

NBC's *Today*

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7:00:40 a.m. [TEASE]

18 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Major Push]

CRAIG MELVIN: Major push.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: They will destroy everything that we built.

MELVIN: President Trump now barnstorming the west ahead of the midterms, while candidates in key races across the battlegrounds clash in debates.

CONGRESSWOMAN ASHLEY HINSON (R-IA): We need to lower gas prices in this country.

MELVIN: Everything you need to know with less than three weeks to go.

(...)

7:08:13 a.m.

2 minutes and 59 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Trump's Big Push Across Battleground States]

LAURA JARRETT: We move to politics now and the push to the midterms, now less than three weeks away. President Trump in the middle of a campaign swing out west, including an overnight stop in Alaska, while his policies take center stage at debates all across the country. We have two reports for you, starting with NBC's Garrett Haake. He's traveling with the President and joining us from Las Vegas. Garrett, good morning.

GARRETT HAAKE: Hey, Laura, good morning. Yeah, President Trump starts his day here in Las Vegas before attending rallies in Arizona and Montana. He, of course, is not on the ballot in these midterms, but as he made clear at his event last night in Alaska, his policies and his legacy are on the line. Overnight, President Trump rallying Republicans on the last frontier.

TRUMP: Nobody has done more for Alaska than Donald J. Trump has.

HAAKE: The President campaigning in Alaska on behalf of embattled Republican Senator Dan Sullivan, locked in a tight re-election race with Democrat Mary Peltola.

TRUMP: I'm here because he's one of the best senators you have, one of the most respected senators that there is in Washington.

HAAKE: Mr. Trump won Alaska by 14 points just two years ago. His appearance in a

battleground contest NBC News now rates as a toss-up, an indication of the strong headwinds facing Republicans heading into November. Despite his 39 percent approval rating and NBC News polling average, the President again asking voters to act as though he is on the ballot.

TRUMP: Pretend, if you will, I'm on the ballot. And actually, I am on the ballot. Because they will destroy everything that we've built.

HAAKE: This morning, early voting is now underway in 20 states, including Iowa, a state President Trump won three times, but where Democrats are hoping to flip as many as three House seats, as well as the governor's mansion, and an open Senate seat. In last night's Senate debate, both candidates focused on rising costs.

HINSON: We need to lower gas prices in this country. We need to lower diesel prices, but I don't think we need to be making a deal with Russia to do it.

STATE SENATOR JOSH TUREK (D-IA): I know that you're struggling, just to keep food on the table, a roof above your head, and keep gas in the tank.

HAAKE: While in Maine, it was the war in Iran taking center stage.

FORMER STATE SENATE PRESIDENT TROY JACKSON (D-ME): If she wants to stop the war, she can cut the funding off for the war, but she's not willing to do that, because Donald Trump wants this.

SENATOR SUSAN COLLINS (R-ME): I voted with the Democrats to bring the war to an end, but there were not sufficient votes for that to happen.

HAAKE: The President's travel schedule gives us more clues about Republican concern about that midterm math. The President going to Montana today to defend a Republican House seat there. And we're learning that he's planning to travel to Kansas next week, a late-developing battleground that hasn't sent a Democrat to the Senate in nearly a century, Laura.

JARRETT: Alright, Garrett, thank you. And a quick note on the midterms leading up to Election Day. NBC's Tom Iltis will be doing special editions of *Nightly News* from key battleground states, speaking to candidates and gauging the mood of voters, and it starts tonight live from Detroit, Michigan.

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7:13:02 a.m.
55 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: New White House Press Secretary Holds First Briefing]

GABE GUTIERREZ: Guilfoyle's dismissal announced by new White House Press Secretary

Katie Zacharia during her inaugural briefing.

KATIE ZACHARIA: I want to thank President Trump for his trust that he has placed in me. I have wanted to work for him for a very long time.

GUTIERREZ: Zacharia, a former conservative commentator, holding an unusually short session with reporters, later departing for Alaska with the President —

TRUMP: I thought she was very good.

GUTIERREZ: But facing questions about her background.

UNIDENTIFIED WHITE HOUSE REPORTER [TO ZACHARIA]: Where did you pass the bar exam? Which state?

TRUMP [TO ZACHARIA]: Which state?

UNIDENTIFIED WHITE HOUSE REPORTER [TO ZACHARIA]: Can you tell us?

ZACHARIA: When I moved to China.

GUTIERREZ: The President has called her an attorney, though there is no record of her passing the California bar exam. The White House says Zacharia moved to China years ago because of her husband's job with an American private equity firm, and that she practiced international transactional law with all of the appropriate credentials.