

White House press briefing [via *Washington Post* Live]

01/27/23

2:22:09 p.m.

1 minute and 29 seconds

DARLENE SUPERVILLE: And with the chief of staff news today, that position is one of the more powerful ones in Washington that has never been held by someone who was not white and male. Would the President commit to choosing a chief of staff who is not white and male if Jeff Zients were to leave before the end of the President's term?

KARINE JEAN-PIERRE: Here what I say — what I'll say to this. I'm certainly not going to get ahead of the President. This is not something I can do from here, but look, and I kind of said it at the top. The Biden-Harris administration is the most diverse in history, that is a fact and we expect to — we expect this trend to continue. The cabinet is majority of people of color for the first time in history, the cabinet is majority female, the first time in history, the majority of white House senior staff identify as female, 40 percent of White House senior staff identify as part of racially diverse communities. A record of six assistants to the President are openly LGBTQ, and also of our — if think about our 30,000 — about 3,000 appointees, 58 percent female, 51 percent people of color, six percent disabled, 31 first generation Americans, 17 first generation college grads and 14 percent — 17 percent first generation college grads — forgot to add that percent — and 14 percent LGBTQ. And I think that matters. This is — this is a — this is a record that the President is truly proud of and I think not just the President, all of us here who are members of his team.

(...)

2:31:03 p.m.

1 minute and 46 seconds

PHIL MATTINGLY: The legislative issues aside, I think the President spoke publicly about what seemed to be a genuine bond he had formed with George Floyd's family and I was wondering if you could talk about — just from a personal side of things for him, how much that has informed or maybe had an impact on how he processes or sees things like it appears we are about to see down in Memphis?

JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah, and you know this, Phil, I think you covered — you've — you've covered the President or certainly watched the President the last couple of years, especially during that time as his relationship with the George Floyd family developed, and they've met many times and they've spoken many times, and you know, I — I cannot imagine how conversations like that don't have an effect on someone, right? When you see — when you see a family going through so much pain, and that pain being captured on video for all the world to see. So yeah, I think it's had an impact on all of us here. It's had an impact on many across the country, across the globe, and yeah, I think he takes this very seriously. He takes — he sees what is going on, he hears the stories, he talks to the families, and he feels that it's important — it's important to make sure that these families that go through this get swift and full and transparent answers and investigation to

the death of their loved ones. Don't want to get too far into it because, as you know, the DOJ is looking into this, as is also the local authorities, and there's going to be a trial, so don't want to get too far into this particular case but as you asked me about the George Floyd family, yeah, I think it's — I think it affected all of us, you know, meeting them and listening to their story and what they've had — the pain that they've — are still going through.

(....)

2:46:17 p.m.

1 minute and 52 seconds

UNIDENTIFIED REPORTER: And there's going to be a vote next month on a nationwide TikTok ban. Does the White House still have security concerns about the app and do you have a different stance on that?

JEAN-PIERRE: Look, your positions have not — has not changed on TikTok. I'm not going to get into — into specifics. As you know, it's under review by the committee, so just not going to get into any details on that. [TO PAGER] Go ahead.

TYLER PAGER: Thanks, Karine. David Axelrod, former top staffer for President — President Obama, wrote in a piece to the — for *The Atlantic* that the “Biden and the White House seemingly have violated every precept—speed, transparency, contrition—of crisis communications” in the relation to the way that you have communicated about the classified documents found in his possession. I'm wondering if you agree with that assessment and your take on that.

JEAN-PIERRE: Well, look, I know David Axelrod very well. I was part of his — I was — I was part of his program that he had at University of Chicago and I respect him wholeheartedly and got to work with him during the Obama-Biden — Obama-Biden administration. He has his opinion. I'm not going to make judgments on that and — and he's allowed to — to — to share what he thinks. But I will say this and — and I'm going to be very careful and prudent here. And we take — we take classified information and classified documents very seriously. And the President's team is fully cooperating with the current legal process at this time. I'm just not going to say anything more.

PAGER: This is not a question about the handling of classified documents. It's a question of communications.

JEAN-PIERRE: I know. I just — I just answered your question. I just answered your question.

PAGER: So, you have no comment —

JEAN-PIERRE: I — I —

PAGER: — on whether the White House —

JEAN-PIERRE: — I literally just answered your question.

PAGER: — but —

JEAN-PIERRE: I— but I did. I did.

PAGER: — the question is about whether or not you think the White House has done a good job communicating —

JEAN-PIERRE: No, but I answered the first part. I answered it in my first part, which is, I know David, Axelrod. He has every right to have his opinion and I've known him for a long time. I've worked closely with him and that's all I'm going to say.

(....)

2:53:56 p.m.

4 minutes and 38 seconds

ANDREW FEINBERG: On — on Tyre Nichols, the — in the — in previous police brutality cases in the past couple years, the officers have been White. That's not the case in this — in this case. Is the President concerned that, within the culture of policing, there is a comfort with violence and an entitlement to use violence that would leave these officers to beat a man to death from them during a traffic stop? Does he feel that police may feel emboldened to do these things and what would he do about that? So —

JEAN-PIERRE: So, look, I mean, the President has called for a meaningful reform. He's called on it very clearly and that spoken to it the last two years and he wants to see real change. He wants to make sure there is accountability with law enforcement officers who violate their oaths and he also said that we need to build that long-lasting relationship between enforcement and the vast majority, we understand and he believes of whom wear — wear the badge honorably. And that is important to and — and those communities not only they — they wear it honorably, but they also — to serve the community, to — to serve into the community that they want to protect. And so, look, we're — we're not going to get into cycle, you know, doing any psychology here and going into the — the minds of — of — of folks, But what we can say is we believe that we there needs to be meaningful reform which is why the President acted and took executive action when — when Congress could not.

FEINBERG: I would just — just follow up on that. His predecessor in 2017 encouraged police officers to “don't be too nice” and suggested that they — they might hit the heads of prisoners on the tops of their patrol cars. Does the President have any plans to speak to police officers? And say that this kind of behavior is not acceptable. Does he plan to address any police groups or anything like that?

JEAN-PIERRE: I understand the question, Andrew, but I think the President has been very clear. He's been very clear on the importance of having true reform, of the important of [sic] making

sure that communities feel safe. He took action, right? He took executive action to deal with that specific — specific issue and — and that's what he's going to continue to do. He's going to, you know, use the tools that he can by taking executive action and call on Congress to truly make meaningful reform that's going to deal with an issue. That is devastating, you know, disproportionately unfortunately, black and brown communities. [TO DOOCY] Go ahead.

JAMES ROSEN: In the back?

REPORTER: Karine!

PETER DOOCY: Thanks, Karine. So, when you talk about infrastructure, you say it's important for the President to have a chance to speak directly to the American people. Why doesn't he directly want to speak directly to the American people now that some big cities are bracing potentially this weekend for riots?

JEAN-PIERRE: So, he put out a statement yesterday and I think when a statement comes from the President of the United States, it has a powerful impact and he was very clear in that statement. He offered his condolences to the family of Tyre — Tyre Nichols. He also joined the family in calling for peaceful protests. That is an important statement that the President could make and you have me here reiterating what the President has said and we're going to continue to do that. It's not the first time — I've laid out the Dobbs decision was — was a time where we were calling for peaceful protests and there's been other times even before then. So — and let's not forget, Election Day where we did the same, so I think the President's words really matter. They have weight and it's important that we — the American people heard from him directly.

DOOCY: Okay. On the documents, have any more classified documents been located in any places associated with President Biden?

JEAN-PIERRE: I would refer you to the White House counsel's office.

DOOCY: Okay and why do White House officials insist that the President self-reported the classified materials if his lawyers initially called the White House and not the Justice Department?

JEAN-PIERRE: I would refer you to the White House counsel.

DOOCY: But we heard from this podium the other day that President Biden self-reported the materials. That's not what — exactly what happened here.

JEAN-PIERRE: Who did you hear that from?

DOOCY: John Kirby.

JEAN-PIERRE: Well, I would refer you to the White House counsel.

(....)

3:03:20 p.m.

46 seconds

NIKKI SCHWAB: On the Elon Musk meeting, did his Twitter ownership come up at all?

JEAN-PIERRE: No.

SCHWAB: And what about the topic of Hunter Biden's laptop?

JEAN-PIERRE: I would — I would refer to — to Hunter's representatives on that.

SCHWAB: Thanks, though.

[REPORTERS SHOUTING]

ROSEN: To the back?

JEAN-PIERRE [TO BENNETT]: Go ahead, Brian.

BRIAN BENNETT: Thank you, Karine. I want to go back to November 2. Why didn't the President go public on November 2 when he found out from his lawyers that classified documents were found in his —

JEAN-PIERRE: I would refer you to the White House counsel, who is — who has — who has put out a — a statements [sic] on this — on their timeline and talking — speaking through this — my colleagues from the White House counsel has had conversations with many of you answering questions on this. I would refer you to the White House counsel.

BENNETT: Wasn't there a time before there was federal investigation when he could have gone public —

JEAN-PIERRE: I would —

BENNETT: — at that point? Why — why wouldn't —

JEAN-PIERRE: — I would refer you to my — the White House counsel.