

NBC's *Today*

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[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Trump Wraps Up Republican Midterm Convention]

CRAIG MELVIN: But we do have some other news to get here on a Friday morning, including politics and the race to November's midterms. President Trump facing growing pushback on that pledge to give every American \$5,000 if Republicans hold the House and Senate, but doubling down on the final night of the GOP's convention in Dallas, that midterm convention. NBC's senior White House correspondent Gabe Gutierrez has the latest for us. Good morning.

GABE GUTIERREZ: Craig, good morning, Craig. President Trump is back here at the White House on this rainy and somber morning. He is promising to ramp up his travel schedule over the next few weeks to campaign for his party's candidates. At Republicans' midterm convention last night, Vice President JD Vance may have been the official headliner –

VICE PRESIDENT JD VANCE: Hello, Dallas.

GUTIERREZ: – but President Trump again took center stage, trying to rally his base –

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: You know what happens if you don't vote? You go to hell.

GUTIERREZ: – urging his supporters not to stay home on election day and pledge --

TRUMP: That I will go out with my family, my friends. I will do it anyway, I don't care if I'm registered or not, I'm going to try to cheat like hell like they do.

GUTIERREZ: The Vice President, meanwhile, speaking directly to skeptical Republicans worried about the economy and the Iran war, which has driven up gas prices.

VANCE: Do not throw the baby out with the bath water. [SCREEN WIPE] Don't give the country over to a bunch of crazy people because you happen to disagree with us on a policy issue.

GUTIERREZ: Despite diesel topping \$6 a gallon for the first time overnight, the President is brushing off any second-guessing about the war.

TRUMP [on FNC's *Ingraham Angle*, 09/10/26]: I don't believe in the word "regret." You can always question yourself a little bit. If I had it to do again, I would do it exactly as I did.

GUTIERREZ: He is also facing questions about his promise to give every American adult a \$5,000 check if Republicans keep control of Congress this November.

TRUMP: I didn't do it for turning out the vote. I do it as a reward for people having to put up with five years and four years of horrible, a horrible situation caused by Biden.

GUTIERREZ: Last year, he gave \$1,776 bonuses to military members but other similar rebates he floated never happened. Democrats are calling the latest so-called dividend a stunt intended to bribe voters.

CONGRESSMAN ROBERT GARCIA (D-CA); The dividend is not happening.

GUTIERREZ: The President pressed about the timing.

LAURA INGRAHAM [TO TRUMP] [on FNC's *The Ingraham Angle*, 09/10/26]: If you have the money, why not give it now?

TRUMP [on FNC's *The Ingraham Angle*, 09/10/26]: I tell you what, because the Democrats can't do it.

GUTIERREZ: Still, at least one Republican locked in a tight reelection battle, Senator Susan Collins of Maine, is questioning the proposal's price tag, which could top \$1.3 trillion. The President saying yesterday that he does not think he needs congressional approval for the payout, but that he would get it, if necessary, Craig.

MELVIN: Gabe Gutierrez from the White House for us. Gabe, thank you. Let's bring in Kristen Welker, moderator of *Meet the Press*. Good morning to you. The stated goal of this first-ever midterm convention there in Texas was to get the base excited. Did they accomplish that, Kristen?

KRISTEN WELKER: Well, Craig, look, there's no doubt President Trump fired up the Republican base in Dallas. He did it with one guiding principle. He asked the audience to pretend that he's on the ballot, even asking them, Craig, at one point to take a pledge of allegiance to him. His other strategy seems to be to paint Democrats as a party to be feared. The President, other top Republicans calling them communists, crazy, as you heard from the Vice President. But, look, it is going to take more than the base to win critical battleground states like Michigan and Maine where recent polls show the Senate candidates there are running neck and neck with Democrats. And, as you heard Gabe reference, it is unclear how that \$5,000 dividend payout to voters would work. It is estimated the proposal would cost more than a trillion dollars. And, while the President thinks he can get the money without congressional approval, there's a lot of disagreement about that. There are a lot of questions about where that money would come from when the national debt, Craig, is already more than \$40 trillion, so that's become yet another flashpoint.

MELVIN: Kristen, what about the undecideds? I mean, to your point, diesel again, as Gabe just reported, north of \$6 for the first time overnight. Gas prices have been stubbornly high since

the war with Iran started. Did the two-day convention do anything to move the needle with undecided voters?

WELKER: Well, it tried to, but I do think that's the question. Are Republicans doing enough to reach out to those undecided moderate voters? As you saw in his keynote address Thursday night, Vice President JD Vance made the argument to people who may disagree with the Iran war, saying don't throw the baby out with the bath water, essentially asking Americans not to vote against Republicans even if they disagree with their policies. A play for the middle, essentially. But, look, complicating the argument, President Trump acknowledged this week for the first time he doesn't expect the Iran war to end before the midterms. He doesn't expect gas prices to come down by November, and there are headwinds. A new Quinnipiac poll showing Trump's approval remains at 33 percent, while Democrats have an 11-point lead over the GOP when it comes to which party voters prefer to lead the House of Representatives, Craig.

MELVIN: Kristen Welker for us. Thank you. Of course, we will see you on Sunday because if it is Sunday, it is *Meet the Press*. Kristen will be talking to Speaker of the House Mike Johnson, former Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg and A.I. whistleblower Jacob Coxon, who made a lot of news this week.