

White House press briefing

09/01/22

Time N/A [by LiveNOW from Fox]

3 minutes and 7 seconds

JEFF MASON: Is tonight a political speech?

KARINE JEAN-PIERRE: No. It's not a political speech. This is an opportunity — again for the President to directly have a conversation with the — with the — the American people. Look, he's going to talk about, of course, we'll talk about the importance of engagement. He'll talk about voter — voter participation. But this is a speech about such a broader subject, you know, what it means to be a democracy. And what it means to participate in our — in our democracy given where we are as a nation and he believes the stakes are very high and that is important to go out and articulate what those stakes are and why it's important for people to participate in their democracy and at the end of the day, why it is worth fighting for and that is what and that to talk about tonight. That's what you're going to hear from him and again, it's a broader subject about this moment that were in currently.

MASON: Democrats and people on the left are pretty happy about the more aggressive tone they're seeing from the President in the White House. But you're also facing some criticism, which has been brought up that this aggressive tone is also stoking the divisiveness that he's trying to heal. Any concerns about that?

JEAN-PIERRE: You know, the President is never going to shy away from calling out what he sees. And I said this yesterday and I — I'll say this now. You know, I'm assuming the device of tone is coming from — from whom? From — from?

MASON: From the right.

JEAN-PIERRE: From the right. So, look, we understand we hit a nerve. We get that. We understand that they're trying to hide and we understand that ultra-MAGA officeholders want to play games here and dodge accountability for their extreme proposals and actions, but they're just telling on themselves. Look, the President has always — always squarely targeted his criticism on elected leaders. This is about what they're doing in Congress. Those extreme MAGA Republicans, those who are — who hold office. The first time that the President said ultra-MAGA was about Rick Scott's radical plan to raise taxes on millions of middle-class Americans and put Medicare on the chopping blocks, will Social Security on the chopping block. I just mentioned national abortions that — ban that — that these MAGA Republicans want to do. It is important to call that out and let's not forget when you think about Medicare, when you think about Social Security, those are popular things. When you think about *Roe* and protecting women's right to choose, those are — majority of Americans support that. So, how — so that's what we're talking about here. We're talking about agenda that is not popular. We're talking about agendas that is [sic] incredibly extreme. We're talking about an agenda that is not in line, where majority of Americans are. So, yeah, the President's going to talk about that. He's not going to shy away, but again, this is going to be about a speech that will be optimistic, that will

talk about participating in our democracy and how important it is to do that and how important it is to continue to fight.

(....)

3:06:41 p.m. [via *Washington Post* Live]
2 minutes and 35 seconds

JEAN-PIERRE: It's not a speech about the former President or a single politician or about a political party. It's about the American democracy, which is what I've been trying to lay out here. This is so much broader, so much bigger than any one party, any one person and it's an optimistic, again, about where we are as a nation and where we can go and it's about the fundamental struggle around the globe between autocracy and democracy and how democracy is a critical foundation for this country to move forward and what can we do — can be done right now to beat back the forces that are threatening — that are threatening us, so he's been working on this for awhile. He's been thinking about this speech for awhile. He's talked about soul of the nation. The first time you've heard him do that is when he wrote an op-ed in *The Atlantic* back in August 2017, so this is nothing new to him. He feels it is his responsibility to bring the American people together and answer a fundamental question about what kind of nation we are going to be and that's what you're going to hear from the President tonight. Again, he's been thinking about this for some time. This is not a new subject or topic for him.

CHRISTINA RUFFINI: But if that includes things that you were saying to one of my colleague's questions, you know, this concern about this MAGA Republican, this extremist agenda and that's something he's going to talk about tonight, how is that not a political speech?

JEAN-PIERRE: Well, I said he's not going to shy away from that and, of course, he's going to talk about voter participation. Of course he's going to talk about getting Americans to — getting involved and participate in this effort to fight our democracy. That is something that he is certainly going to talk about. But what we're — what I'm trying to say is this is a broader speech and you'll hear from him directly. This is not about one political party. It is not about one political — one person in politics. This is about what we are going to do as a country to continue to fight for our democracy. Again, something that he has talked about for some time and — and that's what you're going to hear from him. If you followed him through the campaign, if you followed him through his administration, this is not new and he will speak directly about that, directly about the current events, but again, he's not going to shy away from the extremism that we see today, but again, there is a broader component of the speech and you'll hear about that later this evening.

(....)

3:10:36 p.m.
1 minute and 12 seconds

TAMARA KEITH: Given the ongoing threats of political violence and the majority of

Americans saying they're concerned about American democracy and something like 40 percent of Americans saying that they think Civil War could happen in the next ten years, how is the President going to deliver an optimistic speech? How is he optimistic in the face of all that?

JEAN-PIERRE: Have you followed Joe Biden? Have you listened to him make speeches in the past before? This is a President, I would argue, who knows how to do that, who knows how to deliver an optimistic speech at the same time call out what is happening in this moment and that's what you're going to hear from this President. You know, if you — if you look at — listen to his past speeches, he has done that. How do we bring people together? How do we get people involved in this part — in this process in this — participation in our democracy? And look just because you call out what you're seeing in this current moment, the extremism, the attack on our democracy, the attack on our freedom, the concerns that Americans have themselves doesn't mean you can't bring the country together, and show a positive way forward, show some hope, give some people some hope and you'll see that from this President tonight.

(...)

3:20:46 p.m.

2 minutes and 9 seconds

KELLY O'DONNELL: What do think the President message tonight is for Americans who consider themselves Republicans or may still support the former President? Is there something in the speech directed to them?

JEAN-PIERRE: Well, look, the President really does believe that this — that what he's going to talk about is something that many Americans are going to care about. It doesn't matter which side of the aisle that you care where did you sit at when you think about the possibilities of our democracy, when you think about how we are going to fight for — to protect our rights — right — to protect our democracy. He thinks that's going to touch a lot of people. We have seen — somebody just talked about polling and how we see that many people are concerned about where our democracy is. I would argue that's probably across the board and when we talk about the extremism we're talking about a very small piece, component of the American public, all right? We're talking about very small component of — of MAGA Republicans in Congress. That — that is something that they believe, right? But we know and the President believes and is optimistic that there are many — many Americans who want to continue to make sure that we uphold our democracy. And so, that is something that — that well, we're going to hear, some hope about the resurrection of America and the future of America building toward a more perfect union. That is something that we have heard throughout our history in this country and, and so, he's going to speak directly to them. He's going to make the case. He's going to be optimistic. He's going to lay a path forward and — and that's what matters and that's why it's not — he's not going to focus on a political party's not going to focus on a political person. He's going to focus at what is what matters? What is currently mattering in this moment as it is at the heart of who we are as a country, talk about who we are as a country. And — and that's what you're going to hear from the President.

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3:24:18 p.m.

4 minutes and 37 seconds

PHILIP WEGMANN: Returning to our discussion from yesterday, following up on some of the things that you've said today. I just want to clarify: Does the President believe that the effort to restrict abortion, to restrict that freedom is semi-fascism?

JEAN-PIERRE: Say that — how is that connected to yesterday? I'm just trying to think.

WEGMANN: So, in terms of extremism — the extremism conversation that we were having yesterday. Does the President believe that the effort to restrict abortion, whether it's at the local level or the federal level, to restrict that freedom, does he believe it is semi-fascism?

JEAN-PIERRE: I mean, he was very clear. He was very clear that MAGA Republicans in Congress have an agenda that is extreme and that's what you hear from them of the national ban on abortion is extreme and also it's not in line where majority of Americans are. It is just not. It is taking away people's rights. It is taking away people's freedoms. And you know, he doesn't, he believes that is an extreme agenda. You've heard that from him directly. I don't even need to confirm that from here. He's actually talked about how extreme it is when we saw what — what was done with the *Dobbs* decision on June 24th to take away a right take away a right that people had for 50 years — a constitutional right for 50 years that women had to make a decision for themselves on their health care. And — and so, yeah, we see that as extreme.

WEGMANN: So — but I'm trying to figure out which bucket in particular to put it in because the administration as well as the President has used different language here. There's extremism and then there's also semi-fascism moniker that he used. I mean, this is an effort that has been around for a long-time. Does he believe that this movement working through, whether it's the state legislature, or Congress is in either of those buckets?

JEAN-PIERRE: When we talk about semi-fascism and you talk about the attack on our democracy, that's what we're talking about, right? An attack on our democracy — that's what we're seeing. An attack on our — on our freedoms. That's what we're seeing from the MAGA Republicans in Congress. That is what they're doing. That is — when you're talking about inciting violence, that's — that's — that is an attack on our democracy. And when you're, when you see a mob that is attacking the Capitol, and you don't call that out or you call it out one day and then change your mind the other day — another day, what does — what message are you saying about our democracy?

WEGMANN: But specifically with regards to limiting these freedoms, I guess my question, is he Supreme Court created this space for the anti-abortion movement at the state level and also perhaps at the federal level to restrict this freedom? Where do they fit into all of this? How would the President describe them after that decision? Were they just extremists or they, you know, part and parcel of a semi-fascists —

JEAN-PIERRE: Look, here's what I'll say. We continue to see attacks on people's fundamental rights — right — of Americans with new abortion laws across the country. And when you have national Republicans, who are — who are leaders, in their — in their political party, who sit in office, who say that they want to take away the rights, even in case of incest and case — in case — in — in not — and in case of — of rape, and taking away the — a woman's right to make a decision on her body. That's extreme. And — and you know, the President's going to call that out. He's going to continue to do everything that he can to make sure that we protect people's freedoms. He's going to do everything that he can to call that out and, you know, that is important to call out. That is important to talk about. And again, we see majority of Americans who disagree and so, when you are not with where majority of Americans are, then, you know, that is extreme. That is an extreme way of thinking. I'm not going to, that's what I have for you, Phil.

WEGMANN: Will he call out the Supreme Court tonight?

JEAN-PIERRE: I just laid out what he's going to talk about. It's not a political part. It's not about a political person. It's not about a political party. It's about where we are currently today in — where — where we currently are today with our democracy.

(...)

3:30:26 p.m.

3 minutes and 55 seconds

MARK MEREDITH: Going back to tonight's speech, obviously, you said that the President's going to be calling out these lawmakers that MAGA lawmakers in Congress, but yet, 74 million people vote for Trump last around. You said it's a small number of — the White House believes are extremists. Can you give us an idea of — ballpark? Are we talking a million of that 74 million? Are we talking about one percent? 20 percent? What kind of number are we talking about?

JEAN-PIERRE: Well, I'm talking about — I'm talking about specifically of MAGA office holders. That's what we're talking about. They're the ones —

MEREDITH: Not supporters?

JEAN-PIERRE: We're — I'm talking spec — I've already answered this question about how, you know, we feel like we've touched a nerve — right — when — when folks are — are saying that we're — we're trying to be divisive or that we're talking about millions of voters. That's not what we're talking about here. We're talking about MAGA officeholders who — who have put forth an agenda that is extreme, who have put forth an agenda that takes away people's rights, who have put forth an agenda that you know, want to give tax cut to billionaires and corporations while raising taxes on millions of Americans. We just had a back and forth about how they want to do a national ban — they've called for a national ban on abortion. Those are extreme — that's an extreme agenda. That is not in line where a majority of Americans are. I know you're asking me about 10 — millions of voters out there, but we're talking about, if you look at the items that I

just listed, a majority of Americans don't support what the MAGA Republicans in Congress are doing. That's a fact. That's what polling shows us. When you talking about an agenda from Republicans in the Senate, we're talking about getting rid of Medicare, putting that on the chopping block, putting Social Security on the chopping block. That's not popular. That's not something that majority of Americans want.

MEREDITH: So, if it's MAGA officeholders, we've seen Democratic groups — something like the Democratic Governors Association, boost Trump candidates like Maryland. You think of Dan Cox who just got the nomination. Is that then hypocritical if you're saying we've got to make sure these MAGA supporters are not in office, but you've got Democratic groups that are boosting their campaigns in the primary election?

JEAN-PIERRE: I mean, I can't talk about campaigns and what another — another candidate is doing or a committee is doing, I can't speak from that from here. Look, I can say this. The President has been on has always been clear. They're going to be people who disagree with his programs and legislative priorities and that's what democracy is all about. Like, we understand that — right — but people election and we move forward as a nation — right — but there is a growing number of people who refuse to accept the results of free and fair elections, people who actually openly talking about subverting elections in the future. This is not a speech where he's going to tell people to vote for one party or the other. That's not what he's going to do. [REPORTER SHOUTING] I'm talking about tonight. I'm talking about tonight. He's going to talk about uniting the people of this country who believe in equality and democracy and this is about bringing people together, who believe in America. That's what the speech is going to be about and that's what he's going to focus on.

MEREDITH: And obviously there's been a lot of focus on previous speeches, previous comments, one in Maryland the other day. Is it only on the far right that deserves to be called out or their elements of the far left that also deserve to be either scrutinized and lectured?

JEAN-PIERRE: Look, I'm — I'm I just laid out there's going to be some people who agree with him and who disagree with him, who agree, who — whether it's legislative initiatives or programs. That's going to happen. But what we're going to hear from him is how to move the country forward. That's going to be the focus of the speech tonight. He's going to be — it's going to be optimistic. It's going to be hopeful and is — but it's also going to lay out what's going on currently in this moment That's what you can expect from him tonight. And — and you know, we're going to try and see how we can move this country forward.