

White House press briefing [via Newsmax's *Newsline*]

10/03/25

1:16:08 p.m.

8 minutes and 11 seconds

KAROLINE LEAVITT: President Trump will end the radical left's reign of terror in Portland once and for all. The President has directed Secretary Hegseth to provide all necessary troops to protect war ravaged Portland and any ICE facilities under siege from attack by Antifa and other left-wing domestic terrorists. What's been allowed to happen in Portland — and we saw disturbing video footage of this last night — this is not peaceful protesting. This is left-wing anarchy that has been destroying this great American city for years, leaving police officers battered, citizens terrorized and business properties damaged. Since early June alone, Antifa terrorists have laid siege to the ice field office in South Portland. These radical left-wing lunatics have violently breached the ICE facility by using a stop sign as a battering ram, hurled explosives and other projectiles at law enforcement, repeatedly assault and doxxed officers, berate their law-abiding neighbors, and have even rolled out a guillotine in front of the ICE facility in. And more people should be reporting on that. President Trump has sent federal law enforcement to protect federal assets and arrest those fueling this violence. Just last night, we saw an extremely troubling incident where conservative journalist Nick Schtor was captured on video being taken into custody — custody by the Portland police after he was ambushed by Antifa and was defending himself from these assaults. But instead of arresting these violent mob members night after night after night who are ravaging this community, the police arrested a journalist who was there trying to document the chaos. And everyone in this room should be extremely concerned about that. The Department of Justice spoke with that journalist this morning, and they will be launching a full investigation into his arrest. This incident is part of a troubling trend in Portland, where left-wing mobs believe they get to decide who can visit and live in their city. It is not their city, it is the American people's city, and President Trump is going to restore that. I just spoke with the President about this, and he has directed his team here at the White House to begin reviewing aid that can potentially be cut in Portland. We will not fund states that allow anarchy. There will also be an additional surge of federal resources to Portland's immediately, including enhanced CBP and ICE resources. Law and order will prevail, and President Trump will make sure of it. With that, I'll take your questions, and we will begin today's briefing with our new media seat. Amanda Head from Just the News. Amanda, thank you for being here. Thank you.

AMANDA HEAD: On that most recent topic that you mentioned, reportedly Portland police have not been able to engage protesters to the degree that they normally would. Does the President plan on handling this from that angle as well with city leaders?

LEAVITT: Yes. From our understanding in the law enforcement that we have here in the Homeland Security Task Force, I spoke with them this morning, and what they're seeing is that, unfortunately, local police has been restricted from responding or cooperating at all with federal authorities, which is completely absurd. We have surged federal law enforcement personnel to this city to restore law and order and to work alongside local law enforcement. And we've seen the benefits — the benefits of this in Washington, DC. and all of you live here. So you can agree. Washington, D.C. is and feels much safer because of the cooperation between federal and local

law enforcement. They can and must be working together and we think it's despicable that these local elected officials who swear an oath to protect their people, are preventing law enforcement from doing their jobs on the ground. So, that's why the President has directed his team here at the White House, and they are already on it to look in to how we can cut funds. And the President wants to work with anyone. If the mayor of Portland were to call him right now and say, Mr. President, please help us, I am sure the President would be willing to do that. He is genuinely serious about wanting to restore order in America's cities. But it's become apparent that the local and elected officials in Oregon do not feel the same. And that's very unfortunate for the people who live there.

HEAD: And then one more question on the government shutdown. Should there be some type of scheduled layoffs to maybe entice Democrats to come to the table, like every hour, another agency, another 100 pink slips? I'm sure Russ Vought has a list of folks ready to go.

LEAVITT: Well, look, the Office of Management and Budget, as we've said repeatedly, is working with the agencies and our cabinet secretaries to identify where cuts, unfortunately, can and have to be made. And again, we understand there's another vote happening on the Senate floor in an hour. Maybe if Democrats do the right thing, this government shutdown can be over. Our troops can get paid again. We can go back to doing the business of the American people. But if this shutdown continues, as we've said, layoffs are an unfortunate consequence of that and Russ Vought has been in contact with our cabinet secretaries at their respective agencies to discuss that.

HEAD: Thank you.

LEAVITT: Thank you, Amanda. [TO O'DONNELL] Kelly.

KELLY O'DONNELL: How would this administration define what makes a Democrat agency, which agencies and what constitutes being a Democrat agency?

LEAVITT: I think this administration has been very clear, Kelly, that we're not going to tolerate waste, fraud, and abuse in our government. And we've also been very clear to point out when agencies or when programs do not align with this administration's values of putting our country first. You've seen that with said and in various other cases where there's been cuts made or funding has been slashed. And so, again, unfortunately, we're having to do a massive review of the bureaucracy to be good stewards of the American taxpayer dollar. And it's the Democrats who have forced the White House and the President into this position by voting to shut the government down.

O'DONNELL: You've talked about thousands likely layoffs coming. Do you have an update on the timeline for that? How quickly? And if the government is restored to funding and back in operation, will that list of potential layoffs still be on the table?

LEAVITT: Look, as I just stated, the Office of Management and Budget is in constant communication and contact right now with our cabinet secretaries and agencies across the board

to identify, unfortunately, where layoffs have to be made and where cuts have to happen. But again, the Democrats have an opportunity to prevent this if they vote to reopen the government, that is all this administration and the President is asking for vote for a clean, continuing resolution to keep the government open. [TO DOOCY] Peter.

PETER DOOCY: Thank you. Caroline. During the campaign —

LEAVITT: Thank you, Peter.

DOOCY: I was raised to say thank you in the White House Briefing Room. During the campaign, President Trump said that he did not know anything about Project 2025. Now he knows about it. Is that the blueprint for shrinking the government?

LEAVITT: Look, the blueprint is what the President and his team and his cabinet secretaries ultimately decide. And the president trusts his cabinet secretaries to identify where there is waste, fraud and abuse. We pointed out this morning or Russ Vought tweeted about this morning Chicago rail project that was canceled. We paused \$2.1 billion in Chicago infrastructure projects, specifically the red line extension and the red and purple modernization projects. And it's because the administration is concerned that the Biden administration was handing out taxpayer dollars to pay for this construction based on DEI. DOT is reviewing the race-based contracting on unconstitutional grounds. And in the meantime, the Department of Transportation funds for these projects are on hold, so I guess this answers both of your questions. This would be an example of that.

DOOCY: And just because there's so much shutdown talk, something different. What do you guys think about the NFL's decision —

LEAVITT: Oh, boy.

DOOCY: — to name Bad Bunny as the Super Bowl halftime performer, somebody who has not scheduled shows in the us because he says that he is worried that ICE is going to come and arrest his fans.

LEAVITT: Well, look, I know there are many in this room who are very anxious to hear the President's response to Bad Bunny being the halftime show, so I won't get ahead of him. I won't reveal what he feels about this. Next time you all ask him a question, you're welcome to do that. I have my own feelings on that, but that's not what I'm up here to talk about. As far as ICE being at the Super Bowl, as far as I'm aware, there's no tangible plan for that in store right now. However, of course, this administration is always going to arrest and deport illegal immigrants when we find them. If they are criminals, we're going to do the right thing by our country.

(....)

1:24:44 p.m.  
3 minutes

KATE SULLIVAN: On Hamas, the President said that if Hamas rejects the proposal, that Netanyahu would have his full backing to finish the job. A UN report found that Israel was committing genocide in Gaza. Does the President have concerns about the civilians being killed, the worsening humanitarian crisis, and are there limits to what the White House would support when it comes to Israel's actions in Gaza?

LEAVITT: Look, the President has deep concerns about all of the atrocities that have taken place in the Middle East over the past few years. It's deeply unfortunate that he inherited this mess from the Biden administration. If you all recall, under President Trump in his first term, the Middle East was on a pathway for peace and prosperity. There was the historic signing of the Abraham Accords. Israel was on a path to normalization between Arab and Gulf nations, and we hope that can continue. But right now, the President has made it very clear to Hamas that this is an acceptable and detailed proposal that they must accept, accept, or the consequences are going to be very grave for them and he has given them a deadline of Sunday evening at 6 p.m. When I was out here on Wednesday, I told all of you, I'll leave it to the President to make that red line. And he now has. I think the entire world should hear the President of the United States loud and clear, and Hamas has an opportunity to accept this plan and to move forward in a peaceful and prosperous manner in the region. And if they don't, the consequences, unfortunately, are going to be very tragic. [TO CARTER] Michael.

MIKE CARTER: Thank you. Caroline. Has the President declared war on international drug cartels and if so, or if he will, does he feel he needs congressional approval?

LEAVITT: As the White House has said many times, the President has directed these actions, these strikes against Venezuelan drug cartels and these boats, consistent with his responsibility to protect the United States interests abroad and in furtherance of the U.S. National security and foreign policy interests. This is pursuant to his constitutional authority as Commander in Chief and the Chief Executive to conduct foreign relations. In each of these cases, Michael, the vessels have been assessed by the U.S. intelligence community to be affiliated with designated terrorist organizations engaged at the time in trafficking illicit drugs to our country. The President has been very clear, dating back to the campaign trail, that he is always going to do what's in the best interest of the American homeland, and he also promised the American people he was going to drug — end the drug epidemic that has taken far too many American lives and you're seeing those actions play out almost every single day here.

CARTER: Last question on the shutdown, Karoline, Hakeem Jeffries has said that President Trump is in the presidential witness protection program since the shutdown has begun. What's the White House's reaction to that?

LEAVITT: That's just more ridiculous fodder from Hakeem Jeffries, as you all know, because you're here every day, the President is literally working around the clock right now. I think he has a swearing in ceremony or he already did. He has several meetings on the books today. He literally works 24/7. Anyone who works in this place or covers this place, as you all do, knows that to be true. And Hakeem Jeffries and the Senate Democrats should get back to work in a few minutes and vote to reopen the government.

(....)

1:28:17 p.m.

3 minutes and 6 seconds

LIBBEY DEAN: I have two questions for you. One on the FDA, but first, on the shutdown.

LEAVITT: Sure.

DEAN: Will the administration, if this government shutdown ends, still move forward with firing thousands of federal workers?

LEAVITT: Look, as I've said repeatedly, Libbey, right now, we want the government to be open. Layoffs are an unfortunate consequence of a government shutdown, and it's something the administration is examining. If the government is reopened, we're going to get back to doing what we were doing last week and the week before, working on the issues that the American people care about.

DEAN: And then on the FDA, they just approved that new abortion pill. And it's causing a lot of uproar among Republicans, is — what is the President's response to that? And does the administration plan to have that — pull that FDA approval?

LEAVITT: Well, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, Bobby Kennedy, has put out several statements on this. The HHS decision. It's not an endorsement of this drug by any means. They are just simply following the law. And as they put out in their statement by law, "the Secretary of Health and Human Services must approve a generic drug application if the application demonstrates the generic drug is the "same" as the brand name drug. Generic applicants are not required to submit independent evidence proving safety and effectiveness. As such, FDA's decision to approve a generic version does not address the merits of the current safety program." HHS is reviewing adverse effects to ensure the FDA's required safety program for the drug is sufficient to protect women. The safety review equally applies to generic versions of this drug, so FDA and HHS are following the law. It's, again, not an endorsement of the drug itself. [TO BRUCE] Mary.

MARY BRUCE: Thanks, Karoline. Two questions on the shutdown. You've argued that these impending layoffs are necessary to keep essential services up and running, but that has never been the case in any previous shutdown. Even when the government was shut down for 35 days in Trump's first term, you've never had to lay off thousands of workers to keep essential services up and running. So, why are layoffs now necessary in this shutdown?

LEAVITT: Because we have an administration, and we have a president who are wholeheartedly focused on restoring fiscal sanity to our government and doing the right thing by the American taxpayer. We are \$37 trillion in debt in the federal government is currently shut down. There is no more money coming into the federal government's coffers And as you've also seen since the beginning in January, this administration is focusing on waste, fraud and abuse. And so,

Democrats have given this administration an unenviable choice to have to take a look at the balance sheet and identify where these cuts and layoffs can be made.

BRUCE: And you just said this is an unenviable choice, that this is an unfortunate consequence. But the President has described this as an unprecedented opportunity to lay off additional workers. He's posted a video likening Russ Vought to the Grim Reaper. So which is this? Is this an opportunity to hire more workers or an unfortunate consequence?

LEAVITT: Look, the President likes to have a little fun every now and then. And I think both things can be true at the same time. The Democrats have given the administration this opportunity, and we don't like laying people off. Nobody takes joy in that around here. And if you think that, then I think that's very sad. You view the White House and our staff as wanting to put people out of work. Nobody wants to do that. But sometimes in government you have to make tough decisions.

(...)

1:34:52 p.m.

3 minutes and 34 seconds

LINDA KENYON: At the top of the briefing, you made a statement about that the Democrats are interested in giving health care to illegal immigrants.

LEAVITT: Yes they are.

KENYON: U.S. law already prohibits that. It's a 1996 law saying that they cannot give unauthorized immigrants any federally subsidized health care coverage through Medicaid, the Affordable Care Act, or the Children's Health Insurance Program. There seems to be a disconnect in the messaging.

LEAVITT: Are you are you denying that Medicaid money has never gone to illegal aliens in the United States of America?

KENYON: I'm asking you if you can explain the disconnect in the messaging.

LEAVITT: I most certainly can. The Democrats proposal their continuing resolution. Let me just reiterate, the Republicans continuing resolution was a clean continuing resolution. There was no partisan politics injected into it. There were no conservative wish lists injected to it. What the Republicans want and still want to this very second is a clean, continuing resolution to fund the United States government. What did the Democrats want in their continuing resolution? They inserted a provision to undo a provision in the Working Families Tax Cut, the One Big Beautiful Bill that ended taxpayer funded health care, illegal benefits for illegal aliens. Democrats proposal would require Medicaid to pay more for emergency care provided to illegal aliens than Medicaid does for American patients who are disabled, elderly, or children. And this bill would have also allowed California to continue a gimmick that funds its Medicaid for illegals program. Those are

things that we ended. The Trump administration ended with the passage and the signage of the One Big Beautiful Bill. And it is an undisputed fact — a fact — that, under the Biden administration, illegal aliens were absolutely receiving taxpayer funded health care benefits. In fact, in fiscal year 2020, for Medicaid costs, for emergency services for illegal immigrants skyrocketed by 142% from the previous year to \$9.1 billion. That's 9.1 billion taxpayer dollars that were going to emergency services for illegals. Between President Trump's last full fiscal year under his first administration and Joe Biden's last full fiscal year, Medicaid spending on emergency services for illegal immigrants nearly tripled. There was an increase of 196% between 2020 and 2024. And I have a chart here for you, and I'm more than happy to email it to you. I'd also like to add, because some were asking dishonest questions yesterday about emergency rooms. In Southern California, according to health care professionals, in 2023, under the Biden administration, Southern California's, "entire health care system was being bombarded with illegal immigrants and forcing American patients to endure longer wait times." In Denver, Colorado, the CEO of Denver Health stated that 8000 illegal immigrants made 20,000 visits to the city's health system in 2023, leaving an uncompensated bill totaling over \$10 million. So an illegal alien goes to the emergency room, who's paying for it? The American taxpayer, the main safety net hospital in Denver, had to turn away patients due to the massive influx of illegal immigrants into the community and UC Health hospitals in 2024 reported their system was under stress from an increasing number of migrants. As a result, according to the head of emergency departments and urgent cares across the hospital system, "access is impeded for everyone." These are health care professionals who dealt with this directly, and there's a lot more where that came from. It is an undisputed fact that Democrats want to give taxpayer funded health care benefits to illegal immigrants, period.

1:42:04 p.m.

3 minutes and 12 seconds

ELIZABETH LANDERS: We've seen a spate of gun violence in this country, both mass shootings. We've seen this Michigan church that was attacked, children being shot in pews in Minnesota. We've also seen politically motivated assassinations of Minnesota lawmakers. Charlie Kirk — has any of this made the President or the White House rethink gun safety prevention in this country? Either red flag laws — I know that that was a conversation in the first Trump administration — or is there anything on the table right now on gun violence?

LEAVITT: Of course, this is an extremely pressing issue for the administration in our entire country. It's deeply alarming to everyone here. The violence that we've seen taking place all over the country, the assassinations that have unfortunately, tragically taken place throughout the last several months. There are many discussions about how to prevent such violence, and how we can ensure that law enforcement has the resources they can on the ground to not only respond, but again, to prevent such tragedies from taking place. If there are red flags with an individual in a community that they are treated as an emergency, a public safety emergency, not just, you know, turn a blind eye to there's many other things we can do, but the administration and the president has always also made it clear he's always going to protect the constitutional right, Second Amendment, constitutional right of Americans to own — own guns.

LANDERS: Will he advocate for Congress to pass a federal red flag law? Right now, they just incentivize states financially to have red flag laws, but I know Lindsey Graham has worked on this as a Republican. There are some Republicans that do support this kind of gun safety legislation.

LEAVITT: I don't wanna get ahead of the President on any congressional action or any suggestion to Congress on that matter. [TO FEINBERG] Andrew.

ANDREW FEINBERG: Thank you, Karoline. Two — two things. First, to follow up on something you said earlier about hospitals treating undocumented or illegal aliens, is it the administration's position that hospitals should not have to treat people who come into the emergency department who are not here legally?

LEAVITT: No, that's not our position. Our position is that it's completely unacceptable that the Biden administration paroled and encouraged an invasion of tens of millions of illegal aliens into our country, and then promised them free health care and the Democrats are on the record repeatedly stating that they believe illegal aliens should have health care benefits, free health care benefits in the United States of America, so that is a recipe for disaster. Of course, you're going to encourage a mass illegal invasion of our country, which is exactly what happened and we've seen the unfortunate consequence of that, where American patients are being put last, where American patients are having to wait in waiting rooms, where grandmothers and grandfathers are waiting hours and hours for care because they're being put behind the line to illegal aliens and we don't agree with that. We don't support that. That's why the administration is desperately trying to fix it and deport the tens of millions of illegal aliens that the Democrats and the Biden administration allowed into our country, and we'd love to continue doing that work so long as the federal government is reopened and there are many federal law enforcement agents and officers right now who are working without pay. That's unacceptable. The Democrats need to reopen the United States government, and we hope that they will do the right thing on the Senate floor in just a few moments.