

White House press briefing
August 25, 2022
1:21 p.m. Eastern [via CBSN]

MARYALICE PARKS: If they have to wait for these forms and they have apply it here back. Can you guarantee that everyone who qualifies will see their repayments start being [INAUDIBLE] next year?

KARINE JEAN-PIERRE: Look, that is some — this is something that we want to make sure it happens right away. I don't have a timeline for you. That is something that the Department of Education is going to work on. You know — you know — as a — in a — you know, in a way that is hopefully as they can in a fast way. But look, that is something, again that Department of Education is going to focus on. It is important. We want this to happen for these individuals, but again, you know, we're — as we know the pause is going to be lifted at the end of December 31st — right — at the end of December so we want to make sure it is done in tangent so that's what the Department of Education is going to be focusing on.

(....)

Time N/A [via LiveNOW from Fox on tape delay]

MICHAEL SHEAR: If I could go back to something my Fox colleague asked as yesterday, and that's about the — the — the — who paid pays for this.

JEAN-PIERRE: Mmhmm.

SHEAR: So, I did a search last night for the phrase “fully paid for” coming from that podium and from — in President Biden's speeches to — during the last year and a half and found scores of them. I promise, I won't read them all. But just a couple. You quoted experts saying that the package — referencing, the IRA — would “quickly and noticeably bring down health care costs for families would be more than fully paid for.” Jen Psaki talked about on February 2nd, “he's committed to sustainable and responsible policy in ensuring that our long-term investments are fully paid for like Build Back Better.” Brian Deese, talked about packages that would be fully paid for across time. The president in multiple speeches talked about this bill — this is December referring to the BBB — as fully is paid — fully paid for, won't increase the deficit. Anyway, the question is —

JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah.

SHEAR: — do you all do you all believe that this — this Student Loan program is fully paid for and if it's not, why does the president think it was important to have all of his other spending priorities fully paid for to be fiscally responsible, but not this one.

JEAN-PIERRE: So we do — we — so — this — again, this is the question that my colleague here — Ambassador got, so it, we have to get a better sense — right — of what we're talking

about as far as costs. Wait, let me just — let me just say that out loud. She is — she is the domestic policy adviser and when she was asked this question, so I wanted to reiterate what she said, but we do believe it will be fully paid for because of the — because of the work that this President has done with the economy because of what you just said. Well, what I just said is what we have done to — to bring down the deficit, the deficit reduction that matters in the work that we'll continue to do. Look, when you look at IRA, it is also that three — that \$300 billion deficit is going to matter — right — when you think about that. 1.7 trillion by the end of this fiscal year, is going to matter as well and also here's the thing. When we talk about the pause being lifted, that's going to bring into — to bring \$50 billion dollars per year back into the Treasury, right? That was actually not happening throughout almost for two years now, so, that's going to be coming back at the same time that basically, people are — are getting these — are getting these benefits from this plan.

SHEAR: Just to clarify though, the previous — whether it was the Build Back Better proposals or IRA or — or the infrastructure bills — those were, in the words of the administration, anyway, fully paid for you internally.

JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah.

SHEAR: You're saying that this one, because of the benefits that — of deficit reduction, you're okay raising or lessening that deficit reduction with this proposal because of the work that's been done in the past.

JEAN-PIERRE: Well, I — I —

SHEAR: — cause this one doesn't have any pay-fors, right?

JEAN-PIERRE: — I mean — we'll —

SHEAR: There are no — there are no mechanisms that, internally — to this that would raise money at the same time that it's spending money.

JEAN-PIERRE: — well, here's — here's what I would say. I mean, the question was asked to me earlier about how — how they are some Democrats who are not happy with this. And so because they either they wanted more they didn't want it at all, right? And what the President and did, the step that he took was to do this in a fiscally responsible way. This is what we believe. This is why it took us this time, to do the legal review, to look at the process. This is why we didn't do the 50 — the 50,000. We did up to 20,000. This is why my colleagues here at the podium said, well, let's see, who — who actually takes advantage of this then we'll have a better sense of what this is actually going to cost. But when you think about the \$50 billion that goes back, into — into — into — into the Treasury, when you think about the lowering the deficit, which we — which is historic, which is historic the 1.7 trillion, the 350 billion the first year of the President's — Presidents — President's administration. That matters and it is, you know, it is one of those things that — always welcome this conversation but what we have done is fiscally responsible. What the last administration did was not. It just was not. And what they did cutting

— cutting taxes for the wealthy. They only — they — 85 percent. Of folks — folks making — it went to 85 percent of folks who were making more \$75,000 a year. We actually did — we're actually doing the opposite. And it should matter that this President is trying to give some breathing room for people who've been literally, crippled by this — by — by — by this pandemic, by what has happened the last couple of years. And so again, the way we see it is we've done it in a fiscal, balanced, responsible way. We will see who takes advantage of this, but this is supposed to going to help 43 million people and just think about it. If people are saving a little bit of money — right — they are going to go buy that house. There are going to start a family. This matters in so many ways.

SHEAR: And that matters more than keeping the deficit lower by — by increased, including Something that would offset, whatever the cost might be?

JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah, I mean, look, we don't believe that it's going to increase the deficit because — because what we're saying that is the one point seven trillion, right —

SHEAR: Right.

JEAN-PIERRE: — is we've done the work — right — to lower the deficit. Also fifty billion dollars per year is \$50 billion per year to go back.

(...)

Time N/A

PETER ALEXANDER: We heard from the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget today. You guys can't estimate what it'll cost you —

JEAN-PIERRE: Yep.

ALEXANDER: — until you see how many people take you up on it, but they estimate the cancellation will eliminate about \$550 billion in federal student loan debt. They say, “however, we project that the overall amount of outstanding federal student debt will return to \$1.6 trillion — it's current level — within five years. So, is the President committed to doing this again or is this a one-time deal?

JEAN-PIERRE: Oh, you're asking me about hypothetical that I don't — I don't —

ALEXANDER: Well, no, I guess I'm asking — let's — let's not be so specific if that's a hypothetical. Say that this — this non-partisan organizations say is just going to go back up again so is the President okay with this being just like a temporary relief thing and then it's okay and then taxpayers will pay for it?

JEAN-PIERRE: So, I mean, it is — it is a little bit of a hypothetical. You started off asking me the question we don't know what the number is, which we don't. We have to see what the — in

order to fully — for me to fully answer that question —

ALEXANDER: Does the White House believe that it will not go up again, that the federal student loan debt will not go up again and that the — and that the — the ideas that the ambassador yesterday presented will stop the rising cost of college and the debt will not continue to rise?

(...)

Time N/A

CHRISTINA RUFFINI: I guess what I'm struggling with and what some my colleagues have asked about is —

JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah, you asked this same question yesterday. This is nothing new, right?

RUFFINI: — no, this is a different question.

JEAN-PIERRE: Oh, okay, but you picked up on what he was saying, so —

RUFFINI: But I was going to say if you don't know how much it's going to cost, how can you guarantee that it's going to be paid for, even if you're defining "paid for" in a way that some of us have questions about.

JEAN-PIERRE: Look, what — what I can tell you is this — is that we have done the work to make sure that this is done in a fiscal responsible way, in a balanced way. If you look at how we were able to do the deficit reduction in the past two years, 350 — well, almost two years, 350 billion in the first year, 1.7 trillion reduction that we will see at the end of this fiscal year. That matters as well. That matters by bringing down that deficit. It matters on how we can get this done for the American people, but let's not forget the pause will be lifted and that's going to matter as treasury is going to get the revenues that they haven't been getting in some time. Again, we will — you know, Susan Rice is the domestic policy adviser. I'm just going to reiterate what she said and — and — we — and we'll actually know more once people take us up on it and see it get a sense if they will, but we know — we — we do have what we do know — right — which is what I just listed about the deficit reduction which is important. This matters in this — in this — in this case.

(...)

1:55 p.m. Eastern [via *Washington Post* Live]

JACQUI HEINRICH: I want to ask about the legal basis for cancelling student loan. The Heroes Act hinges on student debt cancellation being tied to the pandemic and that being a national emergency, but the administration argued in court that the pandemic is over at the southern border to lift Title 42. It's so over that the government is going to stop buying vaccines in the fall

and shift to the private sector. So, how is this a national emergency — how is COVID a national emergency when it comes to student debt?

JEAN-PIERRE: So, it's a good question and I'm glad you asked it. Look, we use the Heroes Act because there are going to be some people when we lift the pause that's still going to suffer. They're still going to have a little bit of a hard time and so, that's one of the reasons that we made this decision because as we're lifting up the pause, yes, you know, some folks may — having not to pay for two years has been helpful to them and are — were able to save and were able — are probably going to be able to pay those monthly payments, but there's going to be some folks who are going to have a hard time.

HEINRICH: Because the economic climate?

JEAN-PIERRE: Because — because they're they're just in a different bracket, right? It's just because — they — it is — they — they've probably had hard time before. We have to remember this is a system — so he announced the pause the — lifting up the pause. He announced the 10,000 and up to 20,000 for Pell Grant recipients who, as I said, many of them have a household nearly making 60,000 and half of that — half of the Pell Grant recipients are 30,000 household, thirty thousand dollars a year household. And so, the other piece of that is a reform — right — forming system as well so we can help nurses, so we can help construction workers, so we can help firefighters and making sure that their payment [sic] are cut in half as well because those members some of these are — some of our first respondents — right — who also suffered so much from the past — past two years, so he wanted to make sure he gave them a little bit of relief understanding that some folks — some folks are just going to have a little bit of a harder time even though we're coming out of a pandemic and the economy has been turned back on because of the work that this President has done.

HEINRICH: That was another thing I was going to mention. I mean, the President often says that this is — we're not in a recession because we've got, you know, record job market, record low unemployment, businesses investing in America at record rates.

JEAN-PIERRE: Mmhmm.

HEINRICH: So why are those appropriate conditions to forgive student debt?

JEAN-PIERRE: Well, thank you for laying out all the work that the President has done. That is a thousand percent correct, but we've also said, that we know that some people are still suffering. We have you heard us say that too. Like, you know, it — yes, the economy can be turned back on and we've created to what you've just laid out nearly 10 million new jobs since the President took office. That matters. The economy is stronger than it's been in at some time, but and we have said that — you've heard the president say that — there's still some folks who need a little bit more help and this is what the President is trying to do. Both can be true. It's not one or the other.

HEINRICH: Well, *The Washington Post* editorial board says that this doesn't —

JEAN-PIERRE: And — and then I'm going to go to the back because we're running out of time.

HEINRICH: — doesn't take — doesn't help those people though, that it, you know, takes money from the broader tax base, mostly made up workers who didn't go to college, to subsidize education debt of people with valuable degrees. So, rebutting what you had just said. But, you know, beyond that, there are critics that are saying this is not about the pandemic. It's not about those conditions. This is about getting people to vote ahead of the midterms, that the real national emergency is Democrats in the midterm elections.

JEAN-PIERRE: Well, I mean — I disagree with everything that you just laid out. I was just asked a question by some Democrats in, you know, who are saying that they're not happy with this — right — who were criticizing this and we have said we're not going to make everybody happy. And so, if you're not making everybody happy, you cannot say that, you know — that what you just laid out is certainly cannot be the case, either. Look, here's what — here's what I will say and this is just what we have laid out about this — about this program. This is historical what we're doing. It has never been done before. When you look at the system, the system is broken and we're trying to reform it so that we can help people who really need it. The way that this president has done this, he's done it in a targeted way, so it helps — it doesn't give a penny to anybody making a more than 120 — let — let me finish — more than 125,000. And if you look at the Pell Grant recipients. Pell Grant recipients — we're talking about people — again, and I've said this multiple times in this briefing room today and we said it multiple times yesterday — \$60,000 household. We're talking about \$60,000 household, and cut in half — right — there are people who are — we're talking about people — Pell Grant recipients are at \$30,000 household. I mean, that's the people that we are going to help. Again nurses, construction workers. When you think about the reform —

HEINRICH: I — I understand what you're saying.

JEAN-PIERRE: I mean, we've just — we've just — we've just gone back. You've made your point. I've made my point. I'm going to move on because we are — we are actually running out of time.

(...)

2:01 p.m. Eastern

OWEN JENSEN: I want to take your attention to Nicaragua if you would, please. Daniel Ortega's regime just abducted a Catholic bishop, throwing priests and seminarians in prison. They're shutting down Catholic media outlets. I'm sure the White House is aware of this — the latest persecution of Catholics there in Nicaragua. What's the White House response to these latest developments?

JEAN-PIERRE: Okay. So, there has been a dramatic deterioration of respect for democratic principles and human rights by the regime in Nicaragua, including imprisonment of democratic leaders members of the political opposition, students, and journalists. The Biden-Harris

administration finds this unacceptable and condemns these actions. The United States and members of the international community have already taken a number of actions to promote accountability for the regime's actions and will continue to do so.

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2:06 p.m. Eastern

MATT VISER: You've said a couple times that this is a fiscally responsible way of doing this, but can you explain a little bit about how you guys think it is fiscally responsible? Because you can't say how much it's going to cost, you can't say exactly how it's going to be paid, and you can't say exactly who is paying for the cost. I get how you're arguing that it helps certain —

JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah.

VISER: — certain populations.

JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah.

VISER: But how is it fiscally response?

JEAN-PIERRE: I mean, the way that — the way that we are talking about it and what we're trying to say is we — the actions that we have taken and you see this with the way that the deficit has been reduced we have taken just the last 19 months, and I see that look that you're giving me there.

VISER: Well, what?

JEAN-PIERRE: Well, but —

VISER: I hear that argument that you had taken previous fiscally responsible actions —

JEAN-PIERRE: Right.

VISER: — that would give you — would give you more wiggle room to be less —

JEAN-PIERRE: It gives us — oh, no, no, no.

VISER: — response — not being fiscally —

JEAN-PIERRE: We — I mean, we see this — we do not see this as irresponsible. We see this as a fiscally responsible, balanced approach to doing this. And remember, people have said, "why don't you do 50,000?" We don't want to do that because we want to make sure that we do this in a fiscally responsible way, Again, not pleasing everyone. But making sure that we keep that promise, but also do it in a smart, fiscally responsible way. Again, I'm going to use that word

because that is what our process has been and I use the example of the — the of the 350 billion in deficit reduction and the 1.7 trillion reduction in deficit with everything that we've been able to do. The American Rescue plan, right? The bipartisan infrastructure legislation and we are still, by the end of this physical [sic] year, will be at \$1.7 trillion in deficit. All of those things matter And — and that's the way that we look at it. I'm going to take one more.

VISER: But those are separate policies from this one to —

JEAN-PIERRE: No, but I'm just saying that we have taken — this is the actions that we have taken to show that we are taking this very, very seriously. I'm — I'm going to go around. I — Matt, we can go — we can — we can go back —

VISER: We already are.

JEAN-PIERRE: — and forth on it. We can go back and forth it.