

MSNBC's *The 11<sup>th</sup> Hour With Brian Williams*

12/09/21

11:00:22 p.m.

45 seconds

BRIAN WILLIAMS: Well, good evening once again. Day 324 of the Biden administration and tonight against the constant din of the ticking clock, that countdown to potential consequences. The January 6th committee is one step closer to getting Donald Trump's White House documents and electronic records related to January 6th. Today, Trump lost his fight to hide those records from the committee when a federal appeals court said his claim of executive privilege does not outweigh President Biden's decision that Congress has a legitimate need to see the material. Trump is all but certain to head to the Supreme Court for legal relief here and today's judges put a hold on their own ruling to give his lawyers time to file an appeal. It comes as the Select Committee heard from four important witnesses today.

(...)

11:11:34 p.m.

1 minute and 35 seconds

NICOLLE WALLACE: If you thought, though, that I was going to stay up and put lipstick on at 11:00 just to talk about the committee, you had another thing coming. I think I can safely say I speak for all three of us in saying that to be on this last broadcast is so bittersweet. It was an extraordinary news day. It was the kind of news day that makes you want to throw something against the wall. The idea you will not be helming this broadcast anymore — I know that that does not mean you will not be helming and talking us through these times, but your contributions are too many to number, especially to all of us. So, on behalf of all of us, everyone that I have seen tweeting. I know Rachel pointed to this moment and to say that all of us are missing something already even though you're still very much right there on the air would be an understatement.

WILLIAMS: Bless you for saying that. You were present at the creation. You were — you and I were anchor partners when this idea came to the boss, and we split off and went our separate ways, separate parts of the schedule. Will I miss being the only friend of mine wearing make-up at 11:00 at night? No. But I will miss all of you and aspects of this. Phil Rucker, I — what you're watching is an anchor gamely trying to get control of the rudder again. Let me ask you a news question while I spread the love to my friend, Nicolle Wallace, who has been incredibly gracious in ways that I can never repay.

(...)

11:14:25 p.m.

3 minutes and 20 seconds

PHIL RUCKER: And, Brian, I'm just going to take a moment of personal privilege to add to

what Nicolle said and point out that this has been such a turbulent, traumatic period for all of us in the country, for all of us in journalism. We have the gray hairs to prove it and, yet, this has been such an hour of calm, and that's because of the integrity and the smarts and, frankly, the wit and grace that you bring to the news every night. And we're sure going to miss it.

WILLIAMS: Well, bless you real good for that. Thank you, Phil. And I — I feel the same about you as I've said before, as I'll say until the day I die, the stars of this show are the people we invite on here, again, including, but not limited to my friend with the Pulitzer Prize, Eugene Robinson. Eugene, you are one of the founding fathers of this. You and I have shared so many late nights, sometimes resulting in understandable votes.

EUGENE ROBINSON: That's absolutely right. Listen — listen, let me just throw it off the rails yet again because I just have to take this opportunity to thank you. Thank you for the opportunity of working with you on this broadcast, on election nights where you fed us all staffian [sp?] banquets of bad food on other occasions. You know, you — you have created, you and your great producers and your great crew, created here on *11th Hour*, a show that's really kind of about the human comedy in the — in the way that balzac the phrase, all of life, all the commotion, all of what we're doing. And you have this unique ability to see not just the tragedy and the pathos in the abyss, but also the comedy — often the sardonic comedy, but — but it's a broadcast that — that always leaves viewers knowing a lot more about their nation and their world and feeling a bit better, feeling a bit more prepared to face — face the coming day and that's a tremendous achievement. And — and to have been even a small part of it, I just say thank you, my friend. Thank you.

BRIAN WILLIAMS: Well, well, thank you so much. It's your — it's your brains and words we've been borrowing this whole time and here's the difference a Pulitzer prize makes. Where I'm from, you throw around words like balzac, you're going to get thrown out of wherever you're in. That's just a — a fact of life. To these three friends who I will continue to see in the real world but I will miss most of all in this forum, our ever-loving thanks to Phil Rucker, Nicole Wallace, Eugene Robinson. Thank you all for coming on these many, many years and many late nights. Coming up, another friend of ours, James Carville is here to talk about what's next for the Biden presidency and the Democratic Party as we near the end of Joe Biden's first year in office. And later, celebrated historians Michael Beschloss and Jon Meacham, together on the state of our democracy tonight and what's at stake for all of us who love this country. *The 11th Hour* is just getting underway on a more emotional than average Thursday night, as we look up at the residence from the West Wing.

(...)

11:25:20 p.m.

1 minute and 47 seconds

WILLIAMS: James, you and I were fused through years of political coverage. We were fused in the aftermath of Karina — Katrina, which laid waste to your home and the area of the country that I love. And we were also fused by being on the air the moment you knew, the moment it

occurred to you that Hillary Clinton had lost and the next president was going to be Donald Trump, which was an incredible moment to witness in real time, whatever the aftereffects were that we're still talking about and dealing with now. What is your message, as you'll forgive me, but we're within a couple years, as party elder to the up and comers, to the progressives on the left, to the moderates in the middle and a good many Democrats still insist we're a center-right country.

JAMES CARVILLE: Well, first of all, love your country and I'm sure most all of them do and then communicate directly in simple, plain English and when you do something good, take credit for it and when they do something bad, blame them for it. It's just really isn't that much more complicated, but you have to do it directly. You have to do it plainly and clearly that people hear you and the Biden administration has an incredible story to tell and I can't wait for him to get out there and start telling it. And, you know, I think when people start hearing it, that there can be a change, but we've got to start telling our stories better. We've got to be better storytellers. That's essentially what communications is. It's nothing more than storytelling and we've got to get better at it and quick.

WILLIAMS: Hey, James, just a guess on my part, you do Christmas up pretty big in your house?

CARVILLE: Oh, yeah, I love Christmas. Are you kidding me? I went out and got this red shirt for the show tonight, you know? It's a — it's a great time of year. My kids are going to be home and we're going to my sisters and it's just great. It's a wonderful time of the year and you know, down here, the weather's great.

WILLIAMS: And LSU has a new head coach.

CARVILLE: Yeah. So, I just want to do something — toast you. And I can't be as eloquent as some of your past, Pulitzer Prize-winning guests are, but the best way I know to do it is goggle a bottle of champagne and toast to ya and what a great time we've had. You know, big career move here. I can't wait to see what's next for Brian Williams.

WILLIAMS: Bless you for that. Thank you. All the best back to you. Have a Merry Christmas, you and the family. We'll try to do the same. Our guest tonight has been James Carville. Unique among political analysts. [CARVILLE CHUGS CHAMPAGNE] Coming up — there we go — we'll continue the examination of our perilous state of democracy with two of the great historians of our time.

(...)

11:32:08 p.m.  
47 seconds

WILLIAMS: So, who better to talk about the preservation of our democracy than two renowned, celebrated, decorated historians who, off-camera, are best friends and I will be forever grateful that I get to hang out with them both on rare occasion. Back with us tonight, celebrated author,

presidential historian Michael Beschloss. His latest work in a bookshelf full of works is *Presidents of War*. And Jon Meacham, Pulitzer Prize-winning author, presidential historian, the Rogers chair in the American presidency at Vanderbilt University. He occasionally advises this current President on historical matters and major speeches.

(....)

11:34:43 p.m.

3 minutes and 16 seconds

MICHAEL BESCHLOSS: The genuine national emergency is that Brian Williams is leaving *The 11th Hour*. So, let me just say my piece, then we'll get on to democracy. Two such things are connected. Brian, as historians we know tonight you've had an astounding 28 years at NBC News. Very difficult to believe. That's more than a quarter of the history of the NBC — National Broadcasting Company, more than a third of the length of serious TV news. So, this is a large monument to what you do, my friend and viewers who are watching, we've all watched, Brian, for all these years, the intelligence, wisdom, the kindness, the more than sense of humor, and especially these last five years on *The 11th Hour* at a time of horrible troubles, a nightmare often times for our country. Brian, you made this country better at a time we all needed it. Every single night, this has been a course in civics and democracy, in some cases, for people who didn't really know how precious and how fragile it was. Every single night, you spoke truth to power in the best democratic tradition. Now, everyone knows how much Brian loves history. Certainly Jon and I do. You may not know that he collects historical artifacts and letters. Anyone who's watched this program or watched him not only for 28 years, but he was doing other things before he came to NBC, knows that Brian loves the history of presidents, loves the history of cars, and he loves the history of important anniversaries. Now, someone may have noticed that the week he chose to end his run here at *The 11th Hour* at NBC is the 80th anniversary of Pearl Harbor, I'm sure completely by coincidence, but my gift for you tonight — I thought I would look for something appropriate, president and cars and anniversaries — I'm sending you tomorrow this exact scale model of Franklin Roosevelt's limousine, 1938. As you can see, the hood opens. The doors open. This is pretty exact. Even the seats go up and down. You'll be getting that from me soon, Brian, as an addition to your excellent collection. All I can say is, before we get to the serious — more serious stuff about democracy and the troubles we're having, thank you from all of us grateful Americans and I know I speak for Jon in saying we can't wait to watch your next chapter as it now opens.

WILLIAMS: Bless you for that, Michael. Thank you very much. It was — it was far too generous. All I can say is I have never forgotten that these are the cheap seats. My name is on none of the books on the bookshelves in my house. You two gentlemen are well-represented and that's the difference. I'm going to keep these guys in their chairs just over a break largely because they have no other plans on a Thursday night. We'll continue our discussion right after this.

(....)

11:41:09 p.m.

10 seconds

WILLIAMS: We are back. Our guests Michael Beschloss and Jon Meacham. Jon, I'm coming to you, and I swear to God, if you invoke my name I'm going to kill your mic and drive down to your house.

(....)

11:42:56 p.m.

29 seconds

MEACHAM: By the way, Beschloss has never given me a car, so let's — guess I have to retire to get one. So, I wanted to mention and the fact he has that right at hand is really concerning.

BESCHLOSS: Of course.

MEACHAM: But we will — we will — there's going to — thankfully, Brian, you'll have a little time off so we can do the intervention on Beschloss. So, this will be good for everybody —

BESCHLOSS: Please, please!

MEACHAM: — involved, everybody involved. Afi's very much concerned that we're not — we're not stopping him from doing this.

(....)

11:44:04 p.m.

1 minute and 27 seconds

JON MEACHAM: And you can cut my mic. You've been a gift to the country. You'll continue to be a gift to the country. I will say I thought that Dole was the only funeral of the week. I didn't know this was going to be one too. But save these because the eulogies will not be as good I suspect in the fullness of time. But you've been fantastic and our fantastic and now you can cut my mic.

WILLIAMS: Those thoughts have occurred to me this week. I ought to take notes, write this stuff down, cause it's never going to get any better.

MEACHAM: It's a little bit like —

WILLIAMS: Let me use the remainder of —

MEACHAM: — it's — it's journalistic zoloft at this point. Just use it.

WILLIAMS: — let me use the remainder of my time --

BESCHLOSS: It has the added advantage of being true.

WILLIAMS: Thank you. Another great quote from contemporary American politics. Let me use the remainder of my time for your friendship, mostly for letting us borrow your brains regularly on this broadcast. We're going to have a weekend together with our significant others at our place. I don't know whether the History Channel or Comedy Central should be here to shoot it, but it would make a dandy documentary. Jon Meacham —

BESCHLOSS: [INAUDIBLE]

WILLIAMS: — Michael Beschloss, my brothers, thank you. Friends forever. Coming up here, something I'm not allowed to know about followed by some words I was able to successfully string together this afternoon.

(....)

11:56:47 p.m.

3 minutes and 15 seconds

WILLIAMS: Well, look at the time. I'll try to keep this brief. After 28 years of peacock logos on much of what I own, it is my choice now to jump without a net into the great unknown. As I do for the first time in my 62 years, my biggest worry is for my country. I'm not a liberal or a conservative. I'm an institutionalist. I believe in this place and, in my love of my country, I yield to no one. But the darkness on the edge of town has spread to the main roads and highways and neighborhoods, the local bar, the bowling alley, the school board and the grocery store. And it must be acknowledged and answered for. Grown men and women who swore an oath to our Constitution, elected by our constituents, possessing the kinds of college degrees I can only dream of, have decided to join the mob and become something they are not while hoping we somehow forget who they were. They've decided to burn it all down with us inside. That should scare you to no end as much as it scares an aging volunteer fireman.

To my coworkers, my love and thanks and I say, again, everyone I've worked with has made me better at what I do. To my family, love and thanks doesn't begin to cover it, but now I have the time to better express it. My friends know who they are. No one's been blessed with better friends. To the guests on this broadcast, as you heard the nice man say a few minutes ago, it's always been about you. Otherwise, I'd be staring into the camera for an hour, five nights a week and nobody wants to see that. You are *The 11th Hour* and will continue to be *The 11th Hour*. This is where I thank you, however, for being so great for explaining these last five years.

As a proud New Jersey native, this is where I get to say, regrets? I've had a few. But, then again, too few to mention. What a ride it's been. Where else, how else was a kid like me going to meet presidents and kings and the occasional rock star. These lovely testimonials that I can never truly repay make me hyperaware that it has been and remains a wonderful life. It's as if I'm going to wake up tomorrow morning in Bedford Falls. The reality is, though, I will wake up tomorrow in the America of the year 2021, a nation unrecognizable to those who came before us and fought to

protect it, which is what you must do now. My colleagues will take it from here.

I will probably find it impossible to be silent and stay away from you and lights and cameras after I experiment with relaxation and find out what I've missed and what's out there. Every weeknight for decades now, I've said some version of the same thing: Thank you for being here with us, us meaning the people who produce this broadcast for you. And you, well, without you, there is no us. I'll show myself out. Until we meet again, that is our broadcast for this Thursday night. Thank you for being here with us. And for all my colleagues of the networks of NBC News, good night.