SEUNG MIN KIM: President Biden decided to block the release of the audio interview with the special counsel. And, obviously, the letter from the White House counsel laid out the reasons about the concerns of being used for political purposes. But that seems to imply that the White House is concerned that these could be politically damaging. So why not just release that, especially with this White House’s commitment to transparency?

KARINE JEAN-PIERRE: Well, one — for one, the transcripts, as you all know, is already out there. I think the second piece of this too to note is that the attorney general made it clear that law enforcement files like these need to be protected. And so, the President made his determination at the request of the attorney general. So, just want to make that second point that I made really clear. The Department of Justice and the White House counsel's office have provided extensive written letters, as you all know. I'm sure some of you have read this on this issue. And like I said, that you have seen and so — so, when it comes to anything further or any specifics, obviously, I would — I would — I would refer you to my colleagues at the White House counsel's office. But those are the — just to make that — that second point again very clear, this was taken by determination — presidential determination at the request of the — of the attorney general and wanted to make sure the attorney general wanted to make sure that — that law enforcement files like these must be protected.

KIM: But does the White House feel that the recording — the audio could be politically harmful since that point was also raised in the letter?

JEAN-PIERRE: So, I can’t — I don't want to get into — dive into the specific — uh — uh — point that you're making about the politics. I would have to seriously refer you to our counsel's office on that. But there were determination [sic] that the president took very seriously on behalf of the — obviously, at the request of the attorney general, and that's how this decision was made.

SELINA WANG: Just to follow up on what Seung Min was asking for. Speaker Mike Johnson said that President Biden is 'apparently afraid for citizens to hear' his interview with special counsel Robert Hur. How is the White House responding to that criticism?

JEAN-PIERRE: I would say the transcripts are already out there. They've been out there — uh — they have been released to the public. The public has an opportunity to hear directly from the President and what — or to read and what exactly the President said. The attorney general made it clear that law enforcement files like these need to be protected, and that's the determination
that was made. Anything further — anything specifics [sic], I was — certainly would refer you to my colleagues, but that was a determination that was made and, again, anything more to that. I would refer you to my colleagues.

WANG: You talked about transcripts being released, but as you know, hearing something and reading it is very different and if the transcript is already out there, why is it different to have the audio there?

JEAN-PIERRE: Like I said, there were determinations that the President — that was made by the President at the request of the attorney general, and so we took that very seriously. The President took that very seriously. And so, that's what I would say to your question.

WANG: Thanks.

(....)

2:32:13 p.m.
3 minutes and 26 seconds

KAREN TRAVERS: I want to ask you about the topic that's getting a lot of attention. The Kansas City Chiefs kicker Harrison Butker is facing criticism for his recent commencement address where he told female graduates that the most important title a woman can hold is homemaker. He was critical about surrogacy, IVF, and Pride Month, and he also criticized the President for being a Catholic who supports abortion rights. Has the President seen those comments? Does he have a reaction to that?

JEAN-PIERRE: You know — ah — the President's been pretty busy today, so I haven't had a chance to — to focus on this particular issue. I think I've heard some reports on it. Look, the President is not going to back away from supporting women and reproductive rights, reproductive health care. It is important to do that. It is important to fight for all of our freedoms, and that's what you're seeing the President do. He's not going to back away from that and look, I can't speak to this specific thing because I haven't heard it in — in — in its entirety. But, look, you know, you have a former administration that — uh — that had said — a former president that said, over and over again that they were going to do everything they can to get rid of Roe v. Wade, was successful in doing that, by putting forward judges that made that happen. We saw the Dobbs decision in 2022 and what that caused is chaos. It caused women to — to have to — do — you know — to have — you know, be in a position to not get the health care that they need. I mean, that's — should not be where we are as a country. It should not be. And then you have extreme Republicans that continue to talk about — to talk about how they want to put national abortion ban. It's causing chaos. It's causing chaos for women. It's causing chaos for families. When you're saying that a family can't make a decision on IVF, that's not what this President is about. He wants to make sure that women have the right to make these incredibly difficult decisions about their health care, so families could make a decision about how they want to build and — and move forward with building a family. And so I can't — I can't speak to those direct comments, but what I can speak to is what the president has committed to, and he has shown that
over and over again and you have a Vice President that has toured the country talking exactly about that, about how we have to protect our freedoms and freedoms of — of — obviously, reproductive health as — as we're speaking right now.

TRAVERS: I know you said can't speak to the comments.

JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah.

TRAVERS: As the President gets ready to give his own commencement address, does he think a message like that is appropriate at a commencement address?

JEAN-PIERRE: From — from this particular —

TRAVERS: Yes. Mmhmm.

JEAN-PIERRE: — look again, I haven't heard — I haven't heard this in context. I — I saw some reporting, so want to be super mindful. Look, the — the President sees commencement day as such an important moment for not just the students, but for their families, obviously, their loved ones to talk about the future, to talk about how — how they — how in the world that we are in — that — in the world that we're in now, how do we move forward? And you're [sic] hear with themes from this President on that particular message, and he understands how critical and important that have those messages — especially a message from the President of the United States, how much it matters. I don't want to get ahead of the President. He's going to, obviously, layout and speak to his commencement address on his own, but he's done this many times before. He's done — he's done this when — he's — given commencement address as a senator, has done it, obviously as Vice President, and now President, and this is an incredible important, impactful — impactful moment.

(....)

2:41:41 p.m.
38 seconds

MICHAEL WILNER: The governor of Florida signed a bill today that effectively erases all references to climate change in Florida law. Ah, do you have a response?

JEAN-PIERRE: That's — uh — pretty shameful — uh — and —uh — you know, the President, as you know, has been the most progressive — uh — has done more on climate change than any other president — uh — and — uh — and so, we are committed — committed in dealing with this crisis and meeting our goals and you have heard from this President — it is unfortunate — it is unfortunate that there are climate deniers still out there. There's a lot more work that we need to do and so, we think that's shameful.

(....)
PETER DOOCY: The deputy director of ICE is telling us that two Jordanian nationals are in removal proceedings now after posing as Amazon delivery drivers to crash the gates at Quantico. Does the White House think this might have been a failed terrorist attack?

JEAN-PIERRE: So, going to be really mindful — these two Jordanians that you're speaking of remain in ICE — ICE custody, and given that it is an active law enforcement matter, so I would have to refer you to ICE, I just can't dive into this because again, they there's a law enforcement — this is a law enforcement matter.

DOOCY: Something totally different.

JEAN-PIERRE: Oh, gosh. [REPORTERS LAUGH] Where is this going?

DOOCY: Have you heard —

JEAN-PIERRE: Oh, no!

DOOCY: — that Vice President Harris is telling friends that she may go back to California and run for governor if the election does not go her way?

JEAN-PIERRE: Ha ha. That is news to me. I — I would say this. Um — the Vice President has been a great partner to this President. He is appreciative of the work that she has done. It is impressive what she's been able to do on these tours that she has done on reproductive rights, her leadership on gun violence — to fight gun violence across the country, prevention, obviously, and leading the first historic office coming out of the White House. She has been an amazing partner and the President appreciates her, appreciates her leadership, and that's all I'll say to that.

DOOCY: And, last one —

JEAN-PIERRE: Oh, gosh!

DOOCY: — why is President Biden celebrating today the Dow reaching 40,000 if his position, dating back to 2021 about the stock market, is “that's not how I judge whether or not we have economic growth”?

JEAN-PIERRE: So, while we have long said that the stock market is not the economy, and we have said that, to your point, it's clear that what will say is that the President — President Biden's economic plan is working. It's growing the middle class, as you hear us talk about all the time, spurs investment in manufacturing, created almost 800,000 jobs in this administration alone and infrastructure and outperformed other countries. That's what the President has been very focused on. Record stock market highs under President Biden are good for retirement accounts and household wealth and that is just a fact. And so, which we — which, you know, we would never
root for a stock market crash or for Americans to lose their jobs. That’s something that we would never root for from here, but, obviously, you know, the stock market — again — is not the economy, but we believe that the President's economic — President Biden’s economic plan is working. Again, growing the middle class, and I think that's a good thing. I think we should be really grateful for that for the American people.