

White House press briefing

07/19/22

3:32:51 p.m. [via ABC News Live]

5 minutes and 23 seconds

PHILIP WEGMANN: I have two questions. The first quick one is — I guess, does the council have an estimate for how much the administration's regulatory changes have combated or contributed to regulation — to inflation thus far?

JARED BERNSTEIN: I think, in many ways, we've been talking about a lot of that already. I mean, I just mentioned the E15 ethanol waiver, so that's a waiver that helps increase the supply of gas — gasoline, particularly in the Midwest. I think, certainly, if you broaden, sort of, the regulatory scope to consider executive actions and rule changes, you see a lot more. I mentioned the Strategic Reserve release. We've talked — we haven't talked about this yet, but the President has made real progress in helping to ameliorate food price pressures through issues that include double cropping, taking action on fertilizer prices, ocean shipping. So all of these are actions that he's taken. In some cases, they've involved legislation, but in many cases they haven't.

WEGMANN: And then my second question: Tomorrow marks the one-year anniversary of President Biden insisting that high prices and inflation, in the President's words, were "expected to be temporary." A lot of my colleagues have asked similar questions, but I'm wondering how much faith can the American public put in future White House assessments about the economy, about inflation after they saw that inflation number increase month after month, and before the Russian invasion of Ukraine?

BERNSTEIN: Well, let me say two things. First of all, I tried to answer as fulsomely as I could, some of that — part of that question earlier. But let me ask you to focus on what we're trying to talk about today, which is something that is happening in the here and now. The chart is not up, but that first chart, which we can certainly make available to you, that shows we're not talking about looking around any corner here. We're talking about what has happened in the past 34 days to prices at the pump. They've fallen 50 cents, and you heard me go through some of the numbers in terms of the relief for American drivers. At the same time, we are not stopping there. Okay? This is nothing close to a victory lap, because we have much more to do to achieve the President's agenda of helping families get some breathing room in this tough environment, which is characterized by, of course, such highly elevated prices. Now, if you can help people with prescription drugs, drugs that cost two or three times less in other countries for the same pill; if you can help a 60-year-old couple with a \$45,000 income not have to pay another \$1,900 to get their insurance coverage, you are accomplishing the President's goals. Now, to do that, we need Congress to align and work with us. And, you know, Democrats — many Democrats are there when it comes to prescription drugs. This is something that President Trump said he wanted to achieve. And, you know, he didn't get there. This President is pushing hard to achieve that goal. One last point on this. I've talked about mostly near-term relief, because that's so important for families who are seeking a little bit of breathing room right now. But there's another piece of legislation on the docket and that, of course, is CHIPS and this is something that has had real bipartisan support. I believe it got — I believe an earlier version got 68 votes in the Senate. I

think it is absolutely and critically important for this nation to invest in domestic production of microprocessors. Again, not only would this be a criti- — not only would this be a highly favorable investment for growth and for jobs, it would be disinflationary, because one of the areas where we see inflationary pressures is, of course, in autos, which now very much depend on chips. To be clear, that's not a near-term intervention. That's not going to show up, you know, in the next couple of months, but longer term, absolutely. Supply chain, same thing.

JAMES ROSEN: Aren't you having it both ways, Jared? Because when the gas prices go up, it's got nothing to do with the President; when we see some decline, you want him to get the credit.

BERNSTEIN: Look, I think that — that there's — there's no both-way thinking here at all. I think that there has been a consistent, I think, pressure on this White House to try to do everything it could to ameliorate inflationary pressures. And the President has reacted from the beginning, talking about how this was such an important priority to alleviate these pressures on behalf of the American people, so what did he do? He put his head down and got to work, and got us to work, to do everything we could to achieve that goal. He then presided over the largest historical release of barrels of oil from the Strategic Reserve — 180 million barrels. Then he talked to global partners to get them to kick in another 60 million, so he —

ROSEN: So when they rose, it was Putin's fault. When they're coming down, he gets the credit. Is that (inaudible)?

BERNSTEIN: — yeah, I very much disagree with that framing. I think what's happening here is a President who is working tirelessly to address the largest constraint — probably the toughest constraint — facing American households right now: the budgetary impacts of these elevated prices and we're showing you here today some real results, partially — that partially derived from concrete efforts he's taken.

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4:12:24 p.m. [via NBC News on YouTube]
5 minutes and 9 seconds

PETER DOOCY: Just following up on something — something the Vice President said today. Does the President agree with her that the recent Supreme Court decision on abortion access is similar to slavery?

KARINE JEAN-PIERRE: I have not seen her comments. I would like to see her comments for myself before —

DOOCY: The comment was, “We know, NAACP, that our country has a history of claiming ownership over human bodies. And today, extremists, so-called leaders, are criminalizing doctors and punishing women from making healthcare decisions for themselves.”

JEAN-PIERRE: Well, she is correct: Today's decisions are criminalizing doctors and essentially

taking the rights away from women, taking the freedom away from women, really taking away people's privacy. That does matter, and that is important.

DOOCY: And she's invoking slavery, so the President agrees?

JEAN-PIERRE: Look, for me — I appreciate you reading out what she said — I need to actually see exactly what was — what was — what was said and in what — in what complete context. That's what I need to do as a spokesperson for the administration. But I will say that second part of what you just said, the Vice President is actually right. I just — I just — at the top, I just laid out what women are going through in this country because of an extreme decision that SCOTUS made. Because of what they did, it is going to upend and change the lives of women across the country and we have to be — we — now we have to be mindful about contraception, we have to be mindful about marriage equality, because they have made it really clear — extreme Republicans, ultra-MAGA Republicans have made it clear that that is what they're going after next, so that does matter.

DOOCY: And then following up about this comment that the Saudis say did not happen but the President says did happen: Did you personally hear the President raise the issue of Khashoggi's murder with MBS?

JEAN-PIERRE: I trust the President. He — he made those comments, as you heard directly from him, during — during the press conference. And he said at the top of the meeting, he mentioned Jamal Khashoggi. And so —

DOOCY: But you did not hear him say that?

JEAN-PIERRE: I'm just saying to you that the President himself — I was not in the meeting, to answer that question, but the President himself said and laid out very clearly — and — and just to be clear, that press conference happened because he wanted to make sure that you all heard from him directly. That was the President's decision. He wanted to make sure that he read out what occurred in the bilateral meeting with — with the Saudi — Saudi Arabia government.

DOOCY: But — so, ultimately, we get back from this trip, there's no new peace talks in the Middle East, there's no new commitment to increase oil production in the Gulf, so what was the point of this trip?

JEAN-PIERRE: I just read out earlier, Peter, of all of the things that had occurred that we — some of the do-outs or the — some of the things that we were able to get done during this trip. Look, I want to — let's step back for a second and talk about what the President was trying to do on this trip. If you look at this region, the Middle East, it's a critical region. The President — his intent was to make sure that there was not a vacuum in the region so that you didn't have China and Russia stepping in trying to fill that vacuum and so it's important for the United States to make sure that we're having those conversations, direct leader-to-leader conversations, and that we — and that we talk about our national security, we talk about food security, we talk about climate change. All are issues that are important to the American family and so as it relates to

the oil production — I talked about and Jared talked about what OPEC — OPEC+ did early in June — we are confident that we will be able to measure how — the success of those conversations that the President had in the next several weeks.

DOOCY: Why not insist on a commitment though? He gets back with no commitment, and the price of oil per barrel shot up. Is that what the President wanted, to go there and have the price of oil get more expensive?

JEAN-PIERRE: So, let's — so, again — but again, we have seen gas prices go down in the past 34 straight days — go down —

DOOCY: Aren't they still \$2 a gallon higher than when you guys took office though?

JEAN-PIERRE: First of all, we have to look at the imp- — at how we got there, right? You think about the war that Russia has taken on in Ukraine — an unmitigated war, a war that is brutal and that has had an effect on the price gases going up almost \$2. We have talked about that endlessly and also, we are also in a once-in-a-generation pandemic, so there are outside factors that has led to gas prices going up, to food prices going up, to inflation going up, so that is really important. What we have seen in the last 34 days is that gas prices have gone down by 50 — on average, by 50 cents a gallon. That matters. That matters to teachers, that matters to firefighters, that matters to nurses, that matters to everyday people. And the President is going to continue to do the work to make sure the prices go down. I'm going to go — I'm going to continue, Peter. Thank you.

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4:21:15 p.m. [via NBC News on YouTube]
44 seconds

KEN THOMAS: And Senator Cruz, over the weekend, said on his podcast that the Supreme Court was clearly wrong in overreaching when it legalized same-sex marriage in 2015. What is the White House view on that? Is — does that raise a lot of concerns?

JEAN-PIERRE: So, I'll — it should — it should raise concerns. As we know from the Dobbs decision, one of the things that we saw from — from Judge Thompson [sic] is that they're looking to go further, whether it's privacy, contraception, or marriage equality. Now, you know, you all know that this President has supported marriage equality for some time. This is something that he believes in, and this is something that he will — he will continue to fight for.