That's a mob statement. "Don't call me, I'll call you." He said that I said that. He said that I said, eight times, "quid pro quo." Well, there were no times "quid pro quo." Nothing. That whole thing was corrupt and a disgrace.

And Romney is a disgrace for voting against. He's a disgrace.

Okay. Anybody else?

2020 Democratic Presidential Candidates Former Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg of New York City and Senator Bernard Sanders

Q. Mr. President, can I ask you to elaborate a little bit more on stop-and-frisk? It's going to be a big issue in the coming days.

The President. Sure.

Q. Do you support that policy? And is it, as you said in a tweet——

The President. I support anything we can do to get down crime and to get rid of drugs. But I think when a man is with stop-and-frisk his whole life, and then he decides to go Democrat, and he goes to a church and he's practically crying—he looked like hell. He's practically crying, saying how—what a horrible thing he did. I think that's so disingenuous. You know what I'm talking about, fellas. That was so—of Bloomberg.

Look, he's a lightweight. He's a lightweight. You're going to find that out. He's also one of the worst debaters I've ever seen. And his presence is zero. So he will spend his 3, 4, 500 million dollars. Maybe they will take it away. Frankly, I'd rather run against Bloomberg than Bernie Sanders, because Sanders has real followers—whether you like him or not, whether you agree with him or not. I happen to think it's terrible what he says. But he has followers. Bloomberg is just buying his way in.

But we're going to find out what happens. We're going to find out. But when you watch—go back to the church, where he apologized for everything he ever did, practically—and he looked pathetic. Our country doesn't need that kind of leadership. Thank you all very much.

2020 Democratic Presidential Candidate Former Vice President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.

Q. What do you think of the Biden campaign?

The President. It's stumbling. It's mumbling. Not pretty. But we'll see how he does. You never know. You never know. The only time you knew for sure was the Trump campaign. Trump was going to win.

2020 Democratic Presidential Candidate Former Vice President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.

Q. Do you think he can turn it around in South Carolina?

The President. He can always turn it around, you know. I think it's not going to be easy. I think he can turn it around, yes. I think he has a shot. He's got probably almost as good a shot as anyone, but he's going to have to work. He's going to have to work very hard, much harder than they thought.

Don't forget, when he first ran I called him "1-percent Joe," because every time he ran, he only got 1 percent. And then, Obama took him off the garbage heap. But he only got 1 percent. Right, John? You know that. One-percent Joe. But now he's—what?—19-percent Joe. It's better. He's doing better. He's made a lot of progress.

But it's going to be very interesting. I think we have—we're going to have a very interesting Democrat race, and I think we're going to have a very interesting election.

But our country is doing better than it's ever done. We've rebuilt our military. Thanks to the people back here, we've taken care of our vets at a level that they've never been taken care of before. Jerry—I mean, never even close. And it's really something that we're very proud of.

You look at the economy—I mean, we have the best economy we've ever had. We have the best employment numbers we've ever had: African American, Asian American, Hispanic American.

We're going to protect our Second Amendment. The Democrats want to take away the guns. They want to take away everyone's gun. They want to destroy the Second Amendment.

So when you add it all up, you know, I don't see how we lose, but you never know. It's politics. Right, fellas? Thank you all very much. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:13 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to judicial nominees Andrew L. Brasher for U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit, Joshua M. Kindred for the U.S. District Court for the District of Alaska, Matthew T. Schelp for the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri, John F. Kness for the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, and Philip M. Halpern for the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York; Andrew W. Reid, head coach, National Football League's Kansas City Chiefs; Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome H. Powell; former Sen. Mary Kathryn

"Heidi" Heitkamp; Sens. Charles E. Grassley and W. Mitt Romney; former Department of Justice Special Counsel Robert S. Mueller III; former National Security Adviser Michael T. Flynn; Lt. Col. Yevgeny Vindman, former senior lawyer and ethics official, and John A. Eisenberg, Legal Advisor and Deputy Counsel to the President, National Security Council; Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark A. Milley, USA; and Rep. Adam B. Schiff, in his capacity as chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. Sen. Moran referred to Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs James Byrne. Rep. Dunn referred to former Rep. Lamar Smith. A reporter referred to Brad Parscale, chairman, Donald J. Trump Presidential campaign; and Rudolph W. Giuliani, personal attorney to the President. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 12. S. 153, approved February 11, was assigned Public Law No. 116–115.

Categories: Bill Signings and Vetoes : Supporting Veterans in STEM Careers Act, signing remarks; Interviews With the News Media : White House.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Anderson, Nathan; Babin, Brian; Banks, James E.; Barr, Garland H. "Andy", IV; Barr, Garland H. "Andy," IV; Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Bloomberg, Michael R.; Brasher, Andrew L.; Celli, Louis J.; Cramer, Kevin J.; Cramer, Kevin J.; Cramer, Kris; Dexter, Mona; Dunn, Neal P.; Eisenberg, John A.; Flynn, Michael T.; Grassley, Charles E.; Halpern, Philip M.; Heitkamp, Mary Katherine "Heidi"; Hoeven, John H., III; Kindred, Joshua M.; Kness, John F.; Lawrence, Vincent "B.J."; Lyon, Jared; Lyons, Derek S.; Marshall, Roger W.; Milley, Mark A.; Modi, Narendra; Moran, Gerald W.; Mueller, Robert S., III; Obama, Barack; O'Brien, Elizabeth; Pence, Michael R.; Pompeo, Michael R.; Powell, Jerome H.; Reid, Andrew W.; Romney, W. Mitt; Rubio, Marco A.; Sanders, Bernard; Schelp, Matthew T.; Schiff, Adam B.; Vindman, Alexander S.; Vindman, Yevgeny; Waltz, Michael G.; Wilkie, Robert L., Jr.; Zelenskiy, Volodymyr.

Subjects: Armed Forces, U.S. : Funding; Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Deployment; Business and industry : Business leaders, meeting with President; Civil rights : Firearm rights; Communications : News media :: Accuracy and fairness; Defense, Department of : Joint Chiefs of Staff; Drug abuse and trafficking : Illegal drugs, interdiction efforts; Economy, national : Improvement; Education : Education, Department of : Disabled veterans student loans, elimination efforts; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; India : Prime Minister; India : Relations with U.S.; India : Trade with U.S.; Judiciary : Federal court nominations and confirmations; Legislation, enacted : Supporting Veterans in STEM Careers Act ; Reserve System, Federal; Sports : Football; State, Department of : Secretary; Ukraine : President; Veterans : Disabled veterans; Veterans : Health and medical care; Veterans : Hiring incentives; Veterans : Job training and education assistance; Veterans : Unemployment and underemployment; Veterans Affairs, Department of : Personnel management, improvement efforts; Veterans Affairs, Department of : Secretary; White House Office : Assistants to the President :: Staff Secretary; White House Office : Security Council, National; White House Office : Vice President.

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