

White House press briefing

10/21/21

3:02:58 p.m.

8 minutes and 23 seconds

PETER DOOCY: So, the year Joe Biden was sworn in as President promising more a humane immigration system is the same year that an all-time record 1.7 million migrants have been detained at the southern border. Is that a coincidence?

JEAN-PIERRE: So, thanks for the question, Peter. First, I'll say DHS will formally release its monthly September operational update sometime soon, so, I am not going to go into — get ahead of that or go into the numbers. I think that's what you are mentioning right now. But, secondly, you know, I would add and you hear us talk about this all the time, we continue to enforce title 42. And expel single adults and families when possible and we continue to be very, very clear that no one should attempt to irregularly migrate here or enter the United States. So, it's unsafe, it's unlawful. It's a public health risk which is why we are using Title 42 because it's not our immigration policy. It's a public health authority. And so, those attempting — attempting to come in irregularly — migrate irregularly will be subjected to border restriction, including Title 42 that I just mentioned.

DOOCY: And you're telling people not to come. That's been the line for a couple months. It's been very well documented that a lot of these migrants are just released with a notice to appear or a notice to report and that something close to 80 percent don't appear or report, so do officials around here consider the fact that could be something as attractive to migrants who figure, "if I could just get in, I could stay?"

JEAN-PIERRE: Again, I'm not get into the numbers because I know you're leaning into the numbers in asking me these questions. But, look, we've been very clear. We've been clear the last 10 months. Again, the CDC has determined the continued expulsion of certain individuals under Title 42 is necessary due to the risk of transmission and spread of Covid-19 in — in congregate settings such as CBP stations as well as the threat from emergent variants. So, if it's not possible, which is what, I think, you're alluding to there, there is an exception if we have operational capacity constraints, including the make up of the specific family unit and agreements with the country of origin or last residence. Another determining factor is detention capacity, both within ICE and CBP. There's also an extension for acute humanitarian need such as the urgent medical situation. There's an exception on the convention against torture. If someone makes a legitimate claim that they would suffer torture if they — if they return to the country from which they have come. As we have stated, those who cannot be expelled are placed into immigration proceedings. But, as — to be clear, we are still expelling — expelling single adults and families when possible using title 42. That remains the policy. That has not changed.

DOOCY: And a follow-up about something that you just said. You guys say that President Biden doesn't want to raise taxes on anyone making less than \$400,000 a year, but there's a new Fox poll that finds 83 percent of registered voters are noticing bills for groceries and everyday items increasing, so how is that any different than a new tax?

JEAN-PIERRE: Well, look. And when you say, can you give me a little bit more? Like, what's the —

DOOCY: Well, the supply chains is all backed up. There are bottlenecks, empty shelves, prices going up, people are paying more. And so, how is that any different than a new tax?

JEAN-PIERRE: — so, I — I would say this, you know, we are — we are dealing with a historic and evolving pandemic that is impacting the economy. Right? We have seen it for the past year and half. That's what people have been dealing with. And it is — it is having an outside impact on our global supply chain. And the President understands how much of a squeeze it is when families see their prices rise. And, so, he understands that and that's why he's — we've been using every tool in her toolbelt to make sure we deal with that in a real way so that people understand that the President is doing everything that he can to deal with — to deal those issues. So, there's a couple things. So, we got to think about the progress that we've made on how far we have come for the — for the mess we inherited from the previous President. We — we've already have average 600,000 jobs, which I mentioned at the — at my — at the top. Those are jobs per month compared to just 60,000 before we came in. That is almost five million total in eight months. We've increased economic growth projection for 2021 and more than have — than halve new unemployment claims. So, we're in a different place than we were before the President came into — came into office. And so, we're going to continue building on basically the American Rescue Plan. This is why we are trying to pass the President's domestic economic policy.

DOOCY: To that point, the majority leader — or the minority leader in the House, Kevin McCarthy, wrote a letter to the President. He says, "we must address the global supply chain before Congress even considers additional social spending and taxation legislation." Is that something that you would consider?

JEAN-PIERRE: So, here's the thing. Jen responded to — this is the letter — the letter from McCarthy —

DOOCY: Mmhmm.

JEAN-PIERRE: — we're talking about. Okay, yeah. Wonderful letter. So, she responded to this earlier and let me just add to this a little bit. It's — I already kind of talked about this, but there's a little bit more that I want to lean into. So, under the Trump-McCarthy economy this time last year, fewer Americans were working, which is what I was just saying. Job growth was flattening and families were facing down a dark winter with less economic security than ever before and a pandemic raging out-of-control. That was the holiday season under the McCarthy-Trump — holiday season. So, that's something to remember. This was a different time a year ago. And so, fast-forward a year from then, nearly 80 percent of adults are vaccinated. We've created five million jobs. Americans have money in their pockets and they're spending it resulting in a record volume of goods through our ports and our roads and rails. Kevin McCarthy and his caucus voted against the bill that made that happen. They did not do anything to help the American public when we needed them — when the American public needed and I'm talking —

DOOCY: So —

JEAN-PIERRE: — about the American Rescue Plan.

DOOCY: — I understand —

JEAN-PIERRE: — to be clear, which has helped — which has helped turn on the economy which helped. as I said, make sure people are getting vaccinated to protect their lives —

DOOCY: — yes, and so —

JEAN-PIERRE: — and go back to work.

DOOCY: — last one. Are you saying that, as you compare holiday seasons — this year to holidays last year — are you saying that if Christmas gifts don't get delivered this year because the supply chain is backed up, because of bottlenecks, that people are going to blame Donald Trump or are they going to blame Joe Biden?

JEAN-PIERRE: That is not what I am seeing. I'm saying that we're in a different place than we were a year ago and the reason why is because the President took action. The reason why is Democrats get together and they passed the American Rescue Plan, put checks into pockets, made sure that we were dealing with issues that pushed women out of the workforce, which is the child tax credit, child care, all of those things that really benefitted every day people who were being left behind. Now what we are doing is making sure that we continue the investment, right — the Build Back Better agenda, BIF — the bipartisan infrastructure bill — which 19 Republican senators voted for, those two pieces of legislation. That is — that is the President's plan on how to we actually build back better and not leave anyone behind and do it economic growth for the — for the middle-class. So, that's what we're talking about and that's what we'll continue to do. For the supply chain, the President is doing everything that he can. He is bringing in the private sector. He's brought in the labor. When we talk about the meeting that he did last week for the ports — right — we're talking about Long Beach and the Los Angeles ports. And that's what we — that's — that's one of the things that we can do as a government is — is do it in good faith, bring everybody together, and figure out how to fix the short-term problem that we're having. So, that's — and we've been working on this since the President walked into — walked into the White House.

DOOCY: [INAUDIBLE]

JEAN-PIERRE [TO PETER ALEXANDER]: Go ahead, Peter.

(...)

3:12:57 p.m.

1 minute and 13 seconds

PETER ALEXANDER: As for clarity, I mean, everyone gets it. The price tag isn't actually zero. These programs do cost money, right? When I level with American voters and say there is a cost but they are aiming to do it without raising the deficit?

JEAN-PIERRE: No. We are being honest with the American people. We are being — front —

ALEXANDER: I mean, it does cost something. We agree, right?

JEAN-PIERRE: — nope. It is — it is — we are — it is costing — it is going to bring zero dollars to the deficit. And we're being very clear about that because that's what we want to make sure that we're doing, right? Because, here, once again, we have had people who were being left behind. After this — after this — the Covid-19 pandemic that we've been living in for a year and half, we saw even more — more severely how — how — how much people have been left behind. And not just — been — from the Covid. I mean, before then, people, middle-class people, working people have been not part of the economy. And, now, we want to deal them back in. It has been a long time since we did that. The President talked about that when he was in Scranton, Pennsylvania yesterday. He's going to talk about that, take questions from everyday people today at the CNN town hall, which he's very much looking forward to it and he'll probably be asked that question and he'll answer it as well tonight.

ALEXANDER: So, for clarity, there's a cost, but it's not to the debt. It doesn't raise the deficit? These things we do know?

JEAN-PIERRE: The price tag for this legislation, Peter, is zero dollars.

(....)

3:15:41 p.m.
31 seconds

BRIAN KAREM: Let me just say I'll add my voice to the — I'm sure there have dozens — who would humbly request that the President of the United States not only do a town hall, but show up either in this room or in the East Room to appear before the full press for a robust round of questions that will no doubt benefit the American public.

JEAN-PIERRE: But, Brian, he takes questions all the time.

KAREM: I hear you. I hear you.

JEAN-PIERRE: All the time.

KAREM: I'm just adding my request to that.

JEAN-PIERRE: You know, Martha's here. She — she — she tracks that.

KAREM: Yes, but some of us have not had the chance to ask him.

JEAN-PIERRE: I get it, I get it. But, this is a — this is a large white house press corps, but he —

KAREM: It is. Yes, it is.

KARME: — does take questions.

(...)

3:16:50 p.m.

16 seconds

KAREM: There are several Democratic strategists — Norm Eisen and a couple of others — who say that yesterday was a dark day for democracy. Does the White House share that view? If not, why not? And what do you plan to do to move forward?

JEAN-PIERRE: Which — which — what?

KAREM: A dark day for democracy in what happened on the Hill yesterday.

(...)

3:18:36 p.m.

3 seconds

KAREM: But, to be clear, does he think it was a dark day yesterday?

(...)

3:22:07 p.m.

43 seconds

STEVEN PORTNOY: One more question about Title 42. There's a report this morning from a group called human rights First that says that, through the use of Title 42 and also prohibiting, basically, turning migrants away at the border, 7,000 — 7,600 kidnappings, assaults, and other attacks have taken place against migrants and asylum-seekers. Does this administration believe it deserves any of the blame for that?

JEAN-PIERRE: Well, it's — again, I have not seen that report. That does sound horrifying. And not something that, you know, we would, you know, agree with or be proud of, certainly. So, I have to read the report. I have not seen it and hopefully, we can get back to you on that one as well.

(...)

3:29:29 p.m.
42 seconds

MICHAEL SHEAR: On voting rights, given the President's remarks earlier today at the MLK Memorial, does the President think that Martin Luther King Jr., if he are around today, would find it satisfactory to not break the filibuster in an effort to save what the President has called the cornerstone of democracy?

JEAN-PIERRE: Oh my god, that's such an unfair question. You're asking me what Dr. King would think? Oh my gosh. Um —

SHEAR: I mean, I'm assuming the President must have thought something about that in preparing for the remarks today which were highly symbolic given — given Martin Luther King's —

JEAN-PIERRE: Jeez, Michael.

(...)

3:33:46 p.m.
1 minute and 17 seconds

PHIL MATTINGLY: Against some of the reports we've seen in the last week and a half, does the President believe the U.S. has a sufficient amount of visibility into China's weapons programs and defense capabilities at this moment in time?

JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah. Um, so, you talking about the missile that we saw recently? The hypersonic glide missile? So, Jen talked about this yesterday when — after the President was asked. So, we're not going to comment on the specific report. But generally speaking, we have made clear our concerns about the military capabilities the PRC continues to pursue. And so, you know, again, I'm not going to comment on the specific report, but, generally speaking, we have made clear our concerns about their capabilities and continue to pursue, which — which only increases — the PRC continues to pursue, which only increases tensions in the region and beyond. So, can't comment on the report, but yes, do we have concerns? We do. And then we're going to continue to speak out.

MATTINGLY: But generally, do you feel — does the White House feel like it has the visibility to move into those programs or capabilities?

JEAN-PIERRE: I — I can't speak to that from here. Like I said, you know, we just made clear concerns about the military capabilities that the PRC has.

(...)

3:36:06 p.m.

8 seconds

OWEN JENSEN: But what if the corporate tax hikes don't happen? The proposed corporate tax rates — what if they don't happen? What are they going to hike? Is it still going to be zeroed out?

(....)

3:38:37 p.m.

52 seconds

UNIDENTIFIED REPORTER: A different angle on police. Police unions across the country — right now, we're seeing from Seattle to Los Angeles to Chicago are protesting vaccine mandates that are being implemented by Democratic governors in these cases. As a proponent of vaccine mandates, what does President Biden believe — how does President Biden believe these situations should be resolved?

JEAN-PIERRE: So, as we know, we know the vaccine is safe. The vaccine is highly effective. And the vaccine is the best way out of the pandemic. So, the President strongly believes that all eligible people should be vaccinated. And he certainly believes that frontline workers like police officers should get vaccinated. Vaccines not only protect officers. They protect their families. They protect the people that they — that they serve and so — or are predicating to protect. So, that is important and critical, so, we know that vaccine requirements work and, so, we're going to continue to encourage — encourage that.

(....)

3:41:30 p.m.

4 minutes and 31 seconds

HILLARY VAUGHN: A follow-up on — one on inflation and the supply chain. You mentioned at the top that unemployment's down, wages are up, and that's a testament to the progress that President Biden has made on the economy, but there's no mention of inflation in that and while wages are up, almost 40 percent, inflation is up five percent. So, any bump in pay that people are seeing in their paycheck is getting wiped out when they go to the store and paying more for everything. So, what do you say to people who are looking at their budget and they're saying, "this doesn't feel like progress under President Biden. It feels a pay cut?"

JEAN-PIERRE: So, let me say this. I said this earlier. The President knows how even a small price increase really can squeeze too many families. Like, that is something he is aware of and so, we are working on a wide variety of economic programs to help, right, which is why the Build Back Better plan — to — to work on the supply chain issues is incredibly important. We're using every tool at our disposal to lower prices for working people lowered and bring economic relief, right? If you think about the human infrastructure, the Build Back Better plan, we're talking about perception drugs, we're talking about paid leave, sick leave, medical leave, we're talking

community colleges, we're talking about things that's really give — that — that economic relief, that middle-class tax cut for every day people. So, we're going to continue to do that work. The American Rescue Plan actually helped the American public a lot. It did. It puts checks in peoples pockets. I talked about the child tax credit, talked about the childcare components in it. There was a lot there that gave some relief — that gave some relief to — to Americans here. And so, the Build Back Better plan is just an extension of that, if you will. It's a — to invest — that long-term investment to make sure people feel the relief. Look, we were in a very different place a year from it. Not to say some people are not feeling the squeeze. Totally understand that. But, you know, a year ago, we were — people were getting sick. They were losing their jobs. You know, women were leaving the workforce. And, so, we have been able to turn things around, start the economy back up again. 600,000 jobs a month. Nearly five million jobs in the first eight months. That matters. Now, we just have to continue doing the work. It's going to take time. We're not done.

VAUGHN: Quickly on the supply chain, you know, there's a lot talk about Christmas presents not arriving on time, but the issue is more severe and critical than that. I mean, it's affecting small businesses. Auto body shops can't get parts to fix cars, so they can't make money. 90 percent of school nutrition programs say they're worried about continued supply chain issues, according to a school nutritional association survey. Some schools are making last-minute grocery store trips just to feed their students. So, you know, this is an issue the White House has been working on and aware of since February. Why does it seem like this is a problem getting worse, not better?

JEAN-PIERRE: I would — I would say this. When it comes to the supply chain, it's — there are complexities there. When you think about, you know, the — we learn about the global supply chain as well, right? Those are — that's one thing that you kind have to put it — in the bigger picture. So, it is a complex system that requires private sector collaboration and coordination to improve efficiency and get through the backlog. And that's what we are seeing currently as we talk about the supply chain. These are just some of the players in the game: there are port directors, terminal operators, ocean carriers, railroad truckers, warehouse — warehouses, and retailers. And let's not forget consumers who have a record level of demand as we have made a historic economic recovery cause we have. We have the forecasters — economic forecasters did not see — did not think we would be where we are today. We have surpassed that. So, we have had some historic economic recovery. Do we have more work to do? Absolutely. That's why we're trying to get this Build Back Better plan, but the Biden administration, as it comes to the supply chain, continues to serve as an honest broker. I mentioned before this, making sure that they — we find areas of collaboration to ensure we can move goods — movement — supply chain toward a 24/7 model. Again, you know, the President understands. He understands the squeeze that people are feeling, every day Americans are feeling. That's why he's working every day to make sure that we pass his economic policies.