

Pod Save America

04/14/22

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49 seconds

JEN PSAKI: I do think — look, one thing on the — on the Republican — and their side, there — there are some people and maybe many and maybe I'm just being overly optimistic, who actually believe we should be doing horrible things and — and targeting transgender kids. I don't like to think about those people. I don't want to be their friend. But there are also a fair number of them who don't want to talk about inflation, the economy, COVID, any of these issues because they have no plan and they have nothing to say and they're like, "you know what we should do? We don't know what to do about costs or COVID. Guess what? Let's target transgender kids." And that's a reality as well. And so, I actually think we can talk about all of these things and what we really need to be mindful of is always comparing what — what the other option and what the alternative is.

(....)

1:07:30 mark

33 seconds

DAN PFEIFFER: But any who, we have to ask and we will keep it between us —

PSAKI: Okay.

PFEIFFER: — and these people, every one of whom is incredibly trustworthy —

PSAKI: Yeah.

PFEIFFER: — and does not have access to social media.

PSAKI: Yeah.

PFEIFFER: So, it's fine.

PSAKI: Yep.

PFEIFFER: How much longer can we expect to see you at the podium?

PSAKI: Well, I will not be there forever. That is what I can confirm.

PFEIFFER: Oh, a professional spokesperson, I see.

[PSAKI LAUGHS] [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

PSAKI: You know, I'm not — I'm not trying to be a talking pointee in saying this is the best job I have ever had. It's amazing in so many ways.

(....)

1:08:25 mark

4 minutes and 55 seconds

PSAKI: But especially in this moment it's been really this amazing honor because, when I came into this job, you know, one of the conversation I had with the President and — and Dr. Biden, the First Lady, who's — [AUDIENCE CHEERS AND APPLAUSE] — yes, thank you — she is a boss. She is amazing and we had this conversation and a big part of it was kind of bringing some stability and calm and returning facts — I know, go figure — and substance to the Briefing Room and following Trump and actually, in a crazy way, has been this huge honor because it's like trying to play a small role in stabilizing or, you know, frank, easing the nerves — healing the nerves of the public in a little bit — in a small way. [AUDIENCE CHEERS AND APPLAUSE] But I talked earlier on about staying for a year. I've obviously stayed longer than a year. My son, who's three, still thinks I work at the Honda dealership. He loves cars, so that's cool. My daughter, who's six and, like, a little more advanced, the other day she actually said to me, "mom, did you know there's never been a woman president?" I said, "I am tracking." [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] I'm joking. I said, "Hillary Clinton came very close. There's a lot to discuss there. We'll do it later." [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] You know, and I said, "there's a girl Vice President! It's awesome, right? So, there's a — there's a girl" — you know, she's six, so — "girl speaker of the House." And she goes, "is that you? Are you the speaker of the House?" [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] I was like, "no. No, I'm not." So, anyway, point is I won't be there forever. If I didn't have two kids who are my most important people — you guys have kids, you know how it is — I would be there forever, but I need to spend time with them. I love them. I don't want to miss stuff with them — [AUDIENCE APPLAUSE] — and so, I don't know. I don't have a date or anything like that, but at some point, I will be watching from — from somewhere else.

PFEIFFER: I would just say that when you got the job, there was no question in any of our mind that you were the best qualified person on the planet for that job. [AUDIENCE CHEERS AND APPLAUSE] And you've done it — and you've done it, with all due respect to our other friends who have had the job, you've done it better than anyone else, so —

PSAKI: Thank you. [AUDIENCE CHEERS AND APPLAUSE] Thank you so much. Thank you.

JON FAVREAU: I don't — I don't, like — people aren't going to believe that cause, like, we're friends with you and we're biased, but it's true. It's really true.

PFEIFFER: I mean, just —

PSAKI: Thank you.

PFEIFFER: — track the PsakiBomb hashtags on Twitter

FAVREAU: #PsakiBomb

PSAKI: Josh Earnest, do you hear that? Robert Gibbs? Just kidding. Just kidding. They're our friends and they're amazing.

FAVREAU: Yeah. Umm, hypothetically, if you were to leave, what kind of hypothetical advice would you give to your hypothetical successor?

PSAKI: Oh, hypothetically, okay, a couple of things. One is that I mean, I came into this job thinking this, but I think it's true even more now, we don't have to underestimate the intelligence of the American people. People are not stupid. We do not need to talk in a way that is, like, everybody's in kindergarten. People pay attention. We need to make things accessible. That's also true. I believe the best people who are communicators or spokespeople are ones who are also deeply knowledgeable about the issues they're going to talk about. It's not about reading talking points. This is what I would say to any successor: It's not about reading talking points. It's — you're not, like, a weather girl — no offense to weather girls, they're great, they tell me the weather — but, like, it's — it's about being able to answer the ninth question, right? And being able to talk about things and I — I would say a number of my amazing team members are here, but I'm a little relentless at times because I want to know how to be able to explain what a javelin, the weapon is, so that people can know what it is, right? You want to know how to explain is COVID a problem? Is COVID not a problem? So, I would say that's the second thing. The third things, which I have learned the hard way, and this is the truth — if anybody ever hasn't been in the Briefing Room, come to the Briefing Room, whatever — it's small and there are reporters staring at you the entire time, even when they're not asking you questions. Sometimes, and actually, the ASL interpreter, like, the sign language — American Sign Language interpreter said this in a TV interview the other day, they're very repetitive. These questions are very repetitive. They ask her the same question over and over again. And you have to remember, you're not at a dinner party, you're not at a bar, right? So, you're not just saying to your friends, "listen, I've answered your question nine times," right? You have to continue to provide the same context and information because, in the age of social media and Twitter, otherwise, even the best meaning and well-meaning reporters will take one thing you said and make you seem like you're —

CO-HOST: Whaaa?

PSAKI: — Satan reincarnated.

PFEIFFER: That kind of [INAUDIBLE] has no place here.

PSAKI: I know there's a lot — we could talk about a — Twitter, all these things, but those would be my three pieces — and you know, the last thing I would say is the best thing you can do is know what the President's thinking. I mean, that's, ultimately, your job — is to speak on his behalf. Not on your behalf. You're speaking for — on his behalf, what the administration thinks.

If you don't know, you don't know and you say you don't know and then you call up someone who knows and you'll go give them the answer. And it doesn't have to be a gotcha situation.

(....)

1:13:27 mark

2 minutes and 22 seconds

PFEIFFER: Okay, before we go —

PSAKI: Yeah.

PFEIFFER: — we have to ask you a question.

PSAKI: Okay.

PFEIFFER: Cause we have to talk about Peter Doocy for one second.

PSAKI: Sure.

[AUDIENCE LAUGHS AND GROANS]

PFEIFFER: Okay.

PSAKI: Okay.

PFEIFFER: Is he a stupid son of a bitch — [AUDIENCE CHEERS AND APPLAUSE] — or does he just play a stupid son of a bitch on TV?

PSAKI: Okay. Umm. Well — [AUDIENCE CHEERS AND APPLAUSE] — he works for a network —

PFEIFFER: Okay.

PSAKI: — that provides people with questions that, nothing personal to any individual, including Peter Doocy, but might make anyone sound like a stupid son of a bitch, so —

[CO-HOSTS LAUGH] [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

FAVREAU: Well handled!

CO-HOSTS: Whoa!

PFEIFFER: Wahhhhh.

PSAKI: Well, here's — can I tell a — can I — I don't if — this isn't going to be popular in this crowd, but can I tell a nice Peter Doocy story? A very quick one?

PFEIFFER: I mean —

[LAUGHTER]

PSAKI: Okay.

CO-HOST: Come on.

PSAKI: Well, here's the thing. The President did call him a stupid son of a bitch, right?
[AUDIENCE LAUGHS] So, that happens and it was like —

PFEIFFER: Not in the talking points?

PSAKI: — it was like, “oh, okay. That happened.” So, what do you do about it? The President called him. He's talked about this a little bit. The President called and apologized and what have you. So, he went on TV that night and I actually watched Sean Hannity to see what he said. My mind was, like, really bending and hurting. I'm, like, there was, if you can imagine, it was like a flames and it was, like, crime, crime, crime, and Kamala Harris — and the Vice President's, like, walking through the flames and crime — [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] — I don't even know what was happening. But Sean Hannity asked him about the, you know, what the President had said and what he said back and he could have been like, “he is a son of a bitch” or, “I'm standing up for —” whatever. He could have said anything. And instead, he said, “you know, he called me. We had a really nice conversation. I'm just asking my questions. He's doing his job.” So, I will say that was a moment of grace. You don't have to like everything Peter Doocy says or does — [AUDIENCE APPLAUSE] — but that is certainly a moment of grace by Peter Doocy.

PFEIFFER: This is why, before you were the world-famous press secretary, everyone called Jen Psaki the nicest person in Washington

PSAKI: I hate the word nice. I do appreciate — I know. Isn't, like, it's the wor — can — like, anything is better than nice cause nice just sounds —

PFEIFFER: I didn't make it up. I'm just saying what people say.

PSAKI: No, no, I know. It's — it's a lovely compliment. Thank you, Dan. I appreciate it.

FAVREAU: And you have been a — a brilliant press secretary and public servant.

(....)

1:21:11 mark
30 seconds

JON LOVETT: So, Jen, speaking of hecklers, what would you say is the weirdest question you have gotten in your time in the Briefing Room?

PSAKI: There are many, but the weirdest question I think that sticks with me and sticks with the members of the press team is, “will you commit to us today not to euthanize the President’s dog?”

[AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

UNIDENTIFIED CO-HOST: What?

PSAKI: Yes. Will you commit that you will not kill the President’s dog? Yes, I will commit not to kill the President’s dog.

(....)

1:22:06 mark
28 seconds

LOVETT: Jen, the job of the press secretary is one of the most public and challenging roles in politics. Everyday, the White House press secretary faces tough questions from journalists and Peter Doocy, but who — [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] — and you know what? I was backstage and I heard the nice words. I’m still doing what’s on the card. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] But who could replace Jen Psaki? Who could fill these shoes? Tonight, we’re going to figure it out in a game we’re calling: “As the President has long said.”

(....)

1:27:54 mark
38 seconds

PSAKI: Tommy, President Biden recently extended the pause on federal student loan repayments for a third time, this time through August 31. Is the President worried about a backlash if he ultimately decides to cancel a portion of student loan debt held by young people today?

VIETOR: I’m not the fucking President. Thank you for that question, Ms. Doocy. Just kidding. Yes.

PSAKI: That got weird.

VIETOR: Yes. It goes with the bit, “yes, Peter, the President is terrified about this.”