



REMARKS

Remarks by President Trump and Vice President Pence at Signing of Executive Order Affording Congress an Opportunity to Address Family Separation

— IMMIGRATION

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Oval Office

3:04 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Well, thank you very much. We're signing an executive order I consider to be a very important executive order. It's about keeping families together while at the same time making sure that we have a very powerful, very strong border. And border security will be equal, if not greater than previously.

So we're going to have strong — very strong borders, but we're going to keep the families together. I didn't like the sight or the feeling of families being separated. It's a problem that's gone on for many years, as you know, through many administrations. And we're working very hard on immigration. It's been left out in the cold. People haven't dealt with it, and we are dealing with it.

So, step by step — just like we dealt with North Korea, we dealt with Iran, we dealt with an economy that was heading in the wrong direction. We dealt with a lot of different problems. This is one that has been going on for many decades.

So we're keeping families together, and this will solve that problem. At the same time, we are keeping a very powerful border and it continues to be a zero-tolerance. We have zero tolerance for people that enter our country illegally.

With that, I'd ask Mike Pence, Vice President, if you'd like to say anything.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, thank you, Mr. President. And I think what the President has made clear is we believe it's a false choice between whether we are a country of law and order, a country with borders, and a country that demonstrates the compassion and the heart of the American people in this country, for families.

By taking this action, the President will make it possible for us to continue to engage in enforcing the law against individuals who violate our law, come into our country illegally. But now we'll be able, in the prosecution in the immediate days forward, to keep families together as that goes forward.

But we are calling on Congress to change the laws in this regard and in a broad range of areas that will secure our borders and give us strength and confidence that we are once again going to take the steps necessary to end the crisis of illegal immigration in America.

THE PRESIDENT: I think the word "compassion" comes into it, but it's still equally as tough, if not tougher.

Secretary Nielsen?

SECRETARY NIELSEN: I just thank you for your leadership, sir. We look forward and expect the House to act this week. We ask them to do their job. The laws need to be changed. This is a problem that President after President has dealt with for decades. This one is willing to stand up and fix it. We ask Congress to do their part.

Thank you, sir, for your leadership.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Great job.

(The executive order is signed.)

Okay. You're going to have a lot of happy people.

Q Mr. President, why did you wait so long to sign, sir? (Inaudible.)

THE PRESIDENT: It's been going on for 60 years. Sixty years. Nobody has taken care of it. Nobody has had the political courage to take care of it. But we're going to take care of it. But it's been going on — it's been going on for a long time.

Q Do you think you're backing down? Critics are saying that maybe —

THE PRESIDENT: No, no, the border is just as tough, but we do want to keep families together. This is a problem. If you look at some of those horrible scenes from a few years ago — to me, they were horrible scenes. They were just terrible. And that was during the Obama administration. Other administrations have had the same thing. We're keeping the family together. And so this is it.

And also, there may be some litigation. We're also wanting to go through Congress. We will be going through Congress. We're working on a much more comprehensive bill. A lot of good things are happening toward immigration, and proper immigration. But we have to have strong borders. And ultimately, we want to see it done right, and it will be done right.

But what we have done today is we are keeping families together. The borders are just as tough, just as strong. They can come in through ports of entry if they want. That's a whole different story. And that's coming in through a process, and the process is what we want.

So I want to thank you all very much. I think this is something —

Q Mr. President what is the level of frustration that you still don't have money for that border wall with Mexico?

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much everybody.

We'll get the wall — we'll get the wall done. We'll get the wall done.

Yes?

Q Did Ivanka Trump show you photos of the children being separated from their parents?

THE PRESIDENT: No, Ivanka feels very strongly. My wife feels very strongly about it. I feel very strongly about it. I think anybody with a heart would feel very strongly about it. We don't like to see families separated. At the same time, we don't want people coming into our country illegally. This takes care of the problem.

Thank you very much.

Q Why did it take you a few days to sign it, Mr. President? Mr. President, why did it take you a few days to sign it?

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Caitlin.

She's doing a great job.

Thank you. Thank you very much.

END

3:09 P.M. EDT