

White House press briefing  
08/03/21  
2:21 p.m. Eastern

JONATHAN LEMIRE: In March, President Biden said that New York Governor Andrew Cuomo should resign if the New York attorney general's investigation confirmed allegations of sexual harassment. Today, the investigation found that Cuomo engaged in unwanted groping and kissing of at least 11 women, including current and former state employees. Does the President believe? Gotta call? We should resign.

JEN PSAKI: Well, the President just said that he's going to speak to this later this afternoon and share his views, so I'm not going to get ahead of his — ahead of his comments he'll make later.

LEMIRE: Have there been any conversations today between the governor's office and anyone here at the White House?

PSAKI: No, there have not.

LEMIRE: And why even — why — why the delay? Why not have — did the President watch the governor's video earlier?

PSAKI: Again, The President will give his own reaction to, of course, the announcement this morning and give his own view later this afternoon.

(.....)

2:23 p.m. Eastern

CECILIA VEGA: Does the White House have a message for the women who came forward with these accusations against the Governor?

PSAKI: The White House's message, the President's message the vice President's message, my message is all women's who have who have — have — who lived through, uh, sexual, uh — this — this type of — this type of experience, whether it is, um, harassment or abuse or in — in the worst case, assault deserve to have their voices heard, deserve to be treated with respect and with dignity. I don't know that anyone could have watched this morning and not found the allegations to be abhorrent. I know I certainly did. And again, the President will speak to this later this afternoon.

(....)

2:34 p.m. Eastern

PETER DOOCY: First, following up on that rule in New York now where the mayor says, if you're not vaccinated, you can't go into a restaurant, a gym, or a show. Does the White House

think that that is fair to people who may have a religious reason for not wanting the vaccine or might just be waiting for the FDA to approve it fully before they get it?

PSAKI: Uh the administration and the White House and the President supports steps by localities to — to — take steps to protect people in their states and their communities to incentivize people getting vaccinated. I don't know all the specific details if they have exemptions so I'd point you to them.

DOOCY: Okay, and then I know that the President is going to speak a little bit about his thoughts on this attorney general report in New York. In February, he invited Governor Cuomo to the White House for the next governor's conference. Does that invitation still stand?

PSAKI: I think I'll let the President speak to his views later this afternoon.

DOOCY: Okay, and then the Justice Department recently dropped its civil rights investigation into Governor Cuomo's handling of the Covid nursing home deaths. Does the administration want the Justice Department to initiate a civil rights investigation into these harassment allegations revealed today?

PSAKI: We do something new here that feels foreign from the last four years and allow the Justice Department to act independently on investigations.

DOOCY: Okay and then the New York attorney general says about the Cuomo accusers, "I believe them." Does the President believe them?

PSAKI: Again, the President's going to speak to this later this afternoon, so I will point to — to his comments and I'm sure you will all be tuning in. He also said he'd take some questions.

(....)

2:42 p.m. Eastern

KATIE ROGERS: And there was a report yesterday in Politico that a senior aide in this White House has been abusive to other colleagues. I know the reports was based on anonymous sourcing —

PSAKI: You know, I love anonymous sources —

ROGERS: That's why I almost didn't ask cause I feel like that's what you were going to say.

PSAKI: — placing criticism.

ROGERS: Right, but I'm wondering if, given this administration has its edict treating people with kindness and respect, is this report even though anonymously sourced going to be looked into?

PSAKI: First I would say that I've worked with now over the last six months, even as a newbie into the Biden orbit, the individual named by anonymous source — he's been nothing but supportive and communicative, and that's been my experience. Um, you know, it's hard to look into anonymously-sourced reports. I'm not aware of that being the intention. Go ahead.

UNIDENTIFIED REPORTER #1: Thanks Jen, in July, we likely saw a record number — record high of unaccompanied children. Again, monthly high arriving at the southern border, and we've already reached a yearly high of migrants you've arrived at the border. You all have previously explained that this was likely due to a seasonal spike that we've seen. But we're well out of what we would normally see on yearly average. What is your current assessment for why we're seeing these numbers still well into a very hot summer?

PSAKI: Well, we — we have said that was one of the factors and it is typically one of the factors. Seasonally, we saw a big uptick in the spring, which you see every other year or so. You know, say there's a range of factors which are happening in these countries where individuals are leaving from, economic challenges, weather challenges, crime and that is all those areas. Also, of course, drivers of people of all ages trying to leave their country to come to the United States. That's one of the reasons the Vice President has been so focused at the President's asking on addressing these root causes. That's a long term — a long term challenge and a long — will require a long term solution. She laid out some — some significant steps forward last week, and that is going to continue to be something she is working on. But I will note that, um you know, even — even with the uptick we've seen over the last several months, as we've noted, Title 42 remains in place for health reasons. We also have, um, made great progress in moving people through border patrol facilities, especially, of course, children and getting them into places where they can be treated with safety safely.

(...)

2:45 p.m. Eastern

PHILIP WEGMANN: I wanted to follow up on the question of lockdowns from a second ago because, you know, yesterday you said we're not going back to the shutdown of March 2020. You also said that “we're not going to take options off the table.” Given how incredibly effective the vaccine is, why not take lockdowns off the table?

PSAKI: I think I also said that that's not under consideration. That hasn't changed.

(...)

2:47 p.m. Eastern

TYLER PAGER: You said that the administration supports New York City or locality steps to do what they need to keep their — their, you know, residents safe. Given the success that foreign countries have had been mandating vaccines — obviously New York is taking this step — has there been any more discussion inside the White House about encouraging — actively

encouraging city and steps to take steps like New York did today?

PSAKI: We worked very closely with governors and localities about what steps they're considering and what steps are appropriate to help protect people in their localities and save more lives, but I don't have anything any additional of considerations to preview for you.

PAGER: So the President's not going weight in one way or the other, whether he supports mandating vaccines in the way that, you know, other countries do?

PSAKI: We support steps by private sector entities. We support steps by localities to save lives, protect their communities, incentivize more people getting vaccinated.

(...)

2:49 p.m. Eastern

FRANCESCA CHAMBERS: The White House has stressed that it's following the health and the science when it comes to Covid-19, and that has been the basis for the ongoing international travel restrictions. But what is the health or scientific basis for the travel restrictions on vaccinated individuals from Europe or Canada or other nations when people who are unvaccinated from other countries are allowed to come into the United States?

PSAKI: I would certainly point you to our health and medical teams who make these decisions and evaluate what we need to do from a public health perspective to keep the American people safe at a time where the Delta variant is rising. And one where we are very cognizant about keeping the American people safe.

CHAMBERS: And a quick follow up on that, when it comes to countries that have more vaccinated individuals than the United States does at this point as the percentage of population, what is the basis for those restrictions again?

PSAKI: Again, I would point you to our public health officials who are leading this effort in determining when we can raise or end those restrictions. We certainly understand there is a desire to do that by many people in the United States, many people around the world. We understand that. I just don't have an update on it. And when that will happen, go ahead.

(...)

2:56 p.m. Eastern

SHELBY TALCOTT: So, I wanted to ask about the New York City proof of vaccination. So, New York City data shows that the rate for Black New Yorkers are — is sitting at 31 percent which is a lot lower than some of the other percentages and this is similar to the national level, according to CDC data, so is a White House concerned at all that the burdens imposed by governments and businesses like this New York City proof of vaccination is going to fall

heaviest on these minority communities?

PSAKI: Well, I would say, Shelby, that it's our objective to continue to close that equity gap and to make sure we are, as a federal government, working in partnership with city — or states like New York, cities like New York City to make sure we are making the vaccine accessible, available. We're meeting people where they are. We're partnering with a wide — right — public health officials and we will continue to do exactly that, because we certainly don't want this to be a barrier of entry for communities. We also believe that, at a time when the delta variant is spreading like wildfire across the country, especially to unvaccinated communities that it's important and — and country — and cities and communities should be able to take steps to incentivize — get more people getting vaccinated.

(...)

3:04 p.m. Eastern

NIKKI SCHWAB: Do you know if the President has spoken with Governor Cuomo today?

PSAKI: No, he has not.

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White House press conference (via CNN)

August 3, 2021

4:47 p.m. Eastern

KAITLAN COLLINS: I have a question for you on coronavirus. But first I'd like to start with the news of the day given back in March, you said that if the investigation confirmed the allegations against Governor Cuomo, then he should resign. So will you now call on him to resign given the investigator said the 11 women were credible?

PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN: I stand by that statement.

COLLINS: Are you now calling on him to resign?

BIDEN: Yes.

COLLINS: And if he doesn't resign, do you believe he should be impeached and removed from office?

BIDEN: Let's take one thing at a time. I think he should resign. I understand the state legislature may decide to impeach. I don't know that for a fact. I have not read all that data.

COLLINS: If he's using a photo of you embracing him in his self-defense to say these are commonplace kind of embraces he made in the allegations against him, do you condone that?

BIDEN: Look, I'm not going to fly-speck this. I'm sure there are some embraces that are totally innocent. But apparently the attorney general decided there were things that weren't.

COLLINS: And on the coronavirus, if I could ask you a question about the evictions.

BIDEN: Why don't you [INAUDIBLE]

COLLINS: No, thank you. On the evictions and the moratorium that lapsed on Saturday night, what is your strategy to prevent potentially millions of people from being evicted from their homes, given what we are told your administration is considering a targeted moratorium is likely to face legal challenges?

(...)

4:49 p.m. Eastern

STEVE HERMAN: On overseas coronavirus vaccines, should other high-income countries follow the lead of the United States and increase donations to low and middle-income countries?

(...)

4:50 p.m. Eastern

PETER DOOCY: Mr. President, I have a question about something that you just said.

BIDEN: I'm sure you do.

DOOCY: Thank you. You just said there is no wall high enough and no ocean wide enough to protect us from the virus. So, what is the thinking behind letting untested and unvaccinated migrants cross the southern border into U.S. cities in record numbers?

BIDEN: There is — what we're doing — we have not withdrawn the order that is sometimes critical — or criticized saying that unvaccinated people should be — go back across the border. But unaccompanied children is a different story because there's — that's the most humane thing to do — is to test them and to treat them and not send them back alone.

[REPORTERS SHOUTING]

TYLER PAGER: Mr. President, have you spoken with Governor Cuomo today?

BIDEN: I have not.

PAGER: And then one other question on the virus. You just said we have to continue our aggressive efforts to get the unvaccinated vaccinated. Other countries have found a lot of success in requiring vaccines in public places. New York City just announced today that they will require

vaccines for restaurants and gyms. Do you think more cities and states should institute rules like that?

BIDEN: I do.

PAGER: And are you going to publicly call on them to implement a vaccine passport-type system or — or it's up to each city and state to figure it out on their own?

BIDEN: I'm sorry. What did you say?

PAGER: Do you think that they should implement a vaccine passport-type system or some sort of verification to use public spaces?

BIDEN: I don't think they need to do that. I think they just need to give the authority to those restaurants or businesses to say in order to come in, you have to give proof that you've been vaccinated or you can't come in. I'll take a couple more.

[REPORTERS SHOUTING]

YAMICHE ALCINDOR: Mr. President, can I ask you about the news of the day? One more on — on Governor Cuomo. You're calling for him to resign now. My question is do you think he should be prosecuted? And what is your message to the women who have now accused him of sexually harassing them and abusing them?

BIDEN: Look, what I said was if the investigation of the attorney general concluded that the allegations are correct, that back in March, I would recommend he resign. That's what I'm doing today. I have not read the report. I don't know the detail of it. All I know is the end result.

[REPORTERS SHOUTING]

ALCINDOR: Mr. President, one other question on Covid, if I could, really quickly. It's the eviction moratorium. Can you explain a little bit more why it took so long to have a possible eviction moratorium be put into place? There — there were people — this expired on Saturday. I'm wondering, there are folks who are saying it took too long for this to happen.

(...)

4:56 p.m. Eastern

NANCY CORDES: We're learning that your administration is about to announce a new partial eviction moratorium Covid-related. Can you tell us any more about that? And are you sure it's going to pass Supreme Court muster?