

White House press briefing [via CBSN]  
04/07/22  
2:45:15 p.m.  
34 seconds

ALEX ALPER: I guess the President obviously tested negative today and according to CDC guidelines —

JEN PSAKI: Yesterday.

ALPER: I'm sorry, yesterday.

PSAKI: Yes.

ALPER: Speaker Pelosi was not considered a close contact, but it seems like a very close call. I know you said that he had a second booster and that he's following CDC guidelines. But given the importance of his role and his age, is the White House considering any stricter measures to keep him safe: more mask wearing, fewer big venue events, more outdoor events?

PSAKI: Well, when you say it's a "close call," I'm not sure what you mean by that.

ALPER: Close call in the sense that they were in two events at the White House together; within two days, she tested positive.

(...)

2:47:34 p.m.  
11 seconds

ALPER: And given the fact that there has been this uptick among, you know, people who have been following CDC guidelines, are there plans to revisit those guidelines or edit them in some way, given the uptick?

(...)

2:53:28 p.m.  
5 minutes and 44 seconds

PETER DOOCY: How can you guys say that President Biden was not a close contact with Speaker Pelosi when there is video of the Speaker kissing him?

PSAKI: Well, Peter, the way that it is defined is by the Center for Disease Control — the CDC and their definition of it is 15 minutes of contact within a set period of time within six feet. It did not meet that bar. It does not mean that no one will get COVID around the world who does not have a close contact. It just means we are defining, for all of you, whether the President and their

interaction met the definition of the CDC of a close contact.

DOOCY: Half the Cabinet was there on Tuesday. At least two additional Cabinet members — Raimondo and Garland — already have COVID. Is there a threat that this is going to be a national security problem if the Cabinet comes to the White House and starts getting infected with COVID?

PSAKI: Well, I don't think, Peter, we can assess where they — where they got COVID or where they — where they acquired COVID — or whatever the right way to say that is. I don't know that it was Tuesday. There are other events obviously that have happened over the course of the last week as well. They are all boosted. They are all — many of them are able to work from home, as many staff and even reporters are, who are — who are vaccinated and boosted. and they all have a talented and experienced team who is stepping into their shoes where needed in the office.

DOOCY: When the last President wanted to host a big event for a Supreme Court nominee here at the White House, some folks got COVID and then-former Vice President Biden called it a “super spreader event.” So is there any risk that this event tomorrow for a Biden Supreme Court, now, Justice is going to be a super spreader event?

MS. PSAKI: Well, one, at that point in time, vaccines weren't available. People were not vaccinated. It certainly puts us in a different space. This event is also going to be outside tomorrow.

DOOCY: And then, on a different topic, when Title 42 expires next month, what is the plan for the 18,000 migrants a day that are going to cross? Do you want them to get jobs here? Is there something else that you want these 18,000 a day to be doing?

PSAKI: I don't know where you're basing your specific numbers on, Peter. But what I would tell you —

DOOCY: Eighteen thousand — I've got it right here: “Earlier this week, the Department gave reporters an estimate that up to 18,000 migrants could be apprehended at the border each day if Title 42 were to be lifted.” That's from ABC News.

PSAKI: Well, “up to.” And we'll see what happens. And, obviously, we're taking steps to convey that this is not the time to come. Individuals who come to the border — this is what would happen: CBP and ICE would work together to ensure that anyone who enters the country without authorization is put into immigration proceedings as quickly as possible. CBP has been working with ICE to ensure individuals awaiting processing in the interior of the country monitor und- — would be monitored under the Alternatives to Detention program. We know that, to date, nearly 80 percent of non-citizens waiting in the interior under prosecut- — prosecutorial discretion have either received a notice to appear or are still within their window to report. That is what would happen. In addition, I would note the Department of Homeland Security also put together a preparedness plan to continue addressing irregular migration that involves surging personnel and resources to the border, improving border processing, implementing mitigation

measures, and working with other countries in the hemisphere to manage migration. Those are all steps that they're working to do in order to implement when we get to that point in time.

DOOCY: And the last one on this: Now that the Texas governor is saying that he's going to start busing border crossers to Washington, D.C., when they get here, are you guys going to help them find a place to stay and something for them to do?

PSAKI: Well, I'm not aware of what authority the governor would be doing that under. I think it's pretty clear this is a publicity stunt. His own office admits that a migrant would need to voluntarily be transported and that he can't compel them to. Because again, enforcement of our country's immigration laws lies with the federal government, not a state.

DOOCY: You don't think people want to visit Washington, D.C.?

PSAKI: Well, listen, I don't know, but I know that the governor of Texas or any state does not have the legal authority to compel anyone to get on a bus. Go ahead.

PETER ALEXANDER: Jen, is there pressure to avoid saying that President Biden has a — had a close contact given his position and the demands of his schedule?

PSAKI: No. We announced yesterday the Vice President had a close contact and if there is 15 minutes that he spends with somebody in person within six feet and they test positive for COVID, then that would be a close contact.

ALEXANDER: So, given, you said, it's not — it doesn't necessarily take 15 minutes to get COVID — right? So it could take less than that. Obviously, he was around Nancy Pelosi and many others. Are you doing anything differently? Is there anything being done differently, given that circumstance for the President?

PSAKI: He was tested last night and tested negative and if his doctor deems he should be tested more frequently, he certainly could do that.

ALEXANDER: But if just, for example —

PSAKI: But, again, the CDC guidelines are in place and the CDC specifics on what a close contact and how it's defined are in place for a reason: to give everybody clear, data-driven guidance.

ALEXANDER: It is clear, but it's not always accurate, right? Because it doesn't take 15 minutes to get COVID, and this is more transmissible — this latest variant — than other variants in the past. It doesn't necessarily require that much time. For example, yesterday we were in the State Dining Room. The President was face to face with many individuals, right up in their mugs, for extended periods of time because he was enjoying this moment — a chance to visit with folks. So, for clarity, not everybody in that room was tested in advance of arriving, correct?

PSAKI: Correct.

ALEXANDER: So, some of those people who may have been further back but ultimately had, I don't know, five minutes — we watched for an hour, literally — in the room may not have been with him for 15 minutes, but could have been in his face having not been tested for an extended period of time.

PSAKI: Well, again, if individuals are within six feet of him for 15 minutes or more, that's considered a close contact. No one in there was, that I'm aware of.

ALEXANDER: Ketanji Brown Jackson tested negative before her visit today, I trust.

PSAKI: I don't have any more details on Ketanji Brown Jackson's testing protocols.

(....)

2:59:36 p.m.

24 seconds

STEVEN PORTNOY: I want to give you a chance to respond. Jonathan Swan did an interview with Mitch McConnell this morning, in which he — Swan asked McConnell whether, if the Republicans should take the Senate in the midterm elections and another vacancy should occur while this President is still in office, whether a Republican-controlled Senate would hold a hearing on another Biden nominee. He refused to answer that question. Do you have a response to that? And what do you think it says about the health of our constitutional system?

(....)

3:00:46 p.m.

17 seconds

ALEX LEARY: The CDC aside, and distance, et cetera — has the President expressed any surprise or amazement that there's a number of cases around him? And has he — has he asked for people to stay away? What's his — just his kind of human-level response to what's going on?

(....)

3:03:36 p.m.

52 seconds

JOSH WINGROVE: And the CDC is actually a little less clear on the link between the two clauses that you're linking. And they talked about, "Was this person less than six feet away from someone?" Yes, in President Biden's case. And then they asked — they say to consider the time spent with someone starting two days before, so that includes both the ACA event and yesterday's event and then, separately, they say, "Have they been in the presence of someone

with confirmed or suspected COVID for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period?” As far as we know, Speaker Pelosi might’ve left right after the event. That was about 14 minutes yesterday and they spent about 45 minutes the day before. So, is the White House position —

PSAKI: But she wasn’t —

WINGROVE: — but she was, like, seven feet away. She was, you know, as far as you. So, is it the White House position that President Biden — 14 minutes, seven feet away from Speaker Pelosi — is not a close contact, but 15 minutes, six feet away would have been a close contact? And I ask by way of saying: Was there a discussion of whether to treat him as a close contact anyway?

(...)

3:09:15 p.m.  
22 seconds

USA TODAY REPORTER: You noted that Vice President Kamala Harris is considered a close contact. CDC guidance says to wear a mask. Today, she was presiding over the vote for Ketanji Brown Jackson and didn’t wear a mask. I guess, does the White House have a response to that? Was that a breach of protocol? Or, I guess, what made it different that she didn’t have to wear a mask?

(...)

3:17:27 p.m.  
55 seconds

ROB CRILLY: We’ve enjoyed your shout-outs to members of your team. I wonder if this means you’re now working on notice.

PSAKI: I’m — I’m sorry, what?

CRILLY: Whether you’re now — is that an American phrase? — whether you’re now working on notice, on your — on your way out. Is it underway?

PSAKI: I think I’m — I — it’s — I don’t know that it’s an American phrase. [LAUGHTER] I — I have —

CRILLY: Excuse my Britishism.

PSAKI: No, no, I — I love the Britishness and the accent, not to put you on notice of sorts. Look, I think it is simply a reflection of my appreciation for the incredible people on my team that I get to work with every day. I’ve shouted them out in the past before. I’ve made — I’ve — I’ve presented them with sashes to wear — all sorts of embarrassing things and I think working in the

White House, just like being a reporter — people think you have glamorous set — glamorous setups back there. I'm here to confirm that is not the case, but our team works their tails off. There's a lot going on and it's just simply an effort to recognize that.

[REPORTERS SHOUTING]

PSAKI: I have nothing to announce about —