

White House press briefing [via ABC News Live]

12/03/21

2:07:24 p.m.

38 seconds

ARLETTE SAENZ: In the President's remarks earlier today when he was asked about his cold, he said that he was he is being tested daily for Covid-19. My understanding was that it was done with less frequency of that. I know, Dr. O'Connor said that he was tested three times this week. But is there a change in protocol where he is going to be tested daily? And what kind of test is he getting? The Antigen or PCR test?

JEN PSAKI: I think we just put out some details from Doc O'Connor that outlines how many times has been tested, and I believe the kind of tests that he received. He received those tests because he had a cold, which would be considered a symptom and — but it's not a change in protocol.

SAENZ: So he is not going to be tested daily?

PSAKI: No.

(...)

2:08:35 p.m.

14 seconds

WEIJIA JIANG: Just to clarify, the President did say he was tested every day from Covid. So did he just misspeak there?

PSAKI: Well, Weijia, I think I would point you to the transparent note we put out from the doctor to all of you that outlines how many times he was tested and exactly what he was tested for.

(...)

2:10:40 p.m.

4 minutes and 37 seconds

PETER DOOCY: The Build Back Better's price tag is being described as "incomprehensible" by Congresswoman Abigail Spanberger, a Democrat, and Lindsey Graham says that he's — he has heard from the CBO that they're going to do an alternative cost estimate and that it's going to cost more and add more to the debt. So, is there any thought around here to maybe waiting for Build Back Better until a month that you don't have this big miss in the jobs report?

PSAKI: There's a lot of things gathered into that question, so let me — let me — let me do the best — let me do the best I can for you here. In terms of the report of a new CBO, that is not

exactly how it works. There has been and let me just start with the irony here that — there's an irony that a number of Republicans who forced an unpopular tax giveaway to the rich that increased our debt by \$2 trillion and certainly didn't ask for a score for a continuation of that legislation that did add to the deficit are now asking for a score — an additional score post-this bill being concluded for something that isn't even going to be law. They're asking about a potential continuation of these components of the package that, again, the President has said he would pay for. I can't get into the psyche of why. I would suggest that it might be — have something to do with their opposition to raising taxes on corporation. That seems to get under their skin a little bit. We disagree with them on that front. I would say the CBO has put out a score. A number of economists have put out scores. We've outlined in the past that CBO does not have — does not have a great deal of experience scoring components like the IRS tax savings. That's something that the former head of the CBO has also spoken to in the past and that there are estimates about those cost savings that lead to not only our assessments of the cost and savings from the package, but the assessments by many economists.

DOOCY: Okay. On the pandemic, it's been more than two weeks since President Biden had a call with Xi and on that call, we know he did not press him to help with the Covid origins investigation because you said that Xi just understands he's supposed to be transparent, so in the two plus weeks since, has he helped and been transparent yet?

PSAKI: I don't believe that's exactly what I said. I believe what I said, is that we have pressed for this repeatedly. We will continue to and we'll continue to do that at a range of levels. I don't, unfortunately, have any updates on the participation or willingness of the Chinese to add and provide additional data. Can I provide one other update to you since you asked me about crime yesterday, and I have a little more information for you. Um —

DOOCY: About crime? My question was about Xi. It wasn't about —

PSAKI: Well, you asked me a question about crime yesterday —

DOOCY: Okay.

PSAKI: — so, I was going to give you a little —

DOOCY: Okay.

PSAKI: — a little extra information. I followed up for you, Peter.

DOOCY: Great, thank you.

PSAKI: So I would note what I — what I should have added yesterday, but I learned afterwards is that the Justice Department, the FBI, and the federal law enforcement have been in touch — in contact with jurisdictions where we have seen this high level of retail theft. So, for example, in Los Angeles, we — we've seen a rash of robberies. The FBI is providing assistance to a multi-jurisdictional task force led by the LA Police Department. I'd also note that, on top of that, the

Department of Justice announced last week that San Francisco — were a number of high profile retail thefts have happened — will get money to hire 50 more police officers through the COPS program that the President has championed. That came as part of nearly \$150 million in similar grants nationwide. So, just a few updates for you.

DOOCY: Thank you for that. We will include that in our coverage.

PSAKI: I look forward to seeing it on Fox later today.

DOOCY: It's on Fox right now, I think. [POINTS AT THE CAMERA]

PSAKI: I bet it is.

DOOCY: One more topic to follow up on some of the questions from earlier. The President was hoarse and coughing today. A lot of people in the workforce are encouraged not to go to work if they are exhibiting those symptoms, even if they are played vaccinated, so are the rules different for the President?

PSAKI: The President, again, was tested as we put out in some — in a transparent piece of information from his doctor, where he received a response quickly from that test — enable him — enabling him to proceed. People also had— he had a cold, which is what you know, from the information put out by the doctor.

DOOCY: But as you know, from your own experience, it is possible to test negative several times before there's a positive test, so is there any concern about having him at work while he's got these symptoms, even if he is showing negative?

PSAKI: I — I can assure you that the President follows every protocol. He wants to keep everyone safe in the White House, and that's why, obviously, he — we consult with the doctor and we put out that information to make it available to all of you.

(....)

2:19:54 p.m.

15 seconds

SABRINA SIDDIQUI: A number of cities, including New York, LA, San Francisco require proof of vaccination to access indoor dining, bars, and other non essential businesses. Given the new variant, does the administration believe that more cities and localities should enact similar proof of vaccination requirements?

(....)

2:20:31 p.m.

24 seconds

SIDDIQUI: And just similarly with respect to states, cities, and localities, there are a number of cities that still have not reinstated mask mandates, but they do fall within the substantial or high transmission category that the CDC has outlined for areas where there should be indoor mask mandates in place. Do you think cities like D.C. and Europe, which are still substantial high transmission, should abide by the CDC guidelines?

(....)

2:23:59 p.m.

2 minutes and 15 seconds

BOB COSTANTINI: Germany has decided that unvaccinated people should not be allowed to go in public places. That may be a great way to incentivize people to be vaccinated. But let's assume that would not fly in this country. Let me ask you serious part of the question — really is — there seems to be, no matter what, just 27, 30 percent of the population — the eligible population that refuses to be vaccinated for variety of reasons, but —

PSAKI: It's a little lower than that. I mean, more than 82 percent

COSTANTINI: Okay.

PSAKI: — of people have received their first dose.

COSTANTINI: — but what makes the President think that this new winter initiative of trying to get people to get vaccinated — what makes it — what makes him feel confident that that's going to work on those people who absolutely refused to be vaccinated.

PSAKI: Well, first we know what works. I would remind you that, almost a year ago, only about 30 percent of eligible adults in this country. Felt open to getting vaccinated. Now, we're 82 — more than 82 percent have received one — at least one dose. That is clearly not against part — on partisan lines because, you know — you know how divided our country can be. That — those are people who took a step to protect themselves, to protect their neighbors, to protect their loved ones. I'd also note that we saw — I just gave you some data on the vaccination rate from just yesterday: the highest we have seen since May, and we know that vaccinations are what can save lives, but also it's important to continue to build our testing and masking capacity. That's what we also announced yesterday, so I would just say we know what works. We also know what's standing in the way and you're right. There are things that we can't change. For reasons I will never begin to understand, some members of the Republican Party have decided that their political platform is going to be running in favor of protecting people from getting vaccinated or from getting tested. That's why people tried — some people tried to shut down the government. As crazy as that sounds, people hear that, they hear misinformation traveling on social media, those are all entities were fighting, but you're right. There are some forces against us.

COSTANTINI: The President throws up his hands.

PSAKI: Never. You can't do that as President.

(....)

2:36:32 p.m.

42 seconds

PATSY WIDAKUSWARA: There's reporting on an alleged Chinese submarine in the Taiwan Strait. Has the president getting briefed on that? Is he concerned about it, potentially escalating into an unintended conflict? And just on a more broader level, is the administration preparing for any kind of potential increased Chinese provocations, either in the Taiwan Strait, South China Sea, anywhere, in case Beijing decided to express their frustration ahead of the democracy summit?

PSAKI: Well, I would say first we always raised concerns we have about any provocations or escalatory behavior that we see. I have not seen this exact report, so let me check with our national security team and see if there's more that we can get back to all of you.

(....)

2:37:36 p.m.

2 minutes and 8 seconds

PHILIP WEGMANN: You've been clear going back until at least September every time I ask about the administration's position on the Uighur Forced Labor Prevention Act. You've said numerous times that the President doesn't have a position. There's new reporting in *The Washington Post* that, in October, the deputy secretary of state was telling lawmakers to slow the bill down. So is the administration on the same page and why does it seem that the deputy secretary of state were saying in private to lawmakers to slow this down while, in public, the White House has been saying that the president is neutral.

PSAKI: Well I wouldn't say we're neutral. I would say we share Congress's concern about forced labor in Xinjiang and, in fact, have taken a number of concrete measures, as you know, on our own, including, but not limited to visa restrictions, global Magnitsky, and other financial sanctions, export controls, import restrictions, the release of a business advisory, and rallying the G-7 to commit actions, so I would say we are hardly neutral. We have strong concerns — serious concerns and we are absolutely not lobbying in any way against the passage of this bill. There are negotiations and discussions between members of Congress. The executive branch often offers Congress technical advice to make legislation effective and implementable by the agencies responsible. Those are the conversations that are happening, but we absolutely support and have been advocates for doing more to hold to put in place accountability here.

WEGMANN: You laid out a number of executive steps the President has taken and then also how he's rallied the world. You know, at the G-7 on this issue. Does he want Congress to do anything additional? I mean, is he — he's leading on the world stage. Is it going to lead in

Congress in terms of actually getting something in the law?

PSAKI: There's negotiations he fully supports between members of Congress, and he supports the objective of doing more here and, as is evidenced by the fact that we have done a great deal. We're offering technical assistance. Again, we're not lobbying against this bill in any way, shape, or form. That's a normal part of the process in order to make sure we — legislation can be effective and implementable. That's where the status of it is at this point in time.