

White House press briefing
08/06/21
1:59:10 p.m.
2 minutes and 41 seconds

PETER DOOCY: First on the jobs report, if the economy is so great and you guys are celebrating jobs being created at a historic —

JEN PSAKI: Wouldn't you say over 900,000 jobs created is pretty good?

DOOCY: — so this is my question. Why then is the President still pushing for big relief packages, pandemic era relief packages like the eviction moratorium?

PSAKI: Well, first I would say one of the biggest pieces of legislation he's pushing for, as we know, is the infrastructure package and also the Build Back Better agenda. Most of the components in those packages are long-term investments. They're out — they're overdue. They're meant to modernize our infrastructure, put people to — back to work over the long-term and make us more competitive over the long-term. It is still a reality, even with a good jobs number this month and even with four million jobs created over six months, that there are still people out of work. There are still people who don't have enough money to make ends meet. That's one of the reasons why we designed the American Rescue Plan to have a long-term, spread out impact, whether it's the child tax credit or benefits that are going to schools that are spread out over the course of a year, cause we are still in a recovery.

DOOCY: Back to school question. Florida's Governor DeSantis says that he may start withholding funds from school districts that don't let parents opt out of policies that require masks in the classrooms. Does the President think that parents should have that kind of power?

PSAKI: Well, I think I've spoken to this a few times, but I will say as a parent myself of two young children, that I want public health officials to make decisions about how to keep my kids safe, not politicians and not only is Governor DeSantis not abiding by public health decisions, he's fundraising off of this. So, my view is that, and our view as an administration, is that teachers — parents in Florida, parents across the country should have the ability and the knowledge that their kids are going to school and they're in safe environments. That shouldn't be too much to ask.

DOOCY: He says that his concern is about "harmful emotional, academic, and psychological effects of putting kindergarteners in masks for hours at a time." Is there any concern from officials that you guys talked to in your early pre-decisional discussions about that?

PSAKI: No, there's not and I will tell you from personal experience, my rising kindergartner told me two days ago, she could wear a mask all day and she's just happy to go to camp and go to school. And the objective from all of our public health officials has been clearly, under our secretary of education, kids need to be in school. We know there's a mental health impact of them not being in school. And we should take the mitigation measures needed in order for them

to be in school and in the classroom, including masking and including allowing that to be part of a reality in these schools to keep the community safe.

(....)

2:22:40 p.m.

3 minutes and 41 seconds

PHILIP WEGMANN: So the last time we talked about debt and deficits, you noted that the President has proposed a way to pay for his proposals and that he cares about the future of the next generation. I'm wondering what the White House reaction is to a recent analysis by the Congressional Budget Office that predicts that the bipartisan infrastructure bill would add a quarter trillion dollars to the deficit over the next 10 years.

PSAKI: Well, the CBO analysis, I assume you're referring to?

WEGMANN: Yes, Jen.

PSAKI: No, no, of course. I thought — I thought I understood where you were coming from. The CBO score, which projects a \$30 billion deficit a year for eight years, does not count real savings agreed to on a bipartisan basis. That includes over \$200 billion in lower costs for emergency programs like paid leave over the last year than CBO had originally estimated, and over \$60 billion in higher spectrum revenue from a February auction than CBO had anticipated. Also, it doesn't include the positive effects of the economic growth this package will drive on the budget. In fact, there's strong evidence from a number of economists, and including Moody's, that infrastructure investment like this can, in fact, help pay for itself over the course of time and over the long run. And that's something that a number of leaders in the Senate are referring to.

WEGMANN: And then one more quick one. Yesterday, Secretary Cardona noted that the administration is — is working closely with teacher unions as they prepare for school openings this fall. I'm wondering, are there any specific parent organizations that the administration is also partnering with?

PSAKI: To help ensure school's opening?

WEGMANN: Yes.

PSAKI: That is something, certainly, the Department of Education, they are working with a range of organizations to make sure they are educated, they have the information they need, they know what the mitigation measures are. I can certainly ask Secretary Cardona if there are any specifics or get you in touch with the Department of Education. Go ahead.

EMERALD ROBINSON: Can I follow up on that? The mask issue with Secretary Cardona yesterday.

PSAKI: Sure.

ROBINSON: He made mention that with Governor DeSantis, he was concerned about the EO he did regarding public schools on masks. And he said, “We know what works.” But the pres — one of the President’s top COVID advisers, Michael Osterholm, just this — recently —

PSAKI: Who’s not a current advisor to the President.

ROBINSON: Not a current. But — but was. So notable, right?

PSAKI: Okay.

ROBINSON: He said in a television interview this week regarding mask wearing, specifically the cloth mask like so many of us are wearing here and what the kids are wearing in school — right — largely. He said that “the scientific community has been doing a disservice to the public on face coverings.” He said that cloth masks like these have “very limited impact on the amount of virus that you inhale or you exhale out.” And he also said that he’s really disappointed in his colleagues for not making that more clear to the public. And that’s sort of in line with the study that Governor DeSantis is citing as the basis for his executive order. So how would you respond to that?

PSAKI: I think you’re confusing a few things there, but let me first say that Osterholm is not an advisor to the president, to the administration, to the White House. He doesn’t work here. He’s a private citizen and a medical — a public health expert, but a lot of public health experts are out there speaking and good for them. I will say that we are going to continue to rely on the advice of medical experts in the federal government on what kind of masks we all should wear, what kind of masks kids should wear, and if they change that advice, then the Department of Education will be working with schools to make sure that’s implemented as a mitigation measure. The issue we have taken with the guidance of Governor DeSantis, which he, of course, is fundraising off of, I think we should note, is that he is preventing schools and teachers and others from protecting themselves and the students in their classroom. And as a mother myself, that’s concerning, and I’m sure it’s concerning to mothers in Florida.

(....)

2:29:24 p.m.

1 minute and 10 seconds

SHELBY TALCOTT: I wanted to ask — a little bit ago, it was reported that the emergency compounds set up for COVID positive migrants in McAllen expanded overnight, and there’s only the City of McAllen resources and manpower being used. So, has the administration been in contact with officials in McAllen, Texas on — regarding this situation and is the administration going to be helping provide relief?

PSAKI: Well, I think part of, one, certainly I believe we have been in touch through the

Department of Homeland Security, and the setup of this facility is meant to ensure we are taking steps to isolate and mitigate any spread of COVID. And we have measures in place that we maintain any migrant who is picked up by the Border Patrol is given PPE. They're required to wear a mask. If they show any signs of illness, they are referred to local health systems for proper appropriate testing. So that is part of what our, as a government, steps we are certainly taking. I can check and see, or I would point you to the Department of Homeland Security on any —

TALCOTT: [INAUDIBLE] anything additional?

PSAKI: — the Department of Homeland Security would be the best entity to talk to about any additional assistance or any new assistance that we're providing.