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PRESS BRIEFING
BY PRESS SECRETARY SEAN SPICER

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

1:15 P.M. EDT

MR. SPICER: Good afternoon, everyone. There's a lot going on today, so I'm going to keep this on the briefer side.

This morning, the President announced the official approval of the presidential permit for the Keystone XL pipeline. The last administration spent eight years delaying this enormous investment in American energy independence. President Trump is moving this project forward in just eight weeks. And just as he promised, it's an even better deal for the American people than before he took office. This project will directly generate an estimated 16,100 jobs, according to the State Department -- all without spending a dime of taxpayer money.

In many ways, this project represented everything that was wrong with the infrastructure permitting of the United States. TransCanada spent an incredible amount of resources attempting to comply with government regulations, only to be denied and delayed for political reasons. But the days of pointless government bureaucracy holding up progress and production have ended. By simply getting excessive, duplicative regulations out of the way, we can make infrastructure projects more attractive -- a more attractive prospect for private investors, and encourage even more projects like this one.

Immediately following the announcement by TransCanada, the President announced that Charter Communications has committed to investing \$25 billion here in the United States and hiring an additional 20,000 American workers over the next four years. Charter Communications is truly an example of how American leadership can turn a downturn entity into an amazing success.

Five years ago, Charter Communications was a struggling company that had slowly emerged from bankruptcy. Today, thanks to hard work and great leadership of Chairman and CEO Tom Rutledge, it is the fastest-growing television, Internet, and voice company in the nation. And, most importantly, as Charter grew, American jobs grew, as they brought back many jobs that had previously been shipped overseas. Today, Charter is also committed to completely ending its offshore call centers, basing 100 percent of them in the United States.

Together, the TransCanada and Charter Communications announcement demonstrate the new economic model of what the President called The American Model. By slashing job-killing regulations and reducing government burdens and lowering taxes, we will make it easier for all businesses to grow right here at home, generating jobs and boosting our economy by getting government out of the way.

Following these big announcements, the President had lunch with Secretary of the Treasury Steve Mnuchin. He was joined by Speaker Paul Ryan -- I'll get to in a second on that. Later in the afternoon, the President will host a Greek Independence Day celebration. And as I mentioned yesterday, at 4 o'clock he will meet with about two dozen Medal of Honor recipients to honor Medal of Honor Day, which is technically tomorrow. He's honored to be hosting these great men and women of our Armed Services, the greatest force for peace and justice the world has ever known.

And obviously, later today, the House will be voting on the American Health Care Act. The current vote is scheduled for 3:30 p.m. The President has been working the phones and having in-person meetings since the American Health Care Act was introduced. He's left everything on the field when it comes to this bill. The President and congressional Republicans promised the American people that they would repeal and replace this broken system.

Obamacare's Washington-driven, one-size-fits-all plan had seven years to prove its case, and look what it's left us with: Skyrocketing premiums -- on average, premiums for Obamacare benchmark plans increased 25 percent in 2017. Unaffordable deductibles -- the two most popular Obamacare health plans have average deductibles equivalent to 10 percent and 6 percent of the median American household income. With these high deductibles, many people have, technically, insurance, but

nothing that they can afford to use. Fewer choices -- one in five Americans have only one insurer offering Obamacare through exchanges. And, of course, higher taxes.

Key conservative groups like the Tea Party Express and the American Conservative Union have added themselves to a long list of organizations expressing their support for the American Health Care Act because they know it's our chance, after the American people have spent years suffering, to finally repeal and replace the nightmare of Obamacare. The President looks forward to seeing the House Republicans join with these influential voices and vote in favor of the American Health Care Act.

The President, as I mentioned, had Speaker Ryan come up here and visit with him to update him on the bill. They are continuing to discuss the way forward on this. The Speaker is updating him on his efforts. As I mentioned to you, the President has been working throughout the week on this, calling early -- starting early in the morning and working till late at night, calling with members, visiting members. By our count, over 120 members have personally had a visit, call, or meeting here at the White House in the past few days. This is an extraordinary feat. The President and his team have committed everything they can to making this thing happen. And the Speaker is going to continue to update him on the way forward.

Finally, a few administrative notes here at the end. Yesterday, senior-level United States and Israeli delegations concluded four days of intensive talks with a particular focus on concrete, near-term measures to improve the overall climate in order to advance the prospects of a genuine and lasting peace between Israel and Palestine.

The United States delegation was led by Jason Greenblatt, Special Representative for International Negotiation, and included representatives of the NSC and the Department of State. A principal focus of the discussion was specific measures that could have a meaningful impact on the economic environment in the West Bank and Gaza, allowing the Palestinians to more fully realize their economic potential.

The two delegations also discussed Israeli settlement construction. The fact that both governments dedicated such senior delegations for so many days reflects the close cooperation between these countries and the importance that both assign to this vital task.

Last night, the President announced his intention to nominate several key additional people to the administration, including Althea Coat-zee to be Deputy Administrator of the Small Business Administration; William Francis Hagerty IV to be ambassador to Japan; Robert Sumwalt III to be a member of the National Transportation Safety Board.

And also this morning, of note, the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia upheld the President's revised executive order protecting the nation from foreign people who seek to do us harm into the United States. We're pleased with this ruling, which found the plaintiffs have no likelihood of success on the merits of their claims. As the court correctly notes in its opinion, the President's order falls well within his legal authority to protect the nation's security. We're confident the President's fully lawful and necessary action will ultimately be allowed to move forward through the rest of the system -- court system.

In terms of the schedule for this weekend, the President will spend a working weekend here in Washington, and we'll update you with further details regarding his schedule.

With that, I'll get to your questions. Steve.

Q Sean, is it your understanding that you don't have the votes to pass the healthcare legislation? Is that the message that Speaker Ryan delivered today? And if so, what lessons do you draw from this process?

MR. SPICER: Well, I think the Speaker is currently having a conversation with him to talk about where that vote count stands. He's working with the members of -- you know the President made a sell. They had the Tuesday Group here. There were 17 members here; 16 walked out as a "yes." I think we've had a group of members that we've continued to have a conversation with and try to make -- frankly, at this point, it's not a question of negotiating anymore. It's understanding the greater good that's at hand.

The President understands this is it. We had this opportunity to change the trajectory of healthcare to help improve -- put a healthcare system in place and to end the nightmare that Republicans have campaigned on called Obamacare. I noted yesterday it was the seventh-year anniversary of Obamacare. We have an opportunity to make sure that was the

last one, and the question is, do members realize this opportunity.

There's no question in my mind at least that the President and the team here have left everything on the field. He has called every member that had a question or concern, tried to, to the extent possible, take into consideration ideas that would strengthen the bill. And it's now going to be up to the members of the House to decide whether or not they want to follow through on the promise to that.

But we're going to continue to work with the Speaker and the leadership there to see where the votes are. We're getting closer and closer, but you need to get to 216. And they're starting four hours of debate. I expect a vote somewhere around 3:30-4 o'clock hour. We'll see where we go.

Hunter.

Q Thank you, Sean. We're hearing that Paul Ryan and Mitch McConnell wanted to do a clean repeal and then replace over time. In retrospect, would that have been a better approach? And in general, do you think Paul Ryan has handled this well?

MR. SPICER: I don't know that that's entirely the case. I know that this was a joint effort. This is something that the House determined in terms of the three-pronged approach that we had. So I don't know that I necessarily agree with the assessment of how that happened.

Q And, in general, is the White House happy with how Paul Ryan has handled this?

MR. SPICER: I think the Speaker has done everything he can. He's worked really closely with the President. I think at the end of the day -- I said this yesterday -- you can't force people to vote. But I think we've given them every single reason to fulfill every pledge that they've made, and I think this is the right thing to do.

Maggie. I don't want you to live-Tweet this thing.

Q Thank you, Sean. What is the White House's view if this does not pass and there aren't the votes? What does this mean going forward for other pieces of the President's agenda -- tax reform being the big one?

MR. SPICER: Look, I've said it before, I don't think you can tie any of these together. That's just not -- I think there's a huge appetite for tax reform. And I'm not trying to juxtapose anything to do with today's vote or not. I think it will be great to see it put forward. The President has put a lot of time and effort into this, and I think he's made a strong case as to why this has to happen, and I think we've worked with the House.

If we don't get -- regardless of what happens today -- and I still feel optimistic that the Speaker and the President and the Vice President -- we've got a team that's been up on the Hill most of today -- they're going to continue to try to get every vote they can. But that doesn't mean -- whether it's immigration or tax reform, there's still a huge appetite out there.

Q Just to be clear, I mean, if this fails today, is the President done with healthcare?

MR. SPICER: So negative. (Laughter.)

Q That's what we're hearing.

MR. SPICER: That's what you're hearing? Well, I haven't heard that yet, so why don't we continue with a very positive, optimistic Friday. The sun is coming out. (Laughter.) I feel really good. So we're going to continue to work as late as we can to get the votes. And as I said, the upside is that we continue to pick up votes, people continue to say that they want to -- the question is, can we get to 2016.

But make no mistake about it, the President made it clear last night -- this is it. You have an opportunity to do what you've told the American people, the commitment that we as a party have made, but this is your chance to do what we've done. We've listened, we've incorporated, we've updated in every way possible.

I don't think -- when you look at legislative efforts, I think the President has given it his all. And I think it shocked a lot of people, frankly, how very, very detail-oriented, how personal it was for him -- calling members as early as 6:00 a.m. in the morning and going to 11 o'clock at night the last several nights, sitting down, meeting after

meeting with them, coming back and revising it, having his team back and forth. Everything is out there.

And I think each of these members needs to make the decision, whether or not they believe that they've -- at some point, you can only do so much, is what I would honestly tell you. And I think everything that we could possibly do to listen to members, to get their concerns in this piece of legislation, to make it as strong as possible for the American people has been done.

Q But is the President comfortable then with Obamacare continuing? And what does he say to his supporters?

MR. SPICER: No, he's not. I mean, of course, he's not.

Q I mean, they voted for him with the promise that he would repeal this.

MR. SPICER: I mean, I'm not even sure where to start with that. No, he's not, which is why he's literally put as much effort as he has into repealing this. But he's made it clear that this is our moment, this is our opportunity to do it, but it is now up to members to make that decision whether or not they want to be part of this effort to repeal Obamacare. And if they don't -- and I think for a lot of the -- you saw the President's tweet this morning -- I think for a lot of these members who life is as important as well, this is your opportunity. But it's ultimately them that have to go down in the floor and cast that vote. And I think we've been able to cast a bunch of votes over the past couple years when you knew a President wouldn't sign it. You have a President that's going to sign the bill if you pass it. And now is that time.

Zeke.

Q Some months ago at the Republican National Convention, the President said -- "I alone can fix it." Throughout the entire campaign, his message to his voters, the American people, was, he's a businessman, he knows how to get deals done, he knows how to break the gridlock in Washington, he's the "closer" is what you said earlier this week. If this vote does go down, what does this say about the President? Is the President humbled by this process? And will he readjust -- how will he readjust the administration going forward?

MR. SPICER: Let's not -- like I said to Jill, I'm still optimistic. I feel like we're continuing to work hard. But at the end of the day, you can't force somebody to do something. I think there's nobody that objectively can look at this effort and say the President didn't do every single thing he possibly could, with his team, to get every vote possible. And I think that's why I still feel good about this.

But we are where we are, and members have got to make that decision for themselves. This is the final hour to make that decision.

Blake.

Q Sean, is it under any consideration to pull the bill at all between now and then?

MR. SPICER: You guys are so negative.

Q Well, there's reports out there that --

MR. SPICER: I understand. But there are reports out there -- the Speaker and the President are talking now. The Leader and the Whip are doing their vote counts. The debate is ongoing. We're going to continue -- we are proceeding with a 3:30 p.m. vote as scheduled.

John.

Q Take me through some of the -- if you don't mind -- the thinking yesterday when the bill was pulled and then the President had made the decision -- or his team, they went to the Hill saying, there's going to be a vote today. At what point did he make that calculation? Why did he make that calculation? Can you bring us through some of that thinking?

MR. SPICER: Yeah, I mean, there's a couple of things. One is, I think we wanted to be as open as possible with the vote. Having it on the current trajectory last night, it was going into the wee hours of the morning, and I don't think that that -- for all that we've talked about, that wasn't the appropriate way to vote. I think we decided to work with the House and ask that they postpone and make sure that it was done in the light of day.

But I think that he's had enough discussions. And it is not about improving the deal anymore. I think he has taken into consideration every member's thoughts and concerns, and relayed

those to the House. And I think to the extent that this balance of trying to get to 216, in this case, is such that there are some people that come in with ideas and say, if you do that to get your vote, I'm going to give up 26, or to get these three, I'm going to give up 12. And I think we have struck the right balance right now and incorporated it, and it's the strongest possible bill. But he's going to continue to work as hard as he can until the very end.

Charlie.

Q How important is a live vote to the White House and to the President to see who's on the side and who's not?

MR. SPICER: We've seen the whip counts. Mr. Scalise has done a phenomenal job with Leader McCarthy of -- we know where the vote count stands. So we don't need a live vote to tell us where the votes are. People have been pretty straightforward with where they are and what their outstanding issues are.

Q The President and the Speaker are meeting right now. Do you know -- can you tell us anything about the character of that meeting, or what exactly they're looking at going forward?

MR. SPICER: Well, they're discussing, they're not looking. They're sitting down and talking about where it stands, some of the outstanding issues, and whether they're onesies or twosies or fives -- what are the concerned and outstanding issues of some of the blocs and some of the individuals, and having a discussion on that.

Anita.

Q If the bill doesn't pass --

MR. SPICER: There's somebody that's going to ask when it passes, and you can --

Q Okay, well, do you want to have a briefing right after the vote?

MR. SPICER: No.

Q Okay. (Laughter.)

MR. SPICER: All right, score one for you. (Laughter.)

Q If the bill doesn't pass, does the President still have confidence in the Speaker?

MR. SPICER: I think he answered that question earlier today.

Q Well, does he think that he should step down if it doesn't get a vote?

MR. SPICER: He answered that question earlier, and he said he did. So, asked and answered.

Q And then, logistically today, after the vote, whatever happens, how will we get a response from you all?

MR. SPICER: Electronically or verbally, but one of the two.
Peter.

Q Thank you, Sean. This is the President's first foray into, let's say, the sausage-making process, so to speak. Has he reflected at all on the experience? I mean, how does he feel it differs from, for example, negotiating a real estate deal, a business deal? Is it more complicated? Is it trickier? What's his feeling about this?

MR. SPICER: I think we'll have plenty of time to reflect on it after we do this, so I know that -- I'll just leave it at that for now.

Kristen.

Q Thanks. Without prejudging the outcome of the vote --

MR. SPICER: Thank you. (Laughter.)

Q -- does the President in any way regret pursuing healthcare first, given how complicated it has been?

MR. SPICER: No. I think if you think about it legislatively, in order to maximize -- and I know for most people it doesn't make a ton of sense, but the savings that you achieve through the first reconciliation of healthcare, which we're doing through the 2017 budget process, which still continues, allows us to utilize the savings in that process to maximize additional tax reform measures that will start in the FY2018 reconciliation process.

So while that sounds like a ton of inside-baseball gobbledygook, the reality is, is that in order to maximize tax reform both on the corporate side, to make our businesses more competitive and to give individuals, especially middle-class Americans, more tax relief -- doing this in that way maximizes the amount of savings that you can use for the second reconciliation package, which would be tax reform. Doing it the first way, you can do -- but again, you're not going to achieve the full potential that you could if you did it the way that is happening now.

But that being said, I mean, it's not a question of -- we all knew how big this was -- it's one-fifth of the economy -- and what it took. The issue is, is that I think the disparate interests that are there, and some of the process-explaining, if you will -- the understanding -- the way that this is happening, and I think, legislatively, it's complicated. And for a lot of folks that just understand, why can't you do it all in one fell swoop? What's the Byrd Rule? What's reconciliation? Why do you have to do it in three phases? I think, for a lot of people, that is a little bit complicated to understand.

And it's not just a question of understanding. I think one of the other things that the President and the team have found is that there's a lot of issues where people are wondering, well, if I vote for this how can I guarantee that I get something in phase two -- which is the administrative pieces that Secretary Price would institute.

And then third is -- well, you know, the legislative things that will take 60 votes, they complete the overall package -- you know, how do I have -- and so there's a lot of -- the comprehensive nature of this makes it very complicated. And I think that's a lot different. Normally, you have one bill that sails through, and it deals with all of these things, and you can roll it all in. If someone has an amendment, you add it in. In this process, we're having to have all these one-off discussions about, you know, will the Senate accept this if you put it in; if you put it in, will they -- not only will they accept it, but will the Byrd Rule take place and kick out the whole thing. That complicates this probably like nothing else.

Q Understood. Just to put a fine point on it, though, was it his initial ask to do healthcare first, or did House Speaker Paul Ryan say, I think this is --

MR. SPICER: I think was something that, during the transition, we sat down and gamed out in coordination with the House in terms of what should go first and why. But again, it's not a question of just what should go first, it's a question of if you don't do it first, do you lose some of the potential in savings that you would achieve through the second reconciliation.

Q Wouldn't it have been wiser to try to work with the Freedom Caucus, for example, on something like infrastructure reform to build up some goodwill with that caucus, and then come back to something more complicated?

MR. SPICER: No, I think -- look, Kristen, we've talked about this since 2010. Every Republican, with the exception of probably a handful, has campaigned from dog catcher on up that they would do everything they could to repeal and replace Obamacare. And I think to get in and say, hey, you should have done something else wouldn't be fair to the American people who have said, okay, I'll vote for you but I want you to fulfill this pledge.

Q And just finally, does the buck stop with him on this?

MR. SPICER: Well, I mean -- like I said earlier, you can't force someone to vote a certain way. I think, in the sense that has he done every single thing, has he pulled out every stop, has he called every member, has he tweaked every tweak, has he done every single thing he can possibly, and used every minute of every day that's possible to get this thing through, then the answer is yes. Has the team put everything out there? Have we left everything on the field? Absolutely.

But at the end of the day, this isn't a dictatorship, and we've got to expect members to ultimately vote to -- you know, how they will according to what they think. But I think they're -- as the President made clear, they're the ones who have to go back and answer to their constituents why they didn't fulfill a pledge that they made.

Q Non-healthcare question for you. Regarding these documents that Devin Nunes says show incidental intelligence collection of identifying information about people associated with the Trump campaign, can you categorically rule out that Chairman Nunes received or was alerted to these documents from someone at the White House?

MR. SPICER: I'm not aware of where he got the documents from. I don't know.

Q Can you rule out that it came from the White House?

MR. SPICER: I can't -- I don't know where he got them from. He didn't state it. So I don't have anything for you. And so I cannot say anything more than I don't know at this point.

Cecilia.

Q So if the President has done everything he can possibly do, and the Speaker has done everything he can possibly do, the team has put everything on the table, who is to blame right now for this hold-up, in your eyes?

MR. SPICER: Well, again, let's wait and see how this thing -- I'm not assigning blame.

Q Well, but you wanted a vote even last night or this morning, so there is a stall. So from last night to this morning --

MR. SPICER: No, no, no, we did want a vote last night, and I think, as I have mentioned, as we got into the evening hours, the idea wasn't to bury this at 12:00 a.m. or 1:00 a.m. in the morning.

Q Initially, you were asking for one yesterday, and there was a statement from your press office that asked for one this morning.

MR. SPICER: No, no -- and I'm not backing away from that. We wanted a vote yesterday. But as the process went on, we realized that that vote would occur in -- probably, actually, into today, in terms of like calendar-wise, and that doing it at 1:00 a.m., 2:00 a.m., 3:00 a.m. in the morning was not something that would be in keeping with what we had promised.

Q So who is to blame for the stall right now? Is it the Freedom Caucus? Is it --

MR. SPICER: I think it's not a blame. Right now, it's a question of getting all these members together and dealing with all -- I mean, you've seen the activity. You've seen the members go back and forth. Right now, we're still in that

active discussion phase with trying to figure out who we can get on board and whether or not we can move forward.

But this is -- we're not there yet.

Q But you put this ultimatum out there. Is the President, right now, still confident that he can see this bill through -- that you will repeal and replace Obamacare?

MR. SPICER: The President is confident that we have done every single thing possible, made the case, updated it, added and done everything to listen to the concerns and to do everything that fulfills the promises that we and members have made with the American people.

John.

Q Thank you, Sean. Without prejudging the outcome of the vote today, but focusing on your comments and the President's, saying this would be a vote against life if people vote against it --

MR. SPICER: Right.

Q -- several Republican members said they did not want the vote on Planned Parenthood in this particular bill. Congressman John Faso of New York was particularly outspoken. Did anything come up in the negotiation or from the White House saying they guarantee a separate vote on Planned Parenthood and leave it out of the bill?

MR. SPICER: I'm not aware of that, John. I'm not aware that that happened.

Q The White House -- from your tone and the President's, the White House wanted the Planned Parenthood vote in?

MR. SPICER: I'd have to go back and look at -- there's a lot of discussions that go on. I honestly can't remember how or when that came up.

Q The other thing I wanted to ask was that the last two members who announced they were no -- Chris Smith and Frank LoBiondo, Republicans of New Jersey -- both cited the number of Medicaid recipients in their district as their premier reason. Congressman LoBiondo said in three counties, 30 percent of his constituents were on Medicaid, and he wanted no damage. Was

there anything discussed on Medicaid? Was it on the table in the negotiations?

MR. SPICER: Well, I know that that there was a discussion about the expansion of Medicaid and some of the work requirements with respect to able-bodied Americans who are receiving that. But I would say this, John -- one of the things that -- not member-specific to either of the members from New Jersey -- is that members have to understand that the current system is unsustainable. So if you vote no today, then what is your alternative, and what do you want?

Because right now there's a lot of folks that have said they're going to vote no, which is their prerogative, but at the end of the day, the current Obamacare system will collapse on its own. And so the question that they have to ask themselves or that they are going to be asked by their constituents is, then what is your alternative? Because right now this is the choice that will save the system. The other choice is to do nothing, and that will -- that is going to collapse the system.

Eamon.

Q Thanks, Sean. The stock market has been largely looking at this as a proxy for how you're going to do on your tax cut proposal. Would you be able to say what the lessons learned here are about how this was handled that might apply to the tax cut proposal?

MR. SPICER: Look, Eamon, I've discussed this earlier. I'm not going to start getting a "lessons learned" while we're in the middle of debate of a current bill. We'll have plenty of time -- if you want to stop by over the weekend, we can talk about -- (laughter) -- to sit down with you on that. But again, we're not -- right now we're focused on getting the votes. The House has a vote scheduled. That's what our focus is -- not to figure out -- we'll have plenty of time for that.

Jen.

Q Is the President going to just simply wash his hands of this today if this doesn't go his way?

MR. SPICER: Look, we're not -- the President is going to wash his hands several times, but I don't know -- (laughter).

Q The central campaign promise of the President of the United States --

MR. SPICER: I understand that, and so what -- I get it. So slow down. Let's turn on C-SPAN and all watch this together, and then we can discuss what happened.

Jen.

Q Treasury Secretary Mnuchin was talking this morning about doing tax reform by the August recess. Do you think that that's a reasonable timeline? And why the rush? Are there any lessons learned from this healthcare debate?

MR. SPICER: Again, I think tax reform is something that we've talked about. There's plenty of time. I think it's a goal, and I think it's an ambitious one and I think it's one that we're going to try to stick to. But let's get by today, and then we'll lay it out.

But I think tax reform is something that the President is very committed to. You've seen him very publicly in the last couple of open events talk about how excited he is to move on once this is done to tax reform. Because he understands both sides of this -- that the business piece of this -- we are so uncompetitive when it comes to our other worldly competitors in terms of our tax rate, and yet when we have these discussions about keeping companies from either shipping jobs overseas or growing -- bringing back jobs to America, the two things that come up over and over again are our tax rate and our regulatory system.

And I think he understands that on the tax front, we can be a lot more competitive with the rest of the world in growing American jobs here at home and, frankly, expanding manufacturing if we lower that, but also that the American middle class desperately needs and wants a tax break, and I think the more that we can do with that -- so this is something that I think we're going to be continuing to work on, and we'll have more on that later.

Trey.

Q Sean, how much credit will the President take for the outcome of this healthcare bill?

MR. SPICER: I'm going to refer you to like the last eight people. Let's see where we go from here.

Q Quick follow-up?

MR. SPICER: Yes.

Q Is the White House still as confident as they were earlier in this week, and is the President still as confident as he was earlier in the week that this healthcare bill will pass?

MR. SPICER: I would suggest to you it's -- my answer that I said to Kristen is that we are confident that we have done everything, and it is now up to voters.

The President -- we -- the President called for a vote, and respectfully -- obviously, it's not up to us, but the reason that he asked Speaker Ryan and Leader McCarthy to call for a vote is we've done everything. We've done every single thing that -- every meeting, every call, every discussion, every idea has been out there, adjudicated, listened to. And I think that now is the time for the vote. And so we're a couple hours away, and let's see where we go.

Q -- level of confidence remain?

MR. SPICER: I think in the sense of what we did, yes.

Peter.

Q Sean, the President can order every surveillance transcript that mentions himself or his associates in regards to Russia for the investigation that he called for to be brought to his desk at any time. Has he done that?

MR. SPICER: No.

Q So yesterday you were asked specifically -- you said that the concerns should be less about the process and more about the substance. I asked because that would be one way to get directly to the substance.

On the substance, Devin Nunes said initially that he -- there was evidence that "clearly showed that the President-elect and his team were at least monitored." Then today he said --, asked if Trump or his associates were monitored or mentioned, he

said, we don't know. We won't know until we actually receive all the documentation.

The President said he's somewhat vindicated. So given the fact that Devin Nunes doesn't actually know if the President was monitored or whether he was even mentioned, what is he vindicated by?

MR. SPICER: Well, I think that there has been an acknowledgement that there are documents out there showing that people were surveilled or monitored to some degree.

Q They could have exclusively been foreigners, Devin Nunes concedes.

MR. SPICER: Devin Nunes also made it clear that he's going to have a hearing later next week with several members of the intelligence community and calling others back. And so let's wait and see --

Q Well, what is the President vindicated by?

MR. SPICER: The President said he felt somewhat vindicated because I think that there is an acknowledgement that he's -- that as we proceed down this discussion, it continues to show that there was something there, and that despite the constant discussion about the process --

Q But he said we don't -- we won't know.

MR. SPICER: Hold on, Peter. I understand. I get this is -- I understand that. And he also said that he's going to have a hearing and he's going to call the people back, and he's waiting for the documents. So let's wait and let that process evolve.

Q Thank you, Sean. A couple questions. First about Keystone. What changed? It seemed like it took forever in covering the Obama administration for this thing to finally get over the finish line. It never did. And relatively quickly -- less than 65 days in -- it's finally made its way over the finish line. What changed, especially with respect to the State Department's view of the Keystone XL pipeline?

And is it your opinion that it would be good to hear from the President -- win, lose, or draw -- after what we learned today vis-à-vis healthcare reform?

MR. SPICER: So, simply put, on Keystone, it was a priority. I mean, the President came in, he signed an executive order on it. He had talked about it during the campaign and he made it a priority. He made it a priority for his team here at the White House to get it done -- not only the jobs but incorporating U.S. steel and -- there was a lot of things.

But I don't think it's any simpler than he made it a priority for him, his team, this administration, the Department of State, and others -- and that's it. He recognizes the importance of that to both energy and to jobs and our economy, and simply got it done. And I'll leave it up to the President, once we go forward, to see how it goes.

Margaret.

Q Sean, as a dealmaker, why does the President feel that this take-it-or-leave-it approach is the right one on healthcare?

MR. SPICER: Because I think he has done -- I mean, at some point you've listened to everybody, you've gotten all other ideas, you've gone back and forth, you have incorporated them, you've assuaged them in some way, shape, or form; you've updated the bill -- and a lot of times, it's the same people coming back over and over again. And you go, okay, I've listened to you, I've taken your ideas. At some point, we either have a deal or we don't.

And I think that's where the President finally drew the line and said we've been having this discussion, we've had the meetings, and we've done everything possible to address the concerns and ideas and opinions that people have brought up. And I mean, I don't think you can say it any simpler. I think he has done every single thing possible, and you end up, at some point, finding yourself going around and around and saying, okay, let's just -- let's call the vote.

Q But isn't there a political cost to a collapse, potentially?

MR. SPICER: I think that, at some point, there's a political cost to dragging this out, as well, and saying, let's just keep letting it go. And I think that's where -- you know, we came to a decision that it had gotten as far as it can go.

Kaitlan.

Q If there's a collapse, though, isn't there a cost that the President will, at some point, have to pay for? If it's either --

MR. SPICER: In terms of what?

Q The collapse that you have been predicting --

MR. SPICER: No, I think that -- look, remember -- look, this is --

Q Besides the upcoming election in 2018, I'm talking about economic impact, all the impact on the states -- there will be a cost.

MR. SPICER: I get it, and I think that we'll have to look at the landscape. But at some point -- you know, I think right now Democrats made a decision during this debate that they wanted to stick by Obamacare. I think, at some point -- the President has talked about this -- that this is going to collapse. And let's see where this thing heads, but I think, right now, we have a plan on the table that allows for a solution that will address all of the concerns that, frankly, were initially brought up as far as what the Affordable Care Act was supposed to do.

Kaitlan.

Q So if you know what the vote counts are right now, and there's no discussion of pulling the healthcare bill, and it gets closer to 3:30 p.m. and you still don't have the votes, why vote?

MR. SPICER: I'm not going to discuss our strategy. I mean --

Q But you see what I'm saying, right?

MR. SPICER: I do.

Q If you know what the votes are and you know that you don't have the votes for it to pass, why vote?

MR. SPICER: I understand your question. I'm just not going to comment on our strategy. I think the President and the Speaker are going to have a discussion about where those votes

are and what some of the members needs are, and we'll take it from there.

Athena.

Q You talked about all the work that the President and his team have put into this -- the early-morning calls, late calls. The other day, one of the members of Congress who was here to meet with the President -- Congressman McHenry -- called -- said, we're bringing him to "the closer." You embraced that nickname from the podium. Whatever happens today, do you still feel comfortable calling the President "the closer" when it comes to deal-making on all this?

MR. SPICER: Look, I think I said to Christian and a couple others, I think he has done everything possible. There is no one, either on Capitol Hill or any honest observer of what's happened, that doesn't recognize the extraordinary feats. But at some point, as I've mentioned, this isn't a one-on-one negotiation. This is -- you know, you have to get to 216.

And I don't -- I think part of this question is to go to some of those "no's" and ask them, what is the reason and what would you do? And the probably is, is that, as I've mentioned before, there is this balancing act, where to get these two members, you're giving up 14. But we're doing everything possible to get to that 216. And that -- I don't -- I think when you actually objectively look at the effort that was undertaken, there is no question that every single thing that has been done has been done to maximize the vote count on this.

Q And to be very, very clear -- this has been addressed a few times, but I want to get a clearer answer. You talked a lot about how this is the chance, this is an opportunity for Republicans to make good on campaign promises. I asked the President a couple days ago, what happens when you keep pushing if this fails today. And he said, we'll wait and -- we'll have to see what happens. Are you saying right now that there will be no future attempts to comply with that campaign promise if today's attempt fails?

MR. SPICER: I can't say that there'll never be -- and again, I'm not going to be fatalistic when we've got a vote at 3:30 p.m. I know that the President has made it clear that this is the effort, this was the train that's leaving the station, and that he expects everyone -- you know, this is our opportunity.

And he's got a lot left on the agenda that he wants to get done, whether it's immigration, taxes, the border wall. There's so many other things that he wants to get done that we're not going to sit around and figure out -- this is the opportunity, this is the time, this is the opportunity for every member who has said that they want to repeal and replace Obamacare to put their vote in the "yes" column.

Q And last one. If it does pass today -- you've talked a lot about this being done in three phases, today being phase one. Phase two and phase three, one of the problems, I think, is that this is not information that is in score-able form -- the steps that Secretary Price might take, and then what may end up in this final bill. Is there any attempt being done --

MR. SPICER: Well, I don't know yet. At some point, maybe it can -- I mean --

Q Can you put the administrative steps that Secretary Price --

MR. SPICER: I don't know. That's --

Q Is that something that's being attempted to be done? Because that's the kind of information I think members want.

MR. SPICER: I think, right now, we're focused on the vote. But I think that we'll have either OMB or CBO take a look at not just the other elements, but can you look at it in its totality. I don't know that that's -- but that's a good question that I can have the OMB folks address potentially with the CBO folks.

Thank you, guys. I'm sure we'll have some additional updates today. Thank you.

END

1:56 P.M. EDT