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October 6, 2021

**Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, October 6, 2021**

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

4:13 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Okay --

Q Or maybe not.

MS. PSAKI: Oh, what did you think was going to happen? (Laughter.) I'm sorry to disappoint. Okay, sorry to disappoint. You never know who's behind the door.

Okay. Okay, tomorrow -- just one item for all of you at the top: Tomorrow, the President will travel to Elk Grove Village, Illinois -- a trip he had planned to do last week -- to meet with public and private sector leaders who have implemented vaccination requirements. The President will visit with a company local to the Chicago area that is imposing its own vaccine requirement ahead of the OSHA rule.

The President's message will be clear: Vaccination requirements work. Vaccination requirements get more people vaccinated, helping to end the pandemic and strengthen the economy.

That's why he's leading and implementing on -- implementing vaccination requirements for 100 million workers, two thirds of all workers in the United States, and that's why we're seeing growing momentum for vaccination requirements across the sectors and across the country.

Alex, go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. I was hoping to get you to weigh in on three different debt limit scenarios since there's so many --

MS. PSAKI: Great.

Q -- developing. So, off the top, Senator Mitch McConnell has proposed for Republicans to either support a short-term hike in the debt limit through December or to support a expedited reconciliation process where Democrats would vote to hike it long term. What's the White House response to that? Is there support for either of those from the President?

And then, I was hoping to get clarification on something the President said yesterday. He seemed to suggest that he would support a carveout in the filibuster, if all else fails, to hike the debt limit. Is that where he stands? Would he be open to that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, right now -- and perhaps this the awkwardness of 4:15, while people are still meeting on the Hill -- right now, Democratic members are meeting on the Hill to discuss options on the path forward. I think Republican members may also be meeting or discussing among themselves.

My understanding, at the point I walked out here, is that there's been no formal offer made. A press release is not a formal offer.

And regardless, even the scant details that have been reported present more complicated, more difficult options than the one that is quite obvious, in the President's view, and is in front of the faces of every member up on the Hill. We could get this done today. We don't need to kick the can. We don't need to go through a cumbersome process that every day brings additional risks.

So, they're discussing up there. We'll, obviously, be in close touch with them, as we will continue to be, and we'll see where we -- where we are at the end of today.

Q And then one foreign policy question. Does the White House have a position yet on the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act which passed unanimously in the Senate?

And just broadly in that same context, how do you respond to the criticism from Senator Rubio and some Republicans that the administration is sort of letting Beijing have some advantage on human rights abuses to try to win over their cooperation on climate issues?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we would absolutely dispute that notion. Unlike the former President, this President has spoken out against human rights abuses, has raised his concerns about human rights abuses directly with President Xi, and we have done that at every level from our national security team.

In terms of the legislation, obviously we have spoken out about our concerns of human rights abuses in Xinjiang. And I would also note that the President also led an effort to have coordination on the international stage to address this issue, unlike his predecessors.

But I'd have to talk to our legislative team about specific views on the -- in the piece of legislation. I know I spoke to it briefly last week, but I'll -- I'll come back to you with that.

Go ahead, Steve.

Q Jake Sullivan reached a deal with the Chinese today for President Biden and President Xi to have a virtual summit before the end of the year. Do you see this happening around the G20 Summit? And what's the advantage of them seeing each other face-to-face?



MS. PSAKI: Well, as I understand it, what came out of the discussions was an agreement to continue dialogue at a very high level.

So, what we've said, of course -- and we continue to believe -- is that leader-level engagement is an important part of our effort to responsibly manage the competition with China, especially given the coalescing of power in Chinese leadership.

We're still working through what that would look like, when, and, of course, the final details. So we don't quite have them yet.

Q Secondly, the President indicated last night that he had spoken to President Xi about Taiwan. Was this in their more recent phone call? And what exactly did he tell him?

MS. PSAKI: So just -- you didn't ask this, but some others have asked us -- he did not have a new call that you're not aware of.

Q Okay. Okay.

MS. PSAKI: So, just for full clarity on that. He has spoken with him twice, as you know.

And certainly, reiterating our position as it relates to -- you know, which is guided by the Taiwan Relations Act and our view that we need to uphold that commitment -- our commitment under the act -- that is what the President reiterated to President Xi last time he talked, and it is something that is raised nearly every time he speaks at a leader level and at other levels as well.

Q And last thing -- and sorry to prolong -- the Energy Secretary, Granholm, in a conference today did not rule out a ban on crude oil exports to keep U.S. energy prices down. Is that something that's seriously being looked at?

MS. PSAKI: I would defer to the Energy Secretary, but I don't have anything new to report on that from internally in the White House.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Hey, Jen. So, I understand that you're obviously waiting for more details of this proposal from the Senate Minority Leader, but, you know, would the President accept a short-term deal to raise the debt ceiling while you try and find a broader path out of this crisis?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as I said a few minutes ago, we don't need to kick the can. We don't need to go through a cumbersome process that every day brings additional risks. And you heard many of the business leaders convey that, even as we look to risk tomorrow, the next day, as American -- the American people are looking at the retirement accounts, worrying about their Social Security savings, members of the military worrying about their payments. We don't need to incur that risk uncertainty.

And I think it's important to also remember we're at this point because Republicans in Congress treated the savings accounts and retirement savings of the American people, Social Security checks of retirees, and veterans benefits like a game of Monopoly, putting the stability and security of the American people at risk.

We're at this point because Republicans in Congress blocked efforts by Democrats to raise the debt limit and protect the full faith and credit of the United States, despite having voted for it three times during the Trump administration.

So, obviously, as has been reported, and the vote has been delayed, there's still an opportunity for Republicans to join us in



being adults in the room and ensure that people have confidence in the economic security and their own retirement savings.

Q The Minority Leader's proposal, though, seems to go at one of the key arguments that the President was making yesterday about why he's opposed to using budget reconciliation, which is that it would take time, it's cumbersome, it could lead to, you know, unexpected scenarios.

So, is the Minority Leader taking off the arguments against reconciliation by offering this one-month extension? And if not, then what are your remaining objections? Is it simply that you don't want Democrats to take a vote that will put a specific dollar amount on raising the debt ceiling?

MS. PSAKI: Democrats are very willing to be the adults in the room and take a vote to raise the debt limit. They're not even asking Republicans to do that anymore, since they've clearly shown their refusal to do exactly that.

The point I'm making is that there is a very clear -- the least risky option here that can ensure that there is confidence from the American people about their own checking accounts or about their own retirement savings, that's something Republicans still have the opportunity to participate in and be a part of.

Q And just on Afghanistan, if I could. The ISIS-K suicide bomber had -- you know, who was -- who carried out the attack that resulted in the deaths of 13 U.S. service members and dozens more Afghans had been released from the Parwan prison at Bagram Air Base just days before that attack took place, when the Taliban took control of that base.

Should the Biden administration have done more to secure Bagram or transfer ISIS-K prisoners outside of that? And do you now accept that this attack would not have happened had the United States retained control of Bagram?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I can't speak to the specific case. I'd let it -- leave it to the intelligence community to speak to that. So I'd point you to them.

I'd remind you that, as it relates to Bagram, there was a decision made to close Bagram because it wasn't strategically in the interest of the United States and our national security to keep it open with 5,000 troops there protecting Bagram at a distance that was far away from the capital and far away from where people from the embassy would be evacuated. So, that was the broad-based decision.

I understand you're asking me a different question than that, but I just wanted to reiterate.

Q But would he have made the same decision had he known that it would result --

MS. PSAKI: Again, I can't speak --

Q -- in the deaths of 13 service members?

MS. PSAKI: -- to this particular report. I'd point you to the intelligence community.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. You know, Congress has passed countless short-term government funding measures. They have funded the government for 48 hours before. Wouldn't a short-term debt ceiling hike be preferable to default?

MS. PSAKI: The preference would be just getting this done today so we can move on to more business for the American people. And that option is still on the table.

Q But you -- you know, the White House brought in all of these banking CEOs today to talk about how catastrophic it would be if the U.S. were to default. Why not send the markets that assurance, if you have the opportunity, that, at least



for the next eight weeks, the debt ceiling is going to be secure?

MS. PSAKI: Well, if we're looking at the best options, why kick the can down the road a couple of more weeks? Why create an additional layer of uncertainty? Why not just get it done now? That's what we're continuing to press for, and that's our first choice.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. A week ago, the National School Boards Association wrote to the President to say that their teachers feel like some parents protesting recently "could be the equivalent to a form of domestic terrorism." And then, the Attorney General put the FBI on the case.

So, does the administration agree that parents upset about their kids' curriculums could be considered domestic terrorists?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me unravel this a little bit, because the National School Board Association is not a part of the U.S. government. I'd point you to them.

What the Department of Justice said in a letter from the Attorney General is that, quote, "Threats against public servants are not only illegal, they run counter to our nation's core values." That is true. These were threats against public servants, threats against members of the school board. Regardless of the reasoning, threats and violence against public servants is illegal. That's what he was conveying from the Department of Justice.

Q But the Department of Justice does now have the FBI on this. Something that the School Boards Association is asking for is for the administration to consider using the PATRIOT Act to investigate some of these school board protestors. So, would the administration be okay with the FBI using the PATRIOT Act to surveil these parents, if that is what they decide?

MS. PSAKI: I don't speak on behalf of the National School Board Association; I speak on behalf of this government. The Attorney General has put out a letter. They will take actions they take, and I would point you to them for more information.

Q And something that you said on Monday after some protestors were hounding Kyrsten Sinema into a restroom -- you said, "The President stands for the fundamental right of people to protest, to object, [and] to criticize." So does the President support the fundamental rights of these parents to protest at school board meetings?

MS. PSAKI: Of course. But he doesn't stand for the fundamental right -- I assume you don't either -- for people to take violent action against members -- public servants. And that's what the threats are about. And so, no, he doesn't stand for that; no one should.

Q Just one more. John Kerry says that after France was cut out of the nuclear submarine deal, and they were upset enough about being left in the dark that they pulled their ambassador, he went to the President and, quote, "The President, literally, had not been aware of what had transpired." So what else are you guys not telling the President?

MS. PSAKI: Of course, he was aware of the French being upset -- let me finish --

Q No, Kerry --

MS. PSAKI: Let me --

Q -- said he "literally..." --

MS. PSAKI: Let me -- let me finish.

Q -- "had not been aware."

MS. PSAKI: I know John Kerry quite well. He, of course, was aware -- the President -- of the French being displeased about the deal with the Australians. John Kerry also speaks regularly to the French, as a part of his role as the Climate Envoy. He's someone who also served as Secretary of State. He's someone I -- alone -- traveled to France with him 25 times.

He, of course, conveyed to the President what his read is -- was of what they were specifically unhappy about and how to help address it.

Q A follow-up on France, Jen?

Q You said -- you've said this President's first love is foreign policy. So, why doesn't he know about these things in real time?

MS. PSAKI: Of course, he knew about the French being displeased about --

Q John Kerry said --

MS. PSAKI: Let me finish.

Q -- he "literally had not be aware."

MS. PSAKI: Peter, I would encourage you to ask John Kerry specifically about the context of his comments. The President and John -- and the former Secretary are also good friends. He relies on his counsel, and -- as he does with many members of his national security team. But that certainly is not what he was intending to convey.

Q Follow-up on France?

Q Jen, if I could --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q -- let me ask you quickly: Yesterday, the President said that he would be speaking with Mitch McConnell, as it related to the debt limit. Has that conversation happened? And what did he -- what did he tell him?

MS. PSAKI: They have not spoken. I think what the President has repeatedly conveyed is that he's certainly open to, as he -- as he has shown throughout the course of his presidency, having conversations with Democrats and Republicans when he feels it would be constructive.

Q He said they will be -- he said they will be speaking. So you were saying he was saying they will at some point, but there was no --

MS. PSAKI: At some -- at some point, if it's constructive in moving things forward.

Q Okay. Does the President trust Mitch McConnell to be an honest broker in this process?

MS. PSAKI: I don't think this is about trust. This is about -- he has known him a long time, but this is about whether you're going to be a leader and take steps that are not based on -- on political calculations and more based on what's in the interest of the United States and the full faith and of the United States.

Q The President discussed that there was a possibility of a filibuster -- a carveout -- as it related to the debt ceiling. If that



were the case, would the President be open to a filibuster carveout for voting rights? Where does that line get drawn for the President?

MS. PSAKI: The President was just simply conveying that there are a range of options that leaders on the Hill are discussing. I think you all have reported that, or your colleagues on the Hill have. Nothing more than that. We'll be in touch with them, and we'll see what the next best options look like.

But what is very clear is that there is an easy, risk-free option here that Republicans could allow Democrats to vote to raise the debt ceiling. We could be done with this today.

Q Can I just follow up very quickly? Why wouldn't the President, given that relationship he has with Mitch McConnell, just call Mitch McConnell and have this conversation with him? Why do this through public events?

MS. PSAKI: What's the conversation about?

Q I don't know. They have the relationship. He's the one who said he could bring the two sides together. So, wouldn't there be some value in having that conversation with one another?

MS. PSAKI: We know what the -- we know what the risk-free option is here. We know what the clear path forward is here. And I think the President has made no secret about his belief on that.

Go ahead.

Q Has the President had time to absorb the criticism of the Fed Chairman? And then, specifically, what does the White House believe should happen -- Fed policy about investments made by top officials there?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we obviously leave the independence of the Fed to an independent Fed -- Federal Reserve. And I'm not going to speak to that from here.

The President is confident in the Chairman of the Federal Reserve, and, beyond that, I don't have any personnel announcements for you.

Q Given that confidence, and also given what you just said, I mean, how close is he to making a decision on that?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything to preview for you at this point.

Q Yesterday, the President said he would sign a reconciliation bill that included the Hyde Amendment. You told us earlier this week that he remains opposed to that. So, is he backtracking on a campaign promise, something that's -- a lot of his supporters believe strongly in?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President's position hasn't changed. The context of his comments were that there is still a negotiation happening. There's a range of views. His view remains what is reflected in his budget, which is that getting rid of -- which he released in May -- which shows that getting rid of the Hyde Amendment was a priority. That remains his position. This is a package that's still being negotiated, and he said that much -- as much last night as well.

Go ahead.

Q Just confirming what you told Peter: The President, when he signaled yesterday that it's possible that the Senate could change its rules, that -- we should not read that as him expressing support for that notion?

MS. PSAKI: The President was certain simply reporting out what you already have reported out, which is that there are a range of options being discussed on Capitol Hill.



Q I want to ask you separately: The ambassador-designate to India was seen, reportedly, at an event in Los Angeles last week at an art gallery event that featured the artwork of the President's son, Hunter.

The ethicists who have pointed to this arrangement have expressed concern that the President's son selling art could potentially put the President in a situation where those who seek jobs either in this administration or favors from this administration could put this White House in an awkward position.

Should -- first of all, what is the White House's response to the fact that an ambassador nominee was at this event? And secondly, should we expect to see more people who seek jobs in this administration attending events like this in the future?

MS. PSAKI: Well, to be clear, we've spoken to the arrangement that is run by the gallerist and Hunter Biden's representatives that the White House provided suggestions for. I'd refer you to the gallerist for questions about the event and -- as well as the representatives of Mr. Garcetti, in terms of his attendance.

Q But, Jen, just to follow up: This is exactly what ethicists said they were worried about.

MS. PSAKI: What is, specifically?

Q The fact that the President's son --

MS. PSAKI: That he reportedly attended an event?

Q Well, that the President's son would be selling artwork and then meeting, potentially, with people who would seek to buy it. If you have attendees at that event who might be seeking either jobs in this administration or favors from this administration, isn't it an awkward situation to put the President in?

MS. PSAKI: Again, the gallerist has spoken to -- we've spoken to the specifics of what the gallerist has agreed to and what recommendations were made. I've done that several times. I don't have additional details for it from here. I'd point you to them.

Go ahead.

Q So -- but does this White House not have any concerns about the photos that have emerged showing Hunter Biden at that gallery alongside prospective buyers?

MS. PSAKI: I'd point you to the gallerist on specifics of the restrictions that were put in place.

Q Great. But what about the position of this White House? This is a President who ran on being transparent and you've got -- are there no concerns?

MS. PSAKI: And we were very transparent about what recommendations were made to the gallerist, and I would again point you to them or the many times I've spoken about that from here.

Q And just to clarify, has the President's position on doing away with the filibuster changed?

MS. PSAKI: Nothing has -- no, it has not changed.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. The administration reportedly will invest \$1 billion into making rapid-testing COVID kits available. But there are concerns that the tests will be too expensive. I think a lot of Americans are wondering: Is there a universe where these available tests will be free or affordable, or at least less expensive than \$25 a pop?



MS. PSAKI: Yeah, so, there's no question, to your point, that there has been a huge increase and an interest in testing, and getting tests, and making them, and people going out and being able to get them easily.

We announced a \$2 billion investment in September. So, right now, we're on track to ~~double~~ [triple] the number of rapid, at-home tests on the market by early November. And we're also now on track to triple the number of rapid, at-home tests on the market by -- and thanks to the approval of ACON -- sorry -- this Monday, which accelerates the pace. We're now on track to triple the number. Triple the number, not double. I apologize.

So, right now, with these investments, we'll be at 200 million tests per month starting in December, with tens of millions more coming on the market in the coming weeks.

And we're also working to ensure that these tests, in addition to making them more available -- so you could go to CVS or Walmart, or wherever, to get them -- we've been working hard to make sure they are accessible and available in pharmacies, in community centers, in schools. So, we're also working to do that simultaneously and separate from that.

We recognize there's a need. We recognized we needed to do more. And we are pleased by the fact that we are now on track to not only triple by November but also quadruple by December.

Q There was a school shooting in Texas today. The school safety group Everytown says that this year has been the most dangerous back-to-school period for students since they began tracking the data in 2013. That's some 30 instances of gunfire on schoolgrounds since August 1st, and today's shooting means that number is out of date.

Is the administration discussing ways that schools can keep children safe from school violence -- from gun violence?

MS. PSAKI: Absolutely. I mean, one, I would say the President has been an advocate for doing more for gun safety measures through the course of his career. Not only did he fight to get the Brady Bill passed, he fought for the Assault Weapons Ban. It remains a cause of his public life in office.

We, of course, are frustrated by the inability to get commonsense gun reforms through Congress. We should be able to get universal background checks approved. They're supported by the vast majority of the public, as are assault weapons bans.

But in addition to that, we also have taken a number of steps, both by working through the Department of Justice to increase our strike force teams that are going out to specific communities and cities to help address violence. A lot of that is driven by gun violence. That's something that we've been implementing from there. And, of course, our Department of Education is engaged in this effort as well.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Yesterday's hearing by a Facebook whistleblower underscored several major issues with the company, including, as many senators pointed out, issues with Section 230.

On the campaign trail, Biden said that Section 230 should, quote, "immediately be revoked" and that it should be revoked because, quote, Facebook "is not just an Internet company. It is propagating falsehoods they know to be false." Does the White House stand by that assessment for Section 230, given the revelations now?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President has long said, as you referenced, that tech platforms must be held accountable for the harms that they cause. And he has been a strong supporter of fundamental reforms to achieve that goal. This includes Section 230 reforms. It also includes privacy and antitrust reforms as well as more transparency. That should also be on the table.

And he looks forward to working with Congress on these bipartisan issues.



He's also called, I would note -- because there were a number -- a range of issues that were raised during the whistleblower's testimony yesterday -- on the FTC to adopt rules to address unfair data collection and surveillance practice -- practices in his Executive Order on Promoting Competition in the American Economy.

So, yes, more needs to be done, reform should happen. We also need to do more on privacy and antitrust. And certainly, watching testimony yesterday raised a lot of those issues again for people.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Does the President have any intention of speaking with Senators Manchin or Sinema at all this week?

MS. PSAKI: I can't predict for you day by day. I -- we have been in touch with Senator Manchin and Sinema at a senior-staff level, and certainly, I wouldn't rule it out.

Q I wanted to ask a follow-up question on an earlier question about the Hyde Amendment. The President has not been shy about his opposition, in recent years, to the Hyde Amendment. As you mentioned, you know, he made that clear in his budget blueprint; he made that clear as a candidate, when he was running for President.

So, can you explain why it is he's saying that he would sign this bill either way -- you know, with or without this language in it?

MS. PSAKI: He's reflecting that it's a negotiation. It's ongoing. We don't know what the final product will look like.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, can I ask a little bit about energy prices? There -- you know, gas prices in the U.S. are fairly high. We're seeing exceptionally high prices of certain energy products in --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- Europe right now. Is the U.S. domestically considering a release from the SPR to bring down oil prices at this time?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to make any prediction of that from here. I would note that we have seen, as you said, some ticks-up in parts of the country, also in re- -- as a follow-up to Hurricane Ida, because the hurricane hit a region that is a key center of the nation's oil production and refining infrastructure.

So that's something we've been working to focus on. And we took actions in the days and weeks following to help address that, including, at the time, authorizing several million barrels of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve exchanges.

We've also taken steps into -- including engaging with members of OPEC. We've also taken steps to reach out to the FTC to ensure they're using every available tool to monitor the U.S. gasoline market and address any illegal conduct. But I'm not going to make any other predictions at this point in time. We're continuously monitoring. We'll look to take additional steps as needed.

Q Are you or would you consider restricting LNG exports to, I guess, head off the type of shortages and price spikes that we're seeing in Europe -- in parts of Europe?

MS. PSAKI: I'm just not going to make any additional policy predictions at this point in time.

Q Can I, like, broadly say: Overall, these are fundamentally price crunches on, you know, nonrenewable sources of fuel. And we're heading into COP summit here.



MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Do you worry that this could impact the pledges that countries are willing to make? Will other governments get weak-kneed about going green at a time when they're facing brewing, sort of, political crises at home over, really, skyrocketing prices of non-renewable fuel sources?

MS. PSAKI: We certainly hope not. I mean, I think what COP26 is about is to continue the conversation on the international stage, at the leader level -- that has been going on below the leader level continuously, basically -- about our need to work together to address the climate crisis -- one of the greatest national security crises the President sees. A number of other world leaders agree on that front.

Certainly, we all want to keep gasoline prices low, but the threat of the crisis -- the climate crisis -- certainly can't wait any longer.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead. Oh, go ahead. Go ahead.

Q Yeah, thanks very much. On the -- you sound pretty lukewarm about the McConnell idea. If the Democratic Caucus were to get behind it, is it a given that the President will get on board? Or --

MS. PSAKI: We'll see where things are. This is an ever-moving news cycle.

Q Because, you know, as we speak, there seems to be some positive vibes there regarding this, whereas you're giving, you know, quite the opposite.

MS. PSAKI: I would say, actually, in my read of it, there's a diversity of views in the Democratic Caucus, as is to be expected. And they're meeting now. We'll be in close touch with them, so I just don't want to get ahead of that process.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q I know we're still a few weeks away from the G20, but I wanted to see if the President would be open to meeting with Putin again at the G20. And does he feel like his last meeting with Putin was effective? Does the President feel like he's seen any change in Russia or Putin's behavior since then?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I don't have any predictions for you on the bilateral meetings. That's something that we're still working through at this point in time, every day.

And in terms of the -- how constructive his meeting was with President Putin, as he said at the time, we didn't expect it to be a light switch where, all of a sudden, everything would be hunky-dory in the relationship. It's not. We have remaining concerns, but it was an opportunity to express them at a high level, see what work could be done over the course of the long term to address it.

So I don't know that we're going to do a month-by-month assessment. It's something that we have continued conversations from -- with members of the national security team about many of the issues were raised. Those are ongoing. We're continuing to strive to make progress.

Q Can I follow up on that?

O And do you have any update on Afghanistan and how many Americans are still there? And is the -- do you -- does the



President feel the Taliban is cooperating still with efforts to get those remaining Americans out?

MS. PSAKI: We remain -- through appropriate channels of course -- in touch with Taliban officials. In terms of the specific numbers, I'd point you to the State Department. And they have the most updated number on that, given they oversee that process.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, there's been some reporting that Senate Democrats are planning to accept the short-term debt limit increase. So, given that we now have some reporting on that, can you just give us some guidance on what the White House thinks about that idea?

MS. PSAKI: Not yet. I have to -- I have to dig further into that reporting -- not to question it -- and talk to the team here about where things stand. And as far as when I came out here, they were still meeting, but we'll venture to get back to you as soon as we have something more concrete to convey.

Q Thanks, Jen. When the President was talking today about Republicans and the debt ceiling, he said, "If they don't want to do the job, just get out of the way. We'll take the heat. We'll do it." When he says, "We'll take the heat," what did he mean by that? What political risk is he acknowledging there for Democrats?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think one of the reasons we're at this point is because Republicans in Congress would rather bet on a misleading and inaccurate campaign season talking point. We're not betting that that's going to work, but his point -- the President's point is: Regardless, we're willing -- Democrats are willing to vote alone, without any Republican votes, to raise the debt ceiling. You just need to allow us to proceed with that vote.

Q And on the testing question that had come up, on rapid tests, this \$1 billion investment will quadruple the tests by December, in addition to everything else from the past couple of weeks. But why has it taken so long to get this rapid testing to this point where it will be -- by December, when Europe is flooded with rapid tests? Is it the authorization process and the timeline on that, or is it on the production side, or both?

MS. PSAKI: Well, one of the things we've been working on is to increase production, as you know, and also increase -- I would say that the demand for these tests here has increased a lot in the last several weeks, so we're also working to meet that and ensure that we are meeting the moment here in the United States.

In terms of the specific mechanics, I would encourage you to ask the COVID team that question.

Q Is that missing the moment though by -- you know, the demand has gone up in recent weeks because kids have gone back to school. Should this have been ready for back-to-school so that you could go to a CVS or any of the pharmacies or government sites and get these tests?

MS. PSAKI: I mean, again, we just announced, last month, an enormous investment: We're quadrupling availability by December, tripling by November. I think that is speaking to how seriously we take this and how we're working to ensure there are accessible, cost-effective tests out there and available to the public.

Go ahead.

Q What plans does the White House have to address the risk of oil spills from existing platforms, existing leases that are still operating?

MS. PSAKI: You mean like the one that happened in California?

O Correct.



MS. PSAKI: I would really point you to the Department of Energy for specifics there.

Q But, you know, the White House policies on stopping future leases possibly --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- things like that. But, you know, this is an ongoing threat, you know, that happens as, you know, offshore drilling continues. Is there an interest in investing in the infrastructure of the pipeline to enhance their safety, shutting them down? You know, what are your thoughts on that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, I think there -- as we've seen, and there's been an ongoing investigation about what exactly was the root cause here, so I don't want to, kind of, speak to that as that's been ongoing. But, beyond that, I would point you to the Department of Energy.

Q And two very quick things on the spill: Does the White House have a working theory on what caused the spill? And secondly, do you have an update on federal resources that have been dispatched to respond to the spill?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. I think I do have an update on federal resources. Let me see.

On the leak, just so I don't forget to answer this part, it's still under investigation. As you may know, the oil has stopped leaking; the pipeline has been removed from service.

In terms of our government efforts, 4,788 gallons of oil have been recovered and 11,360 feet of containment boom have been deployed. As of yesterday, six miles of shoreline have been cleaned, 328 response personnel with additional assets are on -- have -- on the way have been deployed.

As we said earlier this week, the Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration investigators are on the ground in the Unified/Incident Command Center. And on Monday, we also issued a corrective order -- action order to the operator mandating immediate corrective action, including performing a root cause failure analysis, integrity assessment, and remedial work plan.

Beyond that, Unified Command, of course, who are on the ground would have any additional steps we're taking and that are up to date.

Go ahead, April.

Q Jen, we see there are crisis moments -- everything is in crisis mode here -- but there are other issues that are percolating as well that some feel are at crisis levels -- Black agenda issues. The Vice President just had the heads of Divine Nine in a meeting -- frank, good, direct discussion, we were told -- about issues, particularly voting rights.

What is the President expecting when it comes to dealing with the Black agenda, particularly with those that have this small window, like voting rights and also the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act? What is he expected to do? What is he planning on committing to make sure these things happen?

MS. PSAKI: He wants to get both done. He wants to sign them into law. As you know, and you've told me in the past, the Black agenda is bigger than voting rights and bigger than the George Floyd Police and Justice Act.

Both are hugely important. The President has committed to getting them both done. He wants to sign them into law. We need Congress to move forward on both to get that done.

Q They are -- the Black agenda is huge. It's vast. But in this moment, there's a small window of time before elections



happen, and the concern is is that this President is not doing enough; he has not armed the Vice President or helped her to be able to fight the fight for these things.

MS. PSAKI: I would say the Vice President is more than capable of fighting the fight and the lead on this particular issue and any issue.

Q So how is he --

MS. PSAKI: She's the Vice President of the United States. Pretty powerful.

Q Right, but if the President -- the argument is, if the President is not supporting her with the tools that she needs --

MS. PSAKI: Which tools is she --

Q -- i.e. the filibuster --

MS. PSAKI: -- is she -- is he not providing to her?

Q -- i.e. the filibuster for voting rights, and that is in her portfolio.

You have one of her friends -- and a Democrat, a strategist -- Bakari Sellers, who says her portfolio is trash because he's not supporting her in the way that she needs to be supported for this to pass. So, what do you say? Can he, will he, shall he push for the filibuster for voting rights, even as he's doing it -- thinking about it for the debt ceiling?

MS. PSAKI: Well, that's not exactly what I conveyed earlier, but I will say that the President has conveyed many times that getting voting rights done, signing it into law is top of his agenda.

The Vice President, one of the most powerful people in the world, is leading this effort. He is her -- she is his partner. She's the first in the room, the last in the room, and he's going to continue to work by her side to get it done.

But beyond that and the legislative process and how that will work, I don't have any update on that front.

Go ahead.

Q Sticking on voting rights, with S.4 being introduced in the Senate: The President has, over and over, talked about the pathways that voting rights legislation could take, same thing that he -- apparently, yesterday, you said he was alluding to when he said "real possibility" -- right? -- talking about what could possibly happen on the Hill.

He's never talked about voting rights with any kind of real possibility of a filibuster carveout, and there's a real frustration -- some people have got arrested just yesterday -- among activists on the voting rights issues.

So, other than, "We're frustrated; we stand with you," what do you have to say to activists who are saying this White House, the President isn't doing enough on voting rights specifically?

MS. PSAKI: I think that was just the question I just answered, no?

Q But we're trying to get an answer from you. I mean, it's a legitimate question. And we're trying to --

MS. PSAKI: I'm not saying -- I'm not saying it's not. I'm not saying it's not. I would say that the President is also frustrated that voting rights has not been done. He's also frustrated that Republicans are so afraid of making reforms that would make it easier for people to vote that they have blocked this effort.



And he is frustrated that, despite everything that's happened around the country, there isn't more of a movement to get this done -- I don't mean by activists; certainly, there's a movement there -- in Congress.

What he was certainly -- what he was speaking to yesterday was the fact that there is live conversations right now about a range of options on the debt limit. He was not speaking to anything beyond that. And that's what is happening on the -- on Capitol Hill in this particular moment. That's it.

And so, I would convey to activists that he is absolutely committed. He wants to get this done. He wants to sign it into law. The Vice President just had meetings today on it. She is in the lead on this effort, as one of the most powerful people in this country, maybe even in the world, leading this effort.

Q But, I mean, he's the President. So, when I talk to activists, you know, they say, "You're the President. If you're frustrated, do something." Right? So, I guess that is the -- that is what we're constantly hearing --

MS. PSAKI: Congress is a separate body.

Q Sure, but there's things that he could --

MS. PSAKI: It's a --

Q There are things that he --

MS. PSAKI: It's a -- it's a separate body. You need 50 votes to change the filibuster. You also need the majority of votes to pass legislation into law.

He has made clear that he wants voting rights to be passed into law. He will continue to advocate publicly, privately, and continue to be a partner to the Vice President. He absolutely feels this is essential and we need to get it done.

Go ahead, Patsy.

Q Thank you, Jen. I want to follow up on Taiwan. Administration officials -- including yourself, I believe, on Monday, and Secretary Blinken today -- essentially have issued warnings to China urging China to stop its military activities in Taiwan. However, China has ignored that. In fact, it has dialed up sending even more military jets. So, what does that say about the credibility of U.S. deterrence on this issue?

MS. PSAKI: I think the Secretary of State spoke to this earlier. I don't think I have anything more to add to what he said.

Q Can I -- can I just follow up?

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q How concerned are you that these recent activities might actually escalate and then draw the U.S. into some sort of great power war with China? And so, what are you doing to maintain tensions beyond, kind of, ad hoc meetings like the Zurich meeting that Jake Sullivan is --

MS. PSAKI: I wouldn't call a meeting with our National Security Advisor and his counterpart an "ad hoc" meeting.

Obviously, we raise our concerns through a range of channels. The State Department also put out a public statement -- a proactive statement on this, which is not something they do frequently, and the Secretary of State spoke to it today.

Q Do you have regular, you know, meetings to make sure that things like this don't escalate into something bigger?



MS. PSAKI: Of course, we do, as you well know.  
Go ahead.

Q I have another debt ceiling question --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- but zooming much farther out.

Earlier today, Jamie Dimon suggested getting rid of the debt ceiling altogether so that this scenario would not happen again.

Secretary Yellen seemed to lend her support to that idea of getting rid of the debt ceiling altogether in the past. Has she spoken with the President about that idea? And does he have a position on, sort of, the larger question of whether or not it should or should not be abolished?

MS. PSAKI: Right now, our focus is on raising the debt ceiling in the limited amount of time we have left to do that and do it without impacting the retirement savings accounts, the Social Security, and the economic security of millions of Americans. There's plenty of time to have a conversation after that.

Q And then a quick follow-up. You were asked about the -- the Uyghur anti-slave labor bill.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah. You asked me about it last week, too -- or the week before. I don't remember.

Q That's right.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q You've noted several times that the President has put out statements.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q There is sanctions as well. Does this administration -- does the President feel that there is anyone in his administration that is opposed to this kind of bipartisan legislation?

MS. PSAKI: I think it's all about taking a look at the legislation and figuring out if it's something we'd support moving forward -- every component of it -- and I'll check and see if we have a statement of administration policy on it.

Q But you don't know of anyone in the administration who currently opposes this?

MS. PSAKI: Again, we're not talking about whether or not we think the treatment of the Uyghurs is outrageous. It is. We've all said that. We're talking about a piece of legislation that has several components, and so I just want to make sure I go through the proper process with that.

Q On food shortages --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Hi. I was just wanting to talk to you about food shortages real quick. I'm not sure if you were looking here. But I just wanted to say that, on food shortages, we're seeing in schools the supply chain is kinked and affecting school lunches to the degree that kids are having bread -- or meat with no bread to make sandwiches, for example. And grocery stores, ahead of the holidays, are limiting the amount of food that you can actually purchase.



So, in regard to the debt ceiling talks, if the Senate votes "no" ahead of Thanksgiving, ahead of Christmas, and the coming holiday season -- if they say "no," what will that mean in the big picture for this nation and food shortages and other product delinquencies?

MS. PSAKI: Well, look, I would say -- I just want to dis- -- to make sure we're sending a clear message here about what the impacts of different things are. I know that's why you asked the question.

You'd have to get me more information about how broadly the school issue you're referencing is. I have not heard that from the Department of Education. It doesn't mean that it is not the case in certain schools, but if you have more information on that --

Q I do. (Inaudible) get it to you.

MS. PSAKI: -- come share that with me.

I would say that we know that unless Congress acts to raise the debt limit, what we're talking about here is people's retirement savings, their Social Security benefits, their economic security being at risk. That could mean all sorts of things, to your point about people's economic security, especially people who are at or below the poverty line or above the poverty line. And we're seeing the impact on markets across the country.

We don't want that to be the case, of course. That's why we're working to prevent this from happening.

I would say, in terms of the cost of meat and the cost of goods, we think -- there's a range of issues here. You referenced the supply chain. Another issue is the fact that there's not enough competition among big meat producers. It's something Secretary Vilsack spoke to when he was here just a few weeks ago and something our Department of Agriculture and the Department of Justice also are working to take steps to address.

Q Thank you for that, but just a real quick --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q -- one -- one more on the shots. We do have an approval for FlowFlex -- I believe is the name of the rapid results test -- and we were expecting today to have -- hear more information about that. But I've written about this, and the New York Times is saying that one of the problems even in going to places like CVS to get a test is, in some places, you don't even -- you can't even buy a rapid results test. And being that school is in session and that we are going to be having more events, for example --

MS. PSAKI: So, Mona, that's exactly why we just announced a \$2 billion investment that's going to quadruple the number of tests that are available at schools, community centers, and also to purchase at home.

Q But that's future focused. I'm talking about --

MS. PSAKI: It's starting to happen now.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. Just to follow up on John Kerry's comments.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q You mentioned that he was, of course, aware of the displeasure after the deal was announced. Was he not aware of something before the deal was announced? Was he not aware that the French weren't read in? Was he not aware of the



French deal on conventional submarines?

MS. PSAKI: Look, I think, right now, what our focus is on is moving forward. As you know and as President Macron spoke to, they're going to be meeting next month. We're working to finalize the details of that.

As you saw, our National Security Advisor and members of our national security team have met with their counterparts or high-level officials in recent weeks.

So, at this point, what our focus is on is how we work with the French moving forward.

Q Thank you, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Thanks, everyone.

4:56 P.M. EDT

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

October 6, 2021

**Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, October 6, 2021**

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

4:13 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Okay --

Q Or maybe not.

MS. PSAKI: Oh, what did you think was going to happen? (Laughter.) I'm sorry to disappoint. Okay, sorry to disappoint. You never know who's behind the door.

Okay. Okay, tomorrow -- just one item for all of you at the top: Tomorrow, the President will travel to Elk Grove Village, Illinois -- a trip he had planned to do last week -- to meet with public and private sector leaders who have implemented vaccination requirements. The President will visit with a company local to the Chicago area that is imposing its own vaccine requirement ahead of the OSHA rule.

The President's message will be clear: Vaccination requirements work. Vaccination requirements get more people vaccinated, helping to end the pandemic and strengthen the economy.

That's why he's leading and implementing on -- implementing vaccination requirements for 100 million workers, two thirds of all workers in the United States, and that's why we're seeing growing momentum for vaccination requirements across the sectors and across the country.



Alex, go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. I was hoping to get you to weigh in on three different debt limit scenarios since there's so many --

MS. PSAKI: Great.

Q -- developing. So, off the top, Senator Mitch McConnell has proposed for Republicans to either support a short-term hike in the debt limit through December or to support a expedited reconciliation process where Democrats would vote to hike it long term. What's the White House response to that? Is there support for either of those from the President?

And then, I was hoping to get clarification on something the President said yesterday. He seemed to suggest that he would support a carveout in the filibuster, if all else fails, to hike the debt limit. Is that where he stands? Would he be open to that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, right now -- and perhaps this the awkwardness of 4:15, while people are still meeting on the Hill -- right now, Democratic members are meeting on the Hill to discuss options on the path forward. I think Republican members may also be meeting or discussing among themselves.

My understanding, at the point I walked out here, is that there's been no formal offer made. A press release is not a formal offer.

And regardless, even the scant details that have been reported present more complicated, more difficult options than the one that is quite obvious, in the President's view, and is in front of the faces of every member up on the Hill. We could get this done today. We don't need to kick the can. We don't need to go through a cumbersome process that every day brings additional risks.

So, they're discussing up there. We'll, obviously, be in close touch with them, as we will continue to be, and we'll see where we -- where we are at the end of today.

Q And then one foreign policy question. Does the White House have a position yet on the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act which passed unanimously in the Senate?

And just broadly in that same context, how do you respond to the criticism from Senator Rubio and some Republicans that the administration is sort of letting Beijing have some advantage on human rights abuses to try to win over their cooperation on climate issues?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we would absolutely dispute that notion. Unlike the former President, this President has spoken out against human rights abuses, has raised his concerns about human rights abuses directly with President Xi, and we have done that at every level from our national security team.

In terms of the legislation, obviously we have spoken out about our concerns of human rights abuses in Xinjiang. And I would also note that the President also led an effort to have coordination on the international stage to address this issue, unlike his predecessors.

But I'd have to talk to our legislative team about specific views on the -- in the piece of legislation. I know I spoke to it briefly last week, but I'll -- I'll come back to you with that.

Go ahead, Steve.

Q Jake Sullivan reached a deal with the Chinese today for President Biden and President Xi to have a virtual summit before the end of the year. Do you see this happening around the G20 Summit? And what's the advantage of them seeing each other face-to-face?



MS. PSAKI: Well, as I understand it, what came out of the discussions was an agreement to continue dialogue at a very high level.

So, what we've said, of course -- and we continue to believe -- is that leader-level engagement is an important part of our effort to responsibly manage the competition with China, especially given the coalescing of power in Chinese leadership.

We're still working through what that would look like, when, and, of course, the final details. So we don't quite have them yet.

Q Secondly, the President indicated last night that he had spoken to President Xi about Taiwan. Was this in their more recent phone call? And what exactly did he tell him?

MS. PSAKI: So just -- you didn't ask this, but some others have asked us -- he did not have a new call that you're not aware of.

Q Okay. Okay.

MS. PSAKI: So, just for full clarity on that. He has spoken with him twice, as you know.

And certainly, reiterating our position as it relates to -- you know, which is guided by the Taiwan Relations Act and our view that we need to uphold that commitment -- our commitment under the act -- that is what the President reiterated to President Xi last time he talked, and it is something that is raised nearly every time he speaks at a leader level and at other levels as well.

Q And last thing -- and sorry to prolong -- the Energy Secretary, Granholm, in a conference today did not rule out a ban on crude oil exports to keep U.S. energy prices down. Is that something that's seriously being looked at?

MS. PSAKI: I would defer to the Energy Secretary, but I don't have anything new to report on that from internally in the White House.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Hey, Jen. So, I understand that you're obviously waiting for more details of this proposal from the Senate Minority Leader, but, you know, would the President accept a short-term deal to raise the debt ceiling while you try and find a broader path out of this crisis?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as I said a few minutes ago, we don't need to kick the can. We don't need to go through a cumbersome process that every day brings additional risks. And you heard many of the business leaders convey that, even as we look to risk tomorrow, the next day, as American -- the American people are looking at the retirement accounts, worrying about their Social Security savings, members of the military worrying about their payments. We don't need to incur that risk uncertainty.

And I think it's important to also remember we're at this point because Republicans in Congress treated the savings accounts and retirement savings of the American people, Social Security checks of retirees, and veterans benefits like a game of Monopoly, putting the stability and security of the American people at risk.

We're at this point because Republicans in Congress blocked efforts by Democrats to raise the debt limit and protect the full faith and credit of the United States, despite having voted for it three times during the Trump administration.

So, obviously, as has been reported, and the vote has been delayed, there's still an opportunity for Republicans to join us in



being adults in the room and ensure that people have confidence in the economic security and their own retirement savings.

Q The Minority Leader's proposal, though, seems to go at one of the key arguments that the President was making yesterday about why he's opposed to using budget reconciliation, which is that it would take time, it's cumbersome, it could lead to, you know, unexpected scenarios.

So, is the Minority Leader taking off the arguments against reconciliation by offering this one-month extension? And if not, then what are your remaining objections? Is it simply that you don't want Democrats to take a vote that will put a specific dollar amount on raising the debt ceiling?

MS. PSAKI: Democrats are very willing to be the adults in the room and take a vote to raise the debt limit. They're not even asking Republicans to do that anymore, since they've clearly shown their refusal to do exactly that.

The point I'm making is that there is a very clear -- the least risky option here that can ensure that there is confidence from the American people about their own checking accounts or about their own retirement savings, that's something Republicans still have the opportunity to participate in and be a part of.

Q And just on Afghanistan, if I could. The ISIS-K suicide bomber had -- you know, who was -- who carried out the attack that resulted in the deaths of 13 U.S. service members and dozens more Afghans had been released from the Parwan prison at Bagram Air Base just days before that attack took place, when the Taliban took control of that base.

Should the Biden administration have done more to secure Bagram or transfer ISIS-K prisoners outside of that? And do you now accept that this attack would not have happened had the United States retained control of Bagram?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I can't speak to the specific case. I'd let it -- leave it to the intelligence community to speak to that. So I'd point you to them.

I'd remind you that, as it relates to Bagram, there was a decision made to close Bagram because it wasn't strategically in the interest of the United States and our national security to keep it open with 5,000 troops there protecting Bagram at a distance that was far away from the capital and far away from where people from the embassy would be evacuated. So, that was the broad-based decision.

I understand you're asking me a different question than that, but I just wanted to reiterate.

Q But would he have made the same decision had he known that it would result --

MS. PSAKI: Again, I can't speak --

Q -- in the deaths of 13 service members?

MS. PSAKI: -- to this particular report. I'd point you to the intelligence community.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. You know, Congress has passed countless short-term government funding measures. They have funded the government for 48 hours before. Wouldn't a short-term debt ceiling hike be preferable to default?

MS. PSAKI: The preference would be just getting this done today so we can move on to more business for the American people. And that option is still on the table.

Q But you -- you know, the White House brought in all of these banking CEOs today to talk about how catastrophic it would be if the U.S. were to default. Why not send the markets that assurance, if you have the opportunity, that, at least



for the next eight weeks, the debt ceiling is going to be secure?

MS. PSAKI: Well, if we're looking at the best options, why kick the can down the road a couple of more weeks? Why create an additional layer of uncertainty? Why not just get it done now? That's what we're continuing to press for, and that's our first choice.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. A week ago, the National School Boards Association wrote to the President to say that their teachers feel like some parents protesting recently "could be the equivalent to a form of domestic terrorism." And then, the Attorney General put the FBI on the case.

So, does the administration agree that parents upset about their kids' curriculums could be considered domestic terrorists?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me unravel this a little bit, because the National School Board Association is not a part of the U.S. government. I'd point you to them.

What the Department of Justice said in a letter from the Attorney General is that, quote, "Threats against public servants are not only illegal, they run counter to our nation's core values." That is true. These were threats against public servants, threats against members of the school board. Regardless of the reasoning, threats and violence against public servants is illegal. That's what he was conveying from the Department of Justice.

Q But the Department of Justice does now have the FBI on this. Something that the School Boards Association is asking for is for the administration to consider using the PATRIOT Act to investigate some of these school board protestors. So, would the administration be okay with the FBI using the PATRIOT Act to surveil these parents, if that is what they decide?

MS. PSAKI: I don't speak on behalf of the National School Board Association; I speak on behalf of this government. The Attorney General has put out a letter. They will take actions they take, and I would point you to them for more information.

Q And something that you said on Monday after some protestors were hounding Kyrsten Sinema into a restroom -- you said, "The President stands for the fundamental right of people to protest, to object, [and] to criticize." So does the President support the fundamental rights of these parents to protest at school board meetings?

MS. PSAKI: Of course. But he doesn't stand for the fundamental right -- I assume you don't either -- for people to take violent action against members -- public servants. And that's what the threats are about. And so, no, he doesn't stand for that; no one should.

Q Just one more. John Kerry says that after France was cut out of the nuclear submarine deal, and they were upset enough about being left in the dark that they pulled their ambassador, he went to the President and, quote, "The President, literally, had not been aware of what had transpired." So what else are you guys not telling the President?

MS. PSAKI: Of course, he was aware of the French being upset -- let me finish --

Q No, Kerry --

MS. PSAKI: Let me --

Q -- said he "literally..." --

MS. PSAKI: Let me -- let me finish.



Q -- "had not been aware."

MS. PSAKI: I know John Kerry quite well. He, of course, was aware -- the President -- of the French being displeased about the deal with the Australians. John Kerry also speaks regularly to the French, as a part of his role as the Climate Envoy. He's someone who also served as Secretary of State. He's someone I -- alone -- traveled to France with him 25 times.

He, of course, conveyed to the President what his read is -- was of what they were specifically unhappy about and how to help address it.

Q A follow-up on France, Jen?

Q You said -- you've said this President's first love is foreign policy. So, why doesn't he know about these things in real time?

MS. PSAKI: Of course, he knew about the French being displeased about --

Q John Kerry said --

MS. PSAKI: Let me finish.

Q -- he "literally had not be aware."

MS. PSAKI: Peter, I would encourage you to ask John Kerry specifically about the context of his comments. The President and John -- and the former Secretary are also good friends. He relies on his counsel, and -- as he does with many members of his national security team. But that certainly is not what he was intending to convey.

Q Follow-up on France?

Q Jen, if I could --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q -- let me ask you quickly: Yesterday, the President said that he would be speaking with Mitch McConnell, as it related to the debt limit. Has that conversation happened? And what did he -- what did he tell him?

MS. PSAKI: They have not spoken. I think what the President has repeatedly conveyed is that he's certainly open to, as he -- as he has shown throughout the course of his presidency, having conversations with Democrats and Republicans when he feels it would be constructive.

Q He said they will be -- he said they will be speaking. So you were saying he was saying they will at some point, but there was no --

MS. PSAKI: At some -- at some point, if it's constructive in moving things forward.

Q Okay. Does the President trust Mitch McConnell to be an honest broker in this process?

MS. PSAKI: I don't think this is about trust. This is about -- he has known him a long time, but this is about whether you're going to be a leader and take steps that are not based on -- on political calculations and more based on what's in the interest of the United States and the full faith and of the United States.

Q The President discussed that there was a possibility of a filibuster -- a carveout -- as it related to the debt ceiling. If that

were the case, would the President be open to a filibuster carveout for voting rights? Where does that line get drawn for the President?

MS. PSAKI: The President was just simply conveying that there are a range of options that leaders on the Hill are discussing. I think you all have reported that, or your colleagues on the Hill have. Nothing more than that. We'll be in touch with them, and we'll see what the next best options look like.

But what is very clear is that there is an easy, risk-free option here that Republicans could allow Democrats to vote to raise the debt ceiling. We could be done with this today.

Q Can I just follow up very quickly? Why wouldn't the President, given that relationship he has with Mitch McConnell, just call Mitch McConnell and have this conversation with him? Why do this through public events?

MS. PSAKI: What's the conversation about?

Q I don't know. They have the relationship. He's the one who said he could bring the two sides together. So, wouldn't there be some value in having that conversation with one another?

MS. PSAKI: We know what the -- we know what the risk-free option is here. We know what the clear path forward is here. And I think the President has made no secret about his belief on that.

Go ahead.

Q Has the President had time to absorb the criticism of the Fed Chairman? And then, specifically, what does the White House believe should happen -- Fed policy about investments made by top officials there?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we obviously leave the independence of the Fed to an independent Fed -- Federal Reserve. And I'm not going to speak to that from here.

The President is confident in the Chairman of the Federal Reserve, and, beyond that, I don't have any personnel announcements for you.

Q Given that confidence, and also given what you just said, I mean, how close is he to making a decision on that?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything to preview for you at this point.

Q Yesterday, the President said he would sign a reconciliation bill that included the Hyde Amendment. You told us earlier this week that he remains opposed to that. So, is he backtracking on a campaign promise, something that's -- a lot of his supporters believe strongly in?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President's position hasn't changed. The context of his comments were that there is still a negotiation happening. There's a range of views. His view remains what is reflected in his budget, which is that getting rid of -- which he released in May -- which shows that getting rid of the Hyde Amendment was a priority. That remains his position. This is a package that's still being negotiated, and he said that much -- as much last night as well.

Go ahead.

Q Just confirming what you told Peter: The President, when he signaled yesterday that it's possible that the Senate could change its rules, that -- we should not read that as him expressing support for that notion?

MS. PSAKI: The President was certain simply reporting out what you already have reported out, which is that there are a range of options being discussed on Capitol Hill.



Q I want to ask you separately: The ambassador-designate to India was seen, reportedly, at an event in Los Angeles last week at an art gallery event that featured the artwork of the President's son, Hunter.

The ethicists who have pointed to this arrangement have expressed concern that the President's son selling art could potentially put the President in a situation where those who seek jobs either in this administration or favors from this administration could put this White House in an awkward position.

Should -- first of all, what is the White House's response to the fact that an ambassador nominee was at this event? And secondly, should we expect to see more people who seek jobs in this administration attending events like this in the future?

MS. PSAKI: Well, to be clear, we've spoken to the arrangement that is run by the gallerist and Hunter Biden's representatives that the White House provided suggestions for. I'd refer you to the gallerist for questions about the event and -- as well as the representatives of Mr. Garcetti, in terms of his attendance.

Q But, Jen, just to follow up: This is exactly what ethicists said they were worried about.

MS. PSAKI: What is, specifically?

Q The fact that the President's son --

MS. PSAKI: That he reportedly attended an event?

Q Well, that the President's son would be selling artwork and then meeting, potentially, with people who would seek to buy it. If you have attendees at that event who might be seeking either jobs in this administration or favors from this administration, isn't it an awkward situation to put the President in?

MS. PSAKI: Again, the gallerist has spoken to -- we've spoken to the specifics of what the gallerist has agreed to and what recommendations were made. I've done that several times. I don't have additional details for it from here. I'd point you to them.

Go ahead.

Q So -- but does this White House not have any concerns about the photos that have emerged showing Hunter Biden at that gallery alongside prospective buyers?

MS. PSAKI: I'd point you to the gallerist on specifics of the restrictions that were put in place.

Q Great. But what about the position of this White House? This is a President who ran on being transparent and you've got -- are there no concerns?

MS. PSAKI: And we were very transparent about what recommendations were made to the gallerist, and I would again point you to them or the many times I've spoken about that from here.

Q And just to clarify, has the President's position on doing away with the filibuster changed?

MS. PSAKI: Nothing has -- no, it has not changed.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. The administration reportedly will invest \$1 billion into making rapid-testing COVID kits available. But there are concerns that the tests will be too expensive. I think a lot of Americans are wondering: Is there a universe where these available tests will be free or affordable, or at least less expensive than \$25 a pop?



MS. PSAKI: Yeah, so, there's no question, to your point, that there has been a huge increase and an interest in testing, and getting tests, and making them, and people going out and being able to get them easily.

We announced a \$2 billion investment in September. So, right now, we're on track to ~~double~~ [triple] the number of rapid, at-home tests on the market by early November. And we're also now on track to triple the number of rapid, at-home tests on the market by -- and thanks to the approval of ACON -- sorry -- this Monday, which accelerates the pace. We're now on track to triple the number. Triple the number, not double. I apologize.

So, right now, with these investments, we'll be at 200 million tests per month starting in December, with tens of millions more coming on the market in the coming weeks.

And we're also working to ensure that these tests, in addition to making them more available -- so you could go to CVS or Walmart, or wherever, to get them -- we've been working hard to make sure they are accessible and available in pharmacies, in community centers, in schools. So, we're also working to do that simultaneously and separate from that.

We recognize there's a need. We recognized we needed to do more. And we are pleased by the fact that we are now on track to not only triple by November but also quadruple by December.

Q There was a school shooting in Texas today. The school safety group Everytown says that this year has been the most dangerous back-to-school period for students since they began tracking the data in 2013. That's some 30 instances of gunfire on schoolgrounds since August 1st, and today's shooting means that number is out of date.

Is the administration discussing ways that schools can keep children safe from school violence -- from gun violence?

MS. PSAKI: Absolutely. I mean, one, I would say the President has been an advocate for doing more for gun safety measures through the course of his career. Not only did he fight to get the Brady Bill passed, he fought for the Assault Weapons Ban. It remains a cause of his public life in office.

We, of course, are frustrated by the inability to get commonsense gun reforms through Congress. We should be able to get universal background checks approved. They're supported by the vast majority of the public, as are assault weapons bans.

But in addition to that, we also have taken a number of steps, both by working through the Department of Justice to increase our strike force teams that are going out to specific communities and cities to help address violence. A lot of that is driven by gun violence. That's something that we've been implementing from there. And, of course, our Department of Education is engaged in this effort as well.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Yesterday's hearing by a Facebook whistleblower underscored several major issues with the company, including, as many senators pointed out, issues with Section 230.

On the campaign trail, Biden said that Section 230 should, quote, "immediately be revoked" and that it should be revoked because, quote, Facebook "is not just an Internet company. It is propagating falsehoods they know to be false." Does the White House stand by that assessment for Section 230, given the revelations now?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President has long said, as you referenced, that tech platforms must be held accountable for the harms that they cause. And he has been a strong supporter of fundamental reforms to achieve that goal. This includes Section 230 reforms. It also includes privacy and antitrust reforms as well as more transparency. That should also be on the table.

And he looks forward to working with Congress on these bipartisan issues.



He's also called, I would note -- because there were a number -- a range of issues that were raised during the whistleblower's testimony yesterday -- on the FTC to adopt rules to address unfair data collection and surveillance practice -- practices in his Executive Order on Promoting Competition in the American Economy.

So, yes, more needs to be done, reform should happen. We also need to do more on privacy and antitrust. And certainly, watching testimony yesterday raised a lot of those issues again for people.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Does the President have any intention of speaking with Senators Manchin or Sinema at all this week?

MS. PSAKI: I can't predict for you day by day. I -- we have been in touch with Senator Manchin and Sinema at a senior-staff level, and certainly, I wouldn't rule it out.

Q I wanted to ask a follow-up question on an earlier question about the Hyde Amendment. The President has not been shy about his opposition, in recent years, to the Hyde Amendment. As you mentioned, you know, he made that clear in his budget blueprint; he made that clear as a candidate, when he was running for President.

So, can you explain why it is he's saying that he would sign this bill either way -- you know, with or without this language in it?

MS. PSAKI: He's reflecting that it's a negotiation. It's ongoing. We don't know what the final product will look like.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, can I ask a little bit about energy prices? There -- you know, gas prices in the U.S. are fairly high. We're seeing exceptionally high prices of certain energy products in --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- Europe right now. Is the U.S. domestically considering a release from the SPR to bring down oil prices at this time?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to make any prediction of that from here. I would note that we have seen, as you said, some ticks-up in parts of the country, also in re- -- as a follow-up to Hurricane Ida, because the hurricane hit a region that is a key center of the nation's oil production and refining infrastructure.

So that's something we've been working to focus on. And we took actions in the days and weeks following to help address that, including, at the time, authorizing several million barrels of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve exchanges.

We've also taken steps into -- including engaging with members of OPEC. We've also taken steps to reach out to the FTC to ensure they're using every available tool to monitor the U.S. gasoline market and address any illegal conduct. But I'm not going to make any other predictions at this point in time. We're continuously monitoring. We'll look to take additional steps as needed.

Q Are you or would you consider restricting LNG exports to, I guess, head off the type of shortages and price spikes that we're seeing in Europe -- in parts of Europe?

MS. PSAKI: I'm just not going to make any additional policy predictions at this point in time.

Q Can I, like, broadly say: Overall, these are fundamentally price crunches on, you know, nonrenewable sources of fuel. And we're heading into COP summit here.



MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Do you worry that this could impact the pledges that countries are willing to make? Will other governments get weak-kneed about going green at a time when they're facing brewing, sort of, political crises at home over, really, skyrocketing prices of non-renewable fuel sources?

MS. PSAKI: We certainly hope not. I mean, I think what COP26 is about is to continue the conversation on the international stage, at the leader level -- that has been going on below the leader level continuously, basically -- about our need to work together to address the climate crisis -- one of the greatest national security crises the President sees. A number of other world leaders agree on that front.

Certainly, we all want to keep gasoline prices low, but the threat of the crisis -- the climate crisis -- certainly can't wait any longer.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead. Oh, go ahead. Go ahead.

Q Yeah, thanks very much. On the -- you sound pretty lukewarm about the McConnell idea. If the Democratic Caucus were to get behind it, is it a given that the President will get on board? Or --

MS. PSAKI: We'll see where things are. This is an ever-moving news cycle.

Q Because, you know, as we speak, there seems to be some positive vibes there regarding this, whereas you're giving, you know, quite the opposite.

MS. PSAKI: I would say, actually, in my read of it, there's a diversity of views in the Democratic Caucus, as is to be expected. And they're meeting now. We'll be in close touch with them, so I just don't want to get ahead of that process.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q I know we're still a few weeks away from the G20, but I wanted to see if the President would be open to meeting with Putin again at the G20. And does he feel like his last meeting with Putin was effective? Does the President feel like he's seen any change in Russia or Putin's behavior since then?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I don't have any predictions for you on the bilateral meetings. That's something that we're still working through at this point in time, every day.

And in terms of the -- how constructive his meeting was with President Putin, as he said at the time, we didn't expect it to be a light switch where, all of a sudden, everything would be hunky-dory in the relationship. It's not. We have remaining concerns, but it was an opportunity to express them at a high level, see what work could be done over the course of the long term to address it.

So I don't know that we're going to do a month-by-month assessment. It's something that we have continued conversations from -- with members of the national security team about many of the issues were raised. Those are ongoing. We're continuing to strive to make progress.

Q Can I follow up on that?

O And do you have any update on Afghanistan and how many Americans are still there? And is the -- do you -- does the



President feel the Taliban is cooperating still with efforts to get those remaining Americans out?

MS. PSAKI: We remain -- through appropriate channels of course -- in touch with Taliban officials. In terms of the specific numbers, I'd point you to the State Department. And they have the most updated number on that, given they oversee that process.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, there's been some reporting that Senate Democrats are planning to accept the short-term debt limit increase. So, given that we now have some reporting on that, can you just give us some guidance on what the White House thinks about that idea?

MS. PSAKI: Not yet. I have to -- I have to dig further into that reporting -- not to question it -- and talk to the team here about where things stand. And as far as when I came out here, they were still meeting, but we'll venture to get back to you as soon as we have something more concrete to convey.

Q Thanks, Jen. When the President was talking today about Republicans and the debt ceiling, he said, "If they don't want to do the job, just get out of the way. We'll take the heat. We'll do it." When he says, "We'll take the heat," what did he mean by that? What political risk is he acknowledging there for Democrats?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think one of the reasons we're at this point is because Republicans in Congress would rather bet on a misleading and inaccurate campaign season talking point. We're not betting that that's going to work, but his point -- the President's point is: Regardless, we're willing -- Democrats are willing to vote alone, without any Republican votes, to raise the debt ceiling. You just need to allow us to proceed with that vote.

Q And on the testing question that had come up, on rapid tests, this \$1 billion investment will quadruple the tests by December, in addition to everything else from the past couple of weeks. But why has it taken so long to get this rapid testing to this point where it will be -- by December, when Europe is flooded with rapid tests? Is it the authorization process and the timeline on that, or is it on the production side, or both?

MS. PSAKI: Well, one of the things we've been working on is to increase production, as you know, and also increase -- I would say that the demand for these tests here has increased a lot in the last several weeks, so we're also working to meet that and ensure that we are meeting the moment here in the United States.

In terms of the specific mechanics, I would encourage you to ask the COVID team that question.

Q Is that missing the moment though by -- you know, the demand has gone up in recent weeks because kids have gone back to school. Should this have been ready for back-to-school so that you could go to a CVS or any of the pharmacies or government sites and get these tests?

MS. PSAKI: I mean, again, we just announced, last month, an enormous investment: We're quadrupling availability by December, tripling by November. I think that is speaking to how seriously we take this and how we're working to ensure there are accessible, cost-effective tests out there and available to the public.

Go ahead.

Q What plans does the White House have to address the risk of oil spills from existing platforms, existing leases that are still operating?

MS. PSAKI: You mean like the one that happened in California?

O Correct.



MS. PSAKI: I would really point you to the Department of Energy for specifics there.

Q But, you know, the White House policies on stopping future leases possibly --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- things like that. But, you know, this is an ongoing threat, you know, that happens as, you know, offshore drilling continues. Is there an interest in investing in the infrastructure of the pipeline to enhance their safety, shutting them down? You know, what are your thoughts on that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, I think there -- as we've seen, and there's been an ongoing investigation about what exactly was the root cause here, so I don't want to, kind of, speak to that as that's been ongoing. But, beyond that, I would point you to the Department of Energy.

Q And two very quick things on the spill: Does the White House have a working theory on what caused the spill? And secondly, do you have an update on federal resources that have been dispatched to respond to the spill?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. I think I do have an update on federal resources. Let me see.

On the leak, just so I don't forget to answer this part, it's still under investigation. As you may know, the oil has stopped leaking; the pipeline has been removed from service.

In terms of our government efforts, 4,788 gallons of oil have been recovered and 11,360 feet of containment boom have been deployed. As of yesterday, six miles of shoreline have been cleaned, 328 response personnel with additional assets are on -- have -- on the way have been deployed.

As we said earlier this week, the Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration investigators are on the ground in the Unified/Incident Command Center. And on Monday, we also issued a corrective order -- action order to the operator mandating immediate corrective action, including performing a root cause failure analysis, integrity assessment, and remedial work plan.

Beyond that, Unified Command, of course, who are on the ground would have any additional steps we're taking and that are up to date.

Go ahead, April.

Q Jen, we see there are crisis moments -- everything is in crisis mode here -- but there are other issues that are percolating as well that some feel are at crisis levels -- Black agenda issues. The Vice President just had the heads of Divine Nine in a meeting -- frank, good, direct discussion, we were told -- about issues, particularly voting rights.

What is the President expecting when it comes to dealing with the Black agenda, particularly with those that have this small window, like voting rights and also the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act? What is he expected to do? What is he planning on committing to make sure these things happen?

MS. PSAKI: He wants to get both done. He wants to sign them into law. As you know, and you've told me in the past, the Black agenda is bigger than voting rights and bigger than the George Floyd Police and Justice Act.

Both are hugely important. The President has committed to getting them both done. He wants to sign them into law. We need Congress to move forward on both to get that done.

Q They are -- the Black agenda is huge. It's vast. But in this moment, there's a small window of time before elections



happen, and the concern is is that this President is not doing enough; he has not armed the Vice President or helped her to be able to fight the fight for these things.

MS. PSAKI: I would say the Vice President is more than capable of fighting the fight and the lead on this particular issue and any issue.

Q So how is he --

MS. PSAKI: She's the Vice President of the United States. Pretty powerful.

Q Right, but if the President -- the argument is, if the President is not supporting her with the tools that she needs --

MS. PSAKI: Which tools is she --

Q -- i.e. the filibuster --

MS. PSAKI: -- is she -- is he not providing to her?

Q -- i.e. the filibuster for voting rights, and that is in her portfolio.

You have one of her friends -- and a Democrat, a strategist -- Bakari Sellers, who says her portfolio is trash because he's not supporting her in the way that she needs to be supported for this to pass. So, what do you say? Can he, will he, shall he push for the filibuster for voting rights, even as he's doing it -- thinking about it for the debt ceiling?

MS. PSAKI: Well, that's not exactly what I conveyed earlier, but I will say that the President has conveyed many times that getting voting rights done, signing it into law is top of his agenda.

The Vice President, one of the most powerful people in the world, is leading this effort. He is her -- she is his partner. She's the first in the room, the last in the room, and he's going to continue to work by her side to get it done.

But beyond that and the legislative process and how that will work, I don't have any update on that front.

Go ahead.

Q Sticking on voting rights, with S.4 being introduced in the Senate: The President has, over and over, talked about the pathways that voting rights legislation could take, same thing that he -- apparently, yesterday, you said he was alluding to when he said "real possibility" -- right? -- talking about what could possibly happen on the Hill.

He's never talked about voting rights with any kind of real possibility of a filibuster carveout, and there's a real frustration -- some people have got arrested just yesterday -- among activists on the voting rights issues.

So, other than, "We're frustrated; we stand with you," what do you have to say to activists who are saying this White House, the President isn't doing enough on voting rights specifically?

MS. PSAKI: I think that was just the question I just answered, no?

Q But we're trying to get an answer from you. I mean, it's a legitimate question. And we're trying to --

MS. PSAKI: I'm not saying -- I'm not saying it's not. I'm not saying it's not. I would say that the President is also frustrated that voting rights has not been done. He's also frustrated that Republicans are so afraid of making reforms that would make it easier for people to vote that they have blocked this effort.



And he is frustrated that, despite everything that's happened around the country, there isn't more of a movement to get this done -- I don't mean by activists; certainly, there's a movement there -- in Congress.

What he was certainly -- what he was speaking to yesterday was the fact that there is live conversations right now about a range of options on the debt limit. He was not speaking to anything beyond that. And that's what is happening on the -- on Capitol Hill in this particular moment. That's it.

And so, I would convey to activists that he is absolutely committed. He wants to get this done. He wants to sign it into law. The Vice President just had meetings today on it. She is in the lead on this effort, as one of the most powerful people in this country, maybe even in the world, leading this effort.

Q But, I mean, he's the President. So, when I talk to activists, you know, they say, "You're the President. If you're frustrated, do something." Right? So, I guess that is the -- that is what we're constantly hearing --

MS. PSAKI: Congress is a separate body.

Q Sure, but there's things that he could --

MS. PSAKI: It's a --

Q There are things that he --

MS. PSAKI: It's a -- it's a separate body. You need 50 votes to change the filibuster. You also need the majority of votes to pass legislation into law.

He has made clear that he wants voting rights to be passed into law. He will continue to advocate publicly, privately, and continue to be a partner to the Vice President. He absolutely feels this is essential and we need to get it done.

Go ahead, Patsy.

Q Thank you, Jen. I want to follow up on Taiwan. Administration officials -- including yourself, I believe, on Monday, and Secretary Blinken today -- essentially have issued warnings to China urging China to stop its military activities in Taiwan. However, China has ignored that. In fact, it has dialed up sending even more military jets. So, what does that say about the credibility of U.S. deterrence on this issue?

MS. PSAKI: I think the Secretary of State spoke to this earlier. I don't think I have anything more to add to what he said.

Q Can I -- can I just follow up?

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q How concerned are you that these recent activities might actually escalate and then draw the U.S. into some sort of great power war with China? And so, what are you doing to maintain tensions beyond, kind of, ad hoc meetings like the Zurich meeting that Jake Sullivan is --

MS. PSAKI: I wouldn't call a meeting with our National Security Advisor and his counterpart an "ad hoc" meeting.

Obviously, we raise our concerns through a range of channels. The State Department also put out a public statement -- a proactive statement on this, which is not something they do frequently, and the Secretary of State spoke to it today.

Q Do you have regular, you know, meetings to make sure that things like this don't escalate into something bigger?



MS. PSAKI: Of course, we do, as you well know.  
Go ahead.

Q I have another debt ceiling question --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- but zooming much farther out.

Earlier today, Jamie Dimon suggested getting rid of the debt ceiling altogether so that this scenario would not happen again.

Secretary Yellen seemed to lend her support to that idea of getting rid of the debt ceiling altogether in the past. Has she spoken with the President about that idea? And does he have a position on, sort of, the larger question of whether or not it should or should not be abolished?

MS. PSAKI: Right now, our focus is on raising the debt ceiling in the limited amount of time we have left to do that and do it without impacting the retirement savings accounts, the Social Security, and the economic security of millions of Americans. There's plenty of time to have a conversation after that.

Q And then a quick follow-up. You were asked about the -- the Uyghur anti-slave labor bill.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah. You asked me about it last week, too -- or the week before. I don't remember.

Q That's right.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q You've noted several times that the President has put out statements.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q There is sanctions as well. Does this administration -- does the President feel that there is anyone in his administration that is opposed to this kind of bipartisan legislation?

MS. PSAKI: I think it's all about taking a look at the legislation and figuring out if it's something we'd support moving forward -- every component of it -- and I'll check and see if we have a statement of administration policy on it.

Q But you don't know of anyone in the administration who currently opposes this?

MS. PSAKI: Again, we're not talking about whether or not we think the treatment of the Uyghurs is outrageous. It is. We've all said that. We're talking about a piece of legislation that has several components, and so I just want to make sure I go through the proper process with that.

Q On food shortages --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Hi. I was just wanting to talk to you about food shortages real quick. I'm not sure if you were looking here. But I just wanted to say that, on food shortages, we're seeing in schools the supply chain is kinked and affecting school lunches to the degree that kids are having bread -- or meat with no bread to make sandwiches, for example. And grocery stores, ahead of the holidays, are limiting the amount of food that you can actually purchase.

So, in regard to the debt ceiling talks, if the Senate votes "no" ahead of Thanksgiving, ahead of Christmas, and the coming holiday season -- if they say "no," what will that mean in the big picture for this nation and food shortages and other product delinquencies?

MS. PSAKI: Well, look, I would say -- I just want to dis- -- to make sure we're sending a clear message here about what the impacts of different things are. I know that's why you asked the question.

You'd have to get me more information about how broadly the school issue you're referencing is. I have not heard that from the Department of Education. It doesn't mean that it is not the case in certain schools, but if you have more information on that --

Q I do. (Inaudible) get it to you.

MS. PSAKI: -- come share that with me.

I would say that we know that unless Congress acts to raise the debt limit, what we're talking about here is people's retirement savings, their Social Security benefits, their economic security being at risk. That could mean all sorts of things, to your point about people's economic security, especially people who are at or below the poverty line or above the poverty line. And we're seeing the impact on markets across the country.

We don't want that to be the case, of course. That's why we're working to prevent this from happening.

I would say, in terms of the cost of meat and the cost of goods, we think -- there's a range of issues here. You referenced the supply chain. Another issue is the fact that there's not enough competition among big meat producers. It's something Secretary Vilsack spoke to when he was here just a few weeks ago and something our Department of Agriculture and the Department of Justice also are working to take steps to address.

Q Thank you for that, but just a real quick --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q -- one -- one more on the shots. We do have an approval for FlowFlex -- I believe is the name of the rapid results test -- and we were expecting today to have -- hear more information about that. But I've written about this, and the New York Times is saying that one of the problems even in going to places like CVS to get a test is, in some places, you don't even -- you can't even buy a rapid results test. And being that school is in session and that we are going to be having more events, for example --

MS. PSAKI: So, Mona, that's exactly why we just announced a \$2 billion investment that's going to quadruple the number of tests that are available at schools, community centers, and also to purchase at home.

Q But that's future focused. I'm talking about --

MS. PSAKI: It's starting to happen now.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. Just to follow up on John Kerry's comments.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q You mentioned that he was, of course, aware of the displeasure after the deal was announced. Was he not aware of something before the deal was announced? Was he not aware that the French weren't read in? Was he not aware of the



French deal on conventional submarines?

MS. PSAKI: Look, I think, right now, what our focus is on is moving forward. As you know and as President Macron spoke to, they're going to be meeting next month. We're working to finalize the details of that.

As you saw, our National Security Advisor and members of our national security team have met with their counterparts or high-level officials in recent weeks.

So, at this point, what our focus is on is how we work with the French moving forward.

Q Thank you, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Thanks, everyone.

4:56 P.M. EDT

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

October 6, 2021

**Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, October 6, 2021**

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

4:13 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Okay --

Q Or maybe not.

MS. PSAKI: Oh, what did you think was going to happen? (Laughter.) I'm sorry to disappoint. Okay, sorry to disappoint. You never know who's behind the door.

Okay. Okay, tomorrow -- just one item for all of you at the top: Tomorrow, the President will travel to Elk Grove Village, Illinois -- a trip he had planned to do last week -- to meet with public and private sector leaders who have implemented vaccination requirements. The President will visit with a company local to the Chicago area that is imposing its own vaccine requirement ahead of the OSHA rule.

The President's message will be clear: Vaccination requirements work. Vaccination requirements get more people vaccinated, helping to end the pandemic and strengthen the economy.

That's why he's leading and implementing on -- implementing vaccination requirements for 100 million workers, two thirds of all workers in the United States, and that's why we're seeing growing momentum for vaccination requirements across the sectors and across the country.



Alex, go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. I was hoping to get you to weigh in on three different debt limit scenarios since there's so many --

MS. PSAKI: Great.

Q -- developing. So, off the top, Senator Mitch McConnell has proposed for Republicans to either support a short-term hike in the debt limit through December or to support an expedited reconciliation process where Democrats would vote to hike it long term. What's the White House response to that? Is there support for either of those from the President?

And then, I was hoping to get clarification on something the President said yesterday. He seemed to suggest that he would support a carveout in the filibuster, if all else fails, to hike the debt limit. Is that where he stands? Would he be open to that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, right now -- and perhaps this the awkwardness of 4:15, while people are still meeting on the Hill -- right now, Democratic members are meeting on the Hill to discuss options on the path forward. I think Republican members may also be meeting or discussing among themselves.

My understanding, at the point I walked out here, is that there's been no formal offer made. A press release is not a formal offer.

And regardless, even the scant details that have been reported present more complicated, more difficult options than the one that is quite obvious, in the President's view, and is in front of the faces of every member up on the Hill. We could get this done today. We don't need to kick the can. We don't need to go through a cumbersome process that every day brings additional risks.

So, they're discussing up there. We'll, obviously, be in close touch with them, as we will continue to be, and we'll see where we -- where we are at the end of today.

Q And then one foreign policy question. Does the White House have a position yet on the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act which passed unanimously in the Senate?

And just broadly in that same context, how do you respond to the criticism from Senator Rubio and some Republicans that the administration is sort of letting Beijing have some advantage on human rights abuses to try to win over their cooperation on climate issues?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we would absolutely dispute that notion. Unlike the former President, this President has spoken out against human rights abuses, has raised his concerns about human rights abuses directly with President Xi, and we have done that at every level from our national security team.

In terms of the legislation, obviously we have spoken out about our concerns of human rights abuses in Xinjiang. And I would also note that the President also led an effort to have coordination on the international stage to address this issue, unlike his predecessors.

But I'd have to talk to our legislative team about specific views on the -- in the piece of legislation. I know I spoke to it briefly last week, but I'll -- I'll come back to you with that.

Go ahead, Steve.

Q Jake Sullivan reached a deal with the Chinese today for President Biden and President Xi to have a virtual summit before the end of the year. Do you see this happening around the G20 Summit? And what's the advantage of them seeing each other face-to-face?



MS. PSAKI: Well, as I understand it, what came out of the discussions was an agreement to continue dialogue at a very high level.

So, what we've said, of course -- and we continue to believe -- is that leader-level engagement is an important part of our effort to responsibly manage the competition with China, especially given the coalescing of power in Chinese leadership.

We're still working through what that would look like, when, and, of course, the final details. So we don't quite have them yet.

Q Secondly, the President indicated last night that he had spoken to President Xi about Taiwan. Was this in their more recent phone call? And what exactly did he tell him?

MS. PSAKI: So just -- you didn't ask this, but some others have asked us -- he did not have a new call that you're not aware of.

Q Okay. Okay.

MS. PSAKI: So, just for full clarity on that. He has spoken with him twice, as you know.

And certainly, reiterating our position as it relates to -- you know, which is guided by the Taiwan Relations Act and our view that we need to uphold that commitment -- our commitment under the act -- that is what the President reiterated to President Xi last time he talked, and it is something that is raised nearly every time he speaks at a leader level and at other levels as well.

Q And last thing -- and sorry to prolong -- the Energy Secretary, Granholm, in a conference today did not rule out a ban on crude oil exports to keep U.S. energy prices down. Is that something that's seriously being looked at?

MS. PSAKI: I would defer to the Energy Secretary, but I don't have anything new to report on that from internally in the White House.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Hey, Jen. So, I understand that you're obviously waiting for more details of this proposal from the Senate Minority Leader, but, you know, would the President accept a short-term deal to raise the debt ceiling while you try and find a broader path out of this crisis?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as I said a few minutes ago, we don't need to kick the can. We don't need to go through a cumbersome process that every day brings additional risks. And you heard many of the business leaders convey that, even as we look to risk tomorrow, the next day, as American -- the American people are looking at the retirement accounts, worrying about their Social Security savings, members of the military worrying about their payments. We don't need to incur that risk uncertainty.

And I think it's important to also remember we're at this point because Republicans in Congress treated the savings accounts and retirement savings of the American people, Social Security checks of retirees, and veterans benefits like a game of Monopoly, putting the stability and security of the American people at risk.

We're at this point because Republicans in Congress blocked efforts by Democrats to raise the debt limit and protect the full faith and credit of the United States, despite having voted for it three times during the Trump administration.

So, obviously, as has been reported, and the vote has been delayed, there's still an opportunity for Republicans to join us in



being adults in the room and ensure that people have confidence in the economic security and their own retirement savings.

Q The Minority Leader's proposal, though, seems to go at one of the key arguments that the President was making yesterday about why he's opposed to using budget reconciliation, which is that it would take time, it's cumbersome, it could lead to, you know, unexpected scenarios.

So, is the Minority Leader taking off the arguments against reconciliation by offering this one-month extension? And if not, then what are your remaining objections? Is it simply that you don't want Democrats to take a vote that will put a specific dollar amount on raising the debt ceiling?

MS. PSAKI: Democrats are very willing to be the adults in the room and take a vote to raise the debt limit. They're not even asking Republicans to do that anymore, since they've clearly shown their refusal to do exactly that.

The point I'm making is that there is a very clear -- the least risky option here that can ensure that there is confidence from the American people about their own checking accounts or about their own retirement savings, that's something Republicans still have the opportunity to participate in and be a part of.

Q And just on Afghanistan, if I could. The ISIS-K suicide bomber had -- you know, who was -- who carried out the attack that resulted in the deaths of 13 U.S. service members and dozens more Afghans had been released from the Parwan prison at Bagram Air Base just days before that attack took place, when the Taliban took control of that base.

Should the Biden administration have done more to secure Bagram or transfer ISIS-K prisoners outside of that? And do you now accept that this attack would not have happened had the United States retained control of Bagram?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I can't speak to the specific case. I'd let it -- leave it to the intelligence community to speak to that. So I'd point you to them.

I'd remind you that, as it relates to Bagram, there was a decision made to close Bagram because it wasn't strategically in the interest of the United States and our national security to keep it open with 5,000 troops there protecting Bagram at a distance that was far away from the capital and far away from where people from the embassy would be evacuated. So, that was the broad-based decision.

I understand you're asking me a different question than that, but I just wanted to reiterate.

Q But would he have made the same decision had he known that it would result --

MS. PSAKI: Again, I can't speak --

Q -- in the deaths of 13 service members?

MS. PSAKI: -- to this particular report. I'd point you to the intelligence community.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. You know, Congress has passed countless short-term government funding measures. They have funded the government for 48 hours before. Wouldn't a short-term debt ceiling hike be preferable to default?

MS. PSAKI: The preference would be just getting this done today so we can move on to more business for the American people. And that option is still on the table.

Q But you -- you know, the White House brought in all of these banking CEOs today to talk about how catastrophic it would be if the U.S. were to default. Why not send the markets that assurance, if you have the opportunity, that, at least



for the next eight weeks, the debt ceiling is going to be secure?

MS. PSAKI: Well, if we're looking at the best options, why kick the can down the road a couple of more weeks? Why create an additional layer of uncertainty? Why not just get it done now? That's what we're continuing to press for, and that's our first choice.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. A week ago, the National School Boards Association wrote to the President to say that their teachers feel like some parents protesting recently "could be the equivalent to a form of domestic terrorism." And then, the Attorney General put the FBI on the case.

So, does the administration agree that parents upset about their kids' curriculums could be considered domestic terrorists?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me unravel this a little bit, because the National School Board Association is not a part of the U.S. government. I'd point you to them.

What the Department of Justice said in a letter from the Attorney General is that, quote, "Threats against public servants are not only illegal, they run counter to our nation's core values." That is true. These were threats against public servants, threats against members of the school board. Regardless of the reasoning, threats and violence against public servants is illegal. That's what he was conveying from the Department of Justice.

Q But the Department of Justice does now have the FBI on this. Something that the School Boards Association is asking for is for the administration to consider using the PATRIOT Act to investigate some of these school board protestors. So, would the administration be okay with the FBI using the PATRIOT Act to surveil these parents, if that is what they decide?

MS. PSAKI: I don't speak on behalf of the National School Board Association; I speak on behalf of this government. The Attorney General has put out a letter. They will take actions they take, and I would point you to them for more information.

Q And something that you said on Monday after some protestors were hounding Kyrsten Sinema into a restroom -- you said, "The President stands for the fundamental right of people to protest, to object, [and] to criticize." So does the President support the fundamental rights of these parents to protest at school board meetings?

MS. PSAKI: Of course. But he doesn't stand for the fundamental right -- I assume you don't either -- for people to take violent action against members -- public servants. And that's what the threats are about. And so, no, he doesn't stand for that; no one should.

Q Just one more. John Kerry says that after France was cut out of the nuclear submarine deal, and they were upset enough about being left in the dark that they pulled their ambassador, he went to the President and, quote, "The President, literally, had not been aware of what had transpired." So what else are you guys not telling the President?

MS. PSAKI: Of course, he was aware of the French being upset -- let me finish --

Q No, Kerry --

MS. PSAKI: Let me --

Q -- said he "literally..." --

MS. PSAKI: Let me -- let me finish.



Q -- "had not been aware."

MS. PSAKI: I know John Kerry quite well. He, of course, was aware -- the President -- of the French being displeased about the deal with the Australians. John Kerry also speaks regularly to the French, as a part of his role as the Climate Envoy. He's someone who also served as Secretary of State. He's someone I -- alone -- traveled to France with him 25 times.

He, of course, conveyed to the President what his read is -- was of what they were specifically unhappy about and how to help address it.

Q A follow-up on France, Jen?

Q You said -- you've said this President's first love is foreign policy. So, why doesn't he know about these things in real time?

MS. PSAKI: Of course, he knew about the French being displeased about --

Q John Kerry said --

MS. PSAKI: Let me finish.

Q -- he "literally had not be aware."

MS. PSAKI: Peter, I would encourage you to ask John Kerry specifically about the context of his comments. The President and John -- and the former Secretary are also good friends. He relies on his counsel, and -- as he does with many members of his national security team. But that certainly is not what he was intending to convey.

Q Follow-up on France?

Q Jen, if I could --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q -- let me ask you quickly: Yesterday, the President said that he would be speaking with Mitch McConnell, as it related to the debt limit. Has that conversation happened? And what did he -- what did he tell him?

MS. PSAKI: They have not spoken. I think what the President has repeatedly conveyed is that he's certainly open to, as he -- as he has shown throughout the course of his presidency, having conversations with Democrats and Republicans when he feels it would be constructive.

Q He said they will be -- he said they will be speaking. So you were saying he was saying they will at some point, but there was no --

MS. PSAKI: At some -- at some point, if it's constructive in moving things forward.

Q Okay. Does the President trust Mitch McConnell to be an honest broker in this process?

MS. PSAKI: I don't think this is about trust. This is about -- he has known him a long time, but this is about whether you're going to be a leader and take steps that are not based on -- on political calculations and more based on what's in the interest of the United States and the full faith and of the United States.

Q The President discussed that there was a possibility of a filibuster -- a carveout -- as it related to the debt ceiling. If that

were the case, would the President be open to a filibuster carveout for voting rights? Where does that line get drawn for the President?

MS. PSAKI: The President was just simply conveying that there are a range of options that leaders on the Hill are discussing. I think you all have reported that, or your colleagues on the Hill have. Nothing more than that. We'll be in touch with them, and we'll see what the next best options look like.

But what is very clear is that there is an easy, risk-free option here that Republicans could allow Democrats to vote to raise the debt ceiling. We could be done with this today.

Q Can I just follow up very quickly? Why wouldn't the President, given that relationship he has with Mitch McConnell, just call Mitch McConnell and have this conversation with him? Why do this through public events?

MS. PSAKI: What's the conversation about?

Q I don't know. They have the relationship. He's the one who said he could bring the two sides together. So, wouldn't there be some value in having that conversation with one another?

MS. PSAKI: We know what the -- we know what the risk-free option is here. We know what the clear path forward is here. And I think the President has made no secret about his belief on that.

Go ahead.

Q Has the President had time to absorb the criticism of the Fed Chairman? And then, specifically, what does the White House believe should happen -- Fed policy about investments made by top officials there?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we obviously leave the independence of the Fed to an independent Fed -- Federal Reserve. And I'm not going to speak to that from here.

The President is confident in the Chairman of the Federal Reserve, and, beyond that, I don't have any personnel announcements for you.

Q Given that confidence, and also given what you just said, I mean, how close is he to making a decision on that?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything to preview for you at this point.

Q Yesterday, the President said he would sign a reconciliation bill that included the Hyde Amendment. You told us earlier this week that he remains opposed to that. So, is he backtracking on a campaign promise, something that's -- a lot of his supporters believe strongly in?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President's position hasn't changed. The context of his comments were that there is still a negotiation happening. There's a range of views. His view remains what is reflected in his budget, which is that getting rid of -- which he released in May -- which shows that getting rid of the Hyde Amendment was a priority. That remains his position. This is a package that's still being negotiated, and he said that much -- as much last night as well.

Go ahead.

Q Just confirming what you told Peter: The President, when he signaled yesterday that it's possible that the Senate could change its rules, that -- we should not read that as him expressing support for that notion?

MS. PSAKI: The President was certain simply reporting out what you already have reported out, which is that there are a range of options being discussed on Capitol Hill.



Q I want to ask you separately: The ambassador-designate to India was seen, reportedly, at an event in Los Angeles last week at an art gallery event that featured the artwork of the President's son, Hunter.

The ethicists who have pointed to this arrangement have expressed concern that the President's son selling art could potentially put the President in a situation where those who seek jobs either in this administration or favors from this administration could put this White House in an awkward position.

Should -- first of all, what is the White House's response to the fact that an ambassador nominee was at this event? And secondly, should we expect to see more people who seek jobs in this administration attending events like this in the future?

MS. PSAKI: Well, to be clear, we've spoken to the arrangement that is run by the gallerist and Hunter Biden's representatives that the White House provided suggestions for. I'd refer you to the gallerist for questions about the event and -- as well as the representatives of Mr. Garcetti, in terms of his attendance.

Q But, Jen, just to follow up: This is exactly what ethicists said they were worried about.

MS. PSAKI: What is, specifically?

Q The fact that the President's son --

MS. PSAKI: That he reportedly attended an event?

Q Well, that the President's son would be selling artwork and then meeting, potentially, with people who would seek to buy it. If you have attendees at that event who might be seeking either jobs in this administration or favors from this administration, isn't it an awkward situation to put the President in?

MS. PSAKI: Again, the gallerist has spoken to -- we've spoken to the specifics of what the gallerist has agreed to and what recommendations were made. I've done that several times. I don't have additional details for it from here. I'd point you to them.

Go ahead.

Q So -- but does this White House not have any concerns about the photos that have emerged showing Hunter Biden at that gallery alongside prospective buyers?

MS. PSAKI: I'd point you to the gallerist on specifics of the restrictions that were put in place.

Q Great. But what about the position of this White House? This is a President who ran on being transparent and you've got -- are there no concerns?

MS. PSAKI: And we were very transparent about what recommendations were made to the gallerist, and I would again point you to them or the many times I've spoken about that from here.

Q And just to clarify, has the President's position on doing away with the filibuster changed?

MS. PSAKI: Nothing has -- no, it has not changed.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. The administration reportedly will invest \$1 billion into making rapid-testing COVID kits available. But there are concerns that the tests will be too expensive. I think a lot of Americans are wondering: Is there a universe where these available tests will be free or affordable, or at least less expensive than \$25 a pop?



MS. PSAKI: Yeah, so, there's no question, to your point, that there has been a huge increase and an interest in testing, and getting tests, and making them, and people going out and being able to get them easily.

We announced a \$2 billion investment in September. So, right now, we're on track to ~~double~~ [triple] the number of rapid, at-home tests on the market by early November. And we're also now on track to triple the number of rapid, at-home tests on the market by -- and thanks to the approval of ACON -- sorry -- this Monday, which accelerates the pace. We're now on track to triple the number. Triple the number, not double. I apologize.

So, right now, with these investments, we'll be at 200 million tests per month starting in December, with tens of millions more coming on the market in the coming weeks.

And we're also working to ensure that these tests, in addition to making them more available -- so you could go to CVS or Walmart, or wherever, to get them -- we've been working hard to make sure they are accessible and available in pharmacies, in community centers, in schools. So, we're also working to do that simultaneously and separate from that.

We recognize there's a need. We recognized we needed to do more. And we are pleased by the fact that we are now on track to not only triple by November but also quadruple by December.

Q There was a school shooting in Texas today. The school safety group Everytown says that this year has been the most dangerous back-to-school period for students since they began tracking the data in 2013. That's some 30 instances of gunfire on schoolgrounds since August 1st, and today's shooting means that number is out of date.

Is the administration discussing ways that schools can keep children safe from school violence -- from gun violence?

MS. PSAKI: Absolutely. I mean, one, I would say the President has been an advocate for doing more for gun safety measures through the course of his career. Not only did he fight to get the Brady Bill passed, he fought for the Assault Weapons Ban. It remains a cause of his public life in office.

We, of course, are frustrated by the inability to get commonsense gun reforms through Congress. We should be able to get universal background checks approved. They're supported by the vast majority of the public, as are assault weapons bans.

But in addition to that, we also have taken a number of steps, both by working through the Department of Justice to increase our strike force teams that are going out to specific communities and cities to help address violence. A lot of that is driven by gun violence. That's something that we've been implementing from there. And, of course, our Department of Education is engaged in this effort as well.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Yesterday's hearing by a Facebook whistleblower underscored several major issues with the company, including, as many senators pointed out, issues with Section 230.

On the campaign trail, Biden said that Section 230 should, quote, "immediately be revoked" and that it should be revoked because, quote, Facebook "is not just an Internet company. It is propagating falsehoods they know to be false." Does the White House stand by that assessment for Section 230, given the revelations now?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President has long said, as you referenced, that tech platforms must be held accountable for the harms that they cause. And he has been a strong supporter of fundamental reforms to achieve that goal. This includes Section 230 reforms. It also includes privacy and antitrust reforms as well as more transparency. That should also be on the table.

And he looks forward to working with Congress on these bipartisan issues.



He's also called, I would note -- because there were a number -- a range of issues that were raised during the whistleblower's testimony yesterday -- on the FTC to adopt rules to address unfair data collection and surveillance practice -- practices in his Executive Order on Promoting Competition in the American Economy.

So, yes, more needs to be done, reform should happen. We also need to do more on privacy and antitrust. And certainly, watching testimony yesterday raised a lot of those issues again for people.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Does the President have any intention of speaking with Senators Manchin or Sinema at all this week?

MS. PSAKI: I can't predict for you day by day. I -- we have been in touch with Senator Manchin and Sinema at a senior-staff level, and certainly, I wouldn't rule it out.

Q I wanted to ask a follow-up question on an earlier question about the Hyde Amendment. The President has not been shy about his opposition, in recent years, to the Hyde Amendment. As you mentioned, you know, he made that clear in his budget blueprint; he made that clear as a candidate, when he was running for President.

So, can you explain why it is he's saying that he would sign this bill either way -- you know, with or without this language in it?

MS. PSAKI: He's reflecting that it's a negotiation. It's ongoing. We don't know what the final product will look like.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, can I ask a little bit about energy prices? There -- you know, gas prices in the U.S. are fairly high. We're seeing exceptionally high prices of certain energy products in --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- Europe right now. Is the U.S. domestically considering a release from the SPR to bring down oil prices at this time?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to make any prediction of that from here. I would note that we have seen, as you said, some ticks-up in parts of the country, also in re- -- as a follow-up to Hurricane Ida, because the hurricane hit a region that is a key center of the nation's oil production and refining infrastructure.

So that's something we've been working to focus on. And we took actions in the days and weeks following to help address that, including, at the time, authorizing several million barrels of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve exchanges.

We've also taken steps into -- including engaging with members of OPEC. We've also taken steps to reach out to the FTC to ensure they're using every available tool to monitor the U.S. gasoline market and address any illegal conduct. But I'm not going to make any other predictions at this point in time. We're continuously monitoring. We'll look to take additional steps as needed.

Q Are you or would you consider restricting LNG exports to, I guess, head off the type of shortages and price spikes that we're seeing in Europe -- in parts of Europe?

MS. PSAKI: I'm just not going to make any additional policy predictions at this point in time.

Q Can I, like, broadly say: Overall, these are fundamentally price crunches on, you know, nonrenewable sources of fuel. And we're heading into COP summit here.



MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Do you worry that this could impact the pledges that countries are willing to make? Will other governments get weak-kneed about going green at a time when they're facing brewing, sort of, political crises at home over, really, skyrocketing prices of non-renewable fuel sources?

MS. PSAKI: We certainly hope not. I mean, I think what COP26 is about is to continue the conversation on the international stage, at the leader level -- that has been going on below the leader level continuously, basically -- about our need to work together to address the climate crisis -- one of the greatest national security crises the President sees. A number of other world leaders agree on that front.

Certainly, we all want to keep gasoline prices low, but the threat of the crisis -- the climate crisis -- certainly can't wait any longer.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead. Oh, go ahead. Go ahead.

Q Yeah, thanks very much. On the -- you sound pretty lukewarm about the McConnell idea. If the Democratic Caucus were to get behind it, is it a given that the President will get on board? Or --

MS. PSAKI: We'll see where things are. This is an ever-moving news cycle.

Q Because, you know, as we speak, there seems to be some positive vibes there regarding this, whereas you're giving, you know, quite the opposite.

MS. PSAKI: I would say, actually, in my read of it, there's a diversity of views in the Democratic Caucus, as is to be expected. And they're meeting now. We'll be in close touch with them, so I just don't want to get ahead of that process.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q I know we're still a few weeks away from the G20, but I wanted to see if the President would be open to meeting with Putin again at the G20. And does he feel like his last meeting with Putin was effective? Does the President feel like he's seen any change in Russia or Putin's behavior since then?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I don't have any predictions for you on the bilateral meetings. That's something that we're still working through at this point in time, every day.

And in terms of the -- how constructive his meeting was with President Putin, as he said at the time, we didn't expect it to be a light switch where, all of a sudden, everything would be hunky-dory in the relationship. It's not. We have remaining concerns, but it was an opportunity to express them at a high level, see what work could be done over the course of the long term to address it.

So I don't know that we're going to do a month-by-month assessment. It's something that we have continued conversations from -- with members of the national security team about many of the issues were raised. Those are ongoing. We're continuing to strive to make progress.

Q Can I follow up on that?

O And do you have any update on Afghanistan and how many Americans are still there? And is the -- do you -- does the



President feel the Taliban is cooperating still with efforts to get those remaining Americans out?

MS. PSAKI: We remain -- through appropriate channels of course -- in touch with Taliban officials. In terms of the specific numbers, I'd point you to the State Department. And they have the most updated number on that, given they oversee that process.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, there's been some reporting that Senate Democrats are planning to accept the short-term debt limit increase. So, given that we now have some reporting on that, can you just give us some guidance on what the White House thinks about that idea?

MS. PSAKI: Not yet. I have to -- I have to dig further into that reporting -- not to question it -- and talk to the team here about where things stand. And as far as when I came out here, they were still meeting, but we'll venture to get back to you as soon as we have something more concrete to convey.

Q Thanks, Jen. When the President was talking today about Republicans and the debt ceiling, he said, "If they don't want to do the job, just get out of the way. We'll take the heat. We'll do it." When he says, "We'll take the heat," what did he mean by that? What political risk is he acknowledging there for Democrats?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think one of the reasons we're at this point is because Republicans in Congress would rather bet on a misleading and inaccurate campaign season talking point. We're not betting that that's going to work, but his point -- the President's point is: Regardless, we're willing -- Democrats are willing to vote alone, without any Republican votes, to raise the debt ceiling. You just need to allow us to proceed with that vote.

Q And on the testing question that had come up, on rapid tests, this \$1 billion investment will quadruple the tests by December, in addition to everything else from the past couple of weeks. But why has it taken so long to get this rapid testing to this point where it will be -- by December, when Europe is flooded with rapid tests? Is it the authorization process and the timeline on that, or is it on the production side, or both?

MS. PSAKI: Well, one of the things we've been working on is to increase production, as you know, and also increase -- I would say that the demand for these tests here has increased a lot in the last several weeks, so we're also working to meet that and ensure that we are meeting the moment here in the United States.

In terms of the specific mechanics, I would encourage you to ask the COVID team that question.

Q Is that missing the moment though by -- you know, the demand has gone up in recent weeks because kids have gone back to school. Should this have been ready for back-to-school so that you could go to a CVS or any of the pharmacies or government sites and get these tests?

MS. PSAKI: I mean, again, we just announced, last month, an enormous investment: We're quadrupling availability by December, tripling by November. I think that is speaking to how seriously we take this and how we're working to ensure there are accessible, cost-effective tests out there and available to the public.

Go ahead.

Q What plans does the White House have to address the risk of oil spills from existing platforms, existing leases that are still operating?

MS. PSAKI: You mean like the one that happened in California?

O Correct.



MS. PSAKI: I would really point you to the Department of Energy for specifics there.

Q But, you know, the White House policies on stopping future leases possibly --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- things like that. But, you know, this is an ongoing threat, you know, that happens as, you know, offshore drilling continues. Is there an interest in investing in the infrastructure of the pipeline to enhance their safety, shutting them down? You know, what are your thoughts on that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, I think there -- as we've seen, and there's been an ongoing investigation about what exactly was the root cause here, so I don't want to, kind of, speak to that as that's been ongoing. But, beyond that, I would point you to the Department of Energy.

Q And two very quick things on the spill: Does the White House have a working theory on what caused the spill? And secondly, do you have an update on federal resources that have been dispatched to respond to the spill?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. I think I do have an update on federal resources. Let me see.

On the leak, just so I don't forget to answer this part, it's still under investigation. As you may know, the oil has stopped leaking; the pipeline has been removed from service.

In terms of our government efforts, 4,788 gallons of oil have been recovered and 11,360 feet of containment boom have been deployed. As of yesterday, six miles of shoreline have been cleaned, 328 response personnel with additional assets are on -- have -- on the way have been deployed.

As we said earlier this week, the Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration investigators are on the ground in the Unified/Incident Command Center. And on Monday, we also issued a corrective order -- action order to the operator mandating immediate corrective action, including performing a root cause failure analysis, integrity assessment, and remedial work plan.

Beyond that, Unified Command, of course, who are on the ground would have any additional steps we're taking and that are up to date.

Go ahead, April.

Q Jen, we see there are crisis moments -- everything is in crisis mode here -- but there are other issues that are percolating as well that some feel are at crisis levels -- Black agenda issues. The Vice President just had the heads of Divine Nine in a meeting -- frank, good, direct discussion, we were told -- about issues, particularly voting rights.

What is the President expecting when it comes to dealing with the Black agenda, particularly with those that have this small window, like voting rights and also the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act? What is he expected to do? What is he planning on committing to make sure these things happen?

MS. PSAKI: He wants to get both done. He wants to sign them into law. As you know, and you've told me in the past, the Black agenda is bigger than voting rights and bigger than the George Floyd Police and Justice Act.

Both are hugely important. The President has committed to getting them both done. He wants to sign them into law. We need Congress to move forward on both to get that done.

Q They are -- the Black agenda is huge. It's vast. But in this moment, there's a small window of time before elections



happen, and the concern is is that this President is not doing enough; he has not armed the Vice President or helped her to be able to fight the fight for these things.

MS. PSAKI: I would say the Vice President is more than capable of fighting the fight and the lead on this particular issue and any issue.

Q So how is he --

MS. PSAKI: She's the Vice President of the United States. Pretty powerful.

Q Right, but if the President -- the argument is, if the President is not supporting her with the tools that she needs --

MS. PSAKI: Which tools is she --

Q -- i.e. the filibuster --

MS. PSAKI: -- is she -- is he not providing to her?

Q -- i.e. the filibuster for voting rights, and that is in her portfolio.

You have one of her friends -- and a Democrat, a strategist -- Bakari Sellers, who says her portfolio is trash because he's not supporting her in the way that she needs to be supported for this to pass. So, what do you say? Can he, will he, shall he push for the filibuster for voting rights, even as he's doing it -- thinking about it for the debt ceiling?

MS. PSAKI: Well, that's not exactly what I conveyed earlier, but I will say that the President has conveyed many times that getting voting rights done, signing it into law is top of his agenda.

The Vice President, one of the most powerful people in the world, is leading this effort. He is her -- she is his partner. She's the first in the room, the last in the room, and he's going to continue to work by her side to get it done.

But beyond that and the legislative process and how that will work, I don't have any update on that front.

Go ahead.

Q Sticking on voting rights, with S.4 being introduced in the Senate: The President has, over and over, talked about the pathways that voting rights legislation could take, same thing that he -- apparently, yesterday, you said he was alluding to when he said "real possibility" -- right? -- talking about what could possibly happen on the Hill.

He's never talked about voting rights with any kind of real possibility of a filibuster carveout, and there's a real frustration -- some people have got arrested just yesterday -- among activists on the voting rights issues.

So, other than, "We're frustrated; we stand with you," what do you have to say to activists who are saying this White House, the President isn't doing enough on voting rights specifically?

MS. PSAKI: I think that was just the question I just answered, no?

Q But we're trying to get an answer from you. I mean, it's a legitimate question. And we're trying to --

MS. PSAKI: I'm not saying -- I'm not saying it's not. I'm not saying it's not. I would say that the President is also frustrated that voting rights has not been done. He's also frustrated that Republicans are so afraid of making reforms that would make it easier for people to vote that they have blocked this effort.



And he is frustrated that, despite everything that's happened around the country, there isn't more of a movement to get this done -- I don't mean by activists; certainly, there's a movement there -- in Congress.

What he was certainly -- what he was speaking to yesterday was the fact that there is live conversations right now about a range of options on the debt limit. He was not speaking to anything beyond that. And that's what is happening on the -- on Capitol Hill in this particular moment. That's it.

And so, I would convey to activists that he is absolutely committed. He wants to get this done. He wants to sign it into law. The Vice President just had meetings today on it. She is in the lead on this effort, as one of the most powerful people in this country, maybe even in the world, leading this effort.

Q But, I mean, he's the President. So, when I talk to activists, you know, they say, "You're the President. If you're frustrated, do something." Right? So, I guess that is the -- that is what we're constantly hearing --

MS. PSAKI: Congress is a separate body.

Q Sure, but there's things that he could --

MS. PSAKI: It's a --

Q There are things that he --

MS. PSAKI: It's a -- it's a separate body. You need 50 votes to change the filibuster. You also need the majority of votes to pass legislation into law.

He has made clear that he wants voting rights to be passed into law. He will continue to advocate publicly, privately, and continue to be a partner to the Vice President. He absolutely feels this is essential and we need to get it done.

Go ahead, Patsy.

Q Thank you, Jen. I want to follow up on Taiwan. Administration officials -- including yourself, I believe, on Monday, and Secretary Blinken today -- essentially have issued warnings to China urging China to stop its military activities in Taiwan. However, China has ignored that. In fact, it has dialed up sending even more military jets. So, what does that say about the credibility of U.S. deterrence on this issue?

MS. PSAKI: I think the Secretary of State spoke to this earlier. I don't think I have anything more to add to what he said.

Q Can I -- can I just follow up?

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q How concerned are you that these recent activities might actually escalate and then draw the U.S. into some sort of great power war with China? And so, what are you doing to maintain tensions beyond, kind of, ad hoc meetings like the Zurich meeting that Jake Sullivan is --

MS. PSAKI: I wouldn't call a meeting with our National Security Advisor and his counterpart an "ad hoc" meeting.

Obviously, we raise our concerns through a range of channels. The State Department also put out a public statement -- a proactive statement on this, which is not something they do frequently, and the Secretary of State spoke to it today.

Q Do you have regular, you know, meetings to make sure that things like this don't escalate into something bigger?



MS. PSAKI: Of course, we do, as you well know.  
Go ahead.

Q I have another debt ceiling question --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- but zooming much farther out.

Earlier today, Jamie Dimon suggested getting rid of the debt ceiling altogether so that this scenario would not happen again.

Secretary Yellen seemed to lend her support to that idea of getting rid of the debt ceiling altogether in the past. Has she spoken with the President about that idea? And does he have a position on, sort of, the larger question of whether or not it should or should not be abolished?

MS. PSAKI: Right now, our focus is on raising the debt ceiling in the limited amount of time we have left to do that and do it without impacting the retirement savings accounts, the Social Security, and the economic security of millions of Americans. There's plenty of time to have a conversation after that.

Q And then a quick follow-up. You were asked about the -- the Uyghur anti-slave labor bill.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah. You asked me about it last week, too -- or the week before. I don't remember.

Q That's right.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q You've noted several times that the President has put out statements.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q There is sanctions as well. Does this administration -- does the President feel that there is anyone in his administration that is opposed to this kind of bipartisan legislation?

MS. PSAKI: I think it's all about taking a look at the legislation and figuring out if it's something we'd support moving forward -- every component of it -- and I'll check and see if we have a statement of administration policy on it.

Q But you don't know of anyone in the administration who currently opposes this?

MS. PSAKI: Again, we're not talking about whether or not we think the treatment of the Uyghurs is outrageous. It is. We've all said that. We're talking about a piece of legislation that has several components, and so I just want to make sure I go through the proper process with that.

Q On food shortages --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Hi. I was just wanting to talk to you about food shortages real quick. I'm not sure if you were looking here. But I just wanted to say that, on food shortages, we're seeing in schools the supply chain is kinked and affecting school lunches to the degree that kids are having bread -- or meat with no bread to make sandwiches, for example. And grocery stores, ahead of the holidays, are limiting the amount of food that you can actually purchase.

So, in regard to the debt ceiling talks, if the Senate votes "no" ahead of Thanksgiving, ahead of Christmas, and the coming holiday season -- if they say "no," what will that mean in the big picture for this nation and food shortages and other product delinquencies?

MS. PSAKI: Well, look, I would say -- I just want to dis- -- to make sure we're sending a clear message here about what the impacts of different things are. I know that's why you asked the question.

You'd have to get me more information about how broadly the school issue you're referencing is. I have not heard that from the Department of Education. It doesn't mean that it is not the case in certain schools, but if you have more information on that --

Q I do. (Inaudible) get it to you.

MS. PSAKI: -- come share that with me.

I would say that we know that unless Congress acts to raise the debt limit, what we're talking about here is people's retirement savings, their Social Security benefits, their economic security being at risk. That could mean all sorts of things, to your point about people's economic security, especially people who are at or below the poverty line or above the poverty line. And we're seeing the impact on markets across the country.

We don't want that to be the case, of course. That's why we're working to prevent this from happening.

I would say, in terms of the cost of meat and the cost of goods, we think -- there's a range of issues here. You referenced the supply chain. Another issue is the fact that there's not enough competition among big meat producers. It's something Secretary Vilsack spoke to when he was here just a few weeks ago and something our Department of Agriculture and the Department of Justice also are working to take steps to address.

Q Thank you for that, but just a real quick --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q -- one -- one more on the shots. We do have an approval for FlowFlex -- I believe is the name of the rapid results test -- and we were expecting today to have -- hear more information about that. But I've written about this, and the New York Times is saying that one of the problems even in going to places like CVS to get a test is, in some places, you don't even -- you can't even buy a rapid results test. And being that school is in session and that we are going to be having more events, for example --

MS. PSAKI: So, Mona, that's exactly why we just announced a \$2 billion investment that's going to quadruple the number of tests that are available at schools, community centers, and also to purchase at home.

Q But that's future focused. I'm talking about --

MS. PSAKI: It's starting to happen now.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. Just to follow up on John Kerry's comments.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q You mentioned that he was, of course, aware of the displeasure after the deal was announced. Was he not aware of something before the deal was announced? Was he not aware that the French weren't read in? Was he not aware of the



French deal on conventional submarines?

MS. PSAKI: Look, I think, right now, what our focus is on is moving forward. As you know and as President Macron spoke to, they're going to be meeting next month. We're working to finalize the details of that.

As you saw, our National Security Advisor and members of our national security team have met with their counterparts or high-level officials in recent weeks.

So, at this point, what our focus is on is how we work with the French moving forward.

Q Thank you, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Thanks, everyone.

4:56 P.M. EDT

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

October 6, 2021

**Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, October 6, 2021**

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

4:13 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Okay --

Q Or maybe not.

MS. PSAKI: Oh, what did you think was going to happen? (Laughter.) I'm sorry to disappoint. Okay, sorry to disappoint. You never know who's behind the door.

Okay. Okay, tomorrow -- just one item for all of you at the top: Tomorrow, the President will travel to Elk Grove Village, Illinois -- a trip he had planned to do last week -- to meet with public and private sector leaders who have implemented vaccination requirements. The President will visit with a company local to the Chicago area that is imposing its own vaccine requirement ahead of the OSHA rule.

The President's message will be clear: Vaccination requirements work. Vaccination requirements get more people vaccinated, helping to end the pandemic and strengthen the economy.

That's why he's leading and implementing on -- implementing vaccination requirements for 100 million workers, two thirds of all workers in the United States, and that's why we're seeing growing momentum for vaccination requirements across the sectors and across the country.



Alex, go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. I was hoping to get you to weigh in on three different debt limit scenarios since there's so many --

MS. PSAKI: Great.

Q -- developing. So, off the top, Senator Mitch McConnell has proposed for Republicans to either support a short-term hike in the debt limit through December or to support a expedited reconciliation process where Democrats would vote to hike it long term. What's the White House response to that? Is there support for either of those from the President?

And then, I was hoping to get clarification on something the President said yesterday. He seemed to suggest that he would support a carveout in the filibuster, if all else fails, to hike the debt limit. Is that where he stands? Would he be open to that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, right now -- and perhaps this the awkwardness of 4:15, while people are still meeting on the Hill -- right now, Democratic members are meeting on the Hill to discuss options on the path forward. I think Republican members may also be meeting or discussing among themselves.

My understanding, at the point I walked out here, is that there's been no formal offer made. A press release is not a formal offer.

And regardless, even the scant details that have been reported present more complicated, more difficult options than the one that is quite obvious, in the President's view, and is in front of the faces of every member up on the Hill. We could get this done today. We don't need to kick the can. We don't need to go through a cumbersome process that every day brings additional risks.

So, they're discussing up there. We'll, obviously, be in close touch with them, as we will continue to be, and we'll see where we -- where we are at the end of today.

Q And then one foreign policy question. Does the White House have a position yet on the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act which passed unanimously in the Senate?

And just broadly in that same context, how do you respond to the criticism from Senator Rubio and some Republicans that the administration is sort of letting Beijing have some advantage on human rights abuses to try to win over their cooperation on climate issues?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we would absolutely dispute that notion. Unlike the former President, this President has spoken out against human rights abuses, has raised his concerns about human rights abuses directly with President Xi, and we have done that at every level from our national security team.

In terms of the legislation, obviously we have spoken out about our concerns of human rights abuses in Xinjiang. And I would also note that the President also led an effort to have coordination on the international stage to address this issue, unlike his predecessors.

But I'd have to talk to our legislative team about specific views on the -- in the piece of legislation. I know I spoke to it briefly last week, but I'll -- I'll come back to you with that.

Go ahead, Steve.

Q Jake Sullivan reached a deal with the Chinese today for President Biden and President Xi to have a virtual summit before the end of the year. Do you see this happening around the G20 Summit? And what's the advantage of them seeing each other face-to-face?



MS. PSAKI: Well, as I understand it, what came out of the discussions was an agreement to continue dialogue at a very high level.

So, what we've said, of course -- and we continue to believe -- is that leader-level engagement is an important part of our effort to responsibly manage the competition with China, especially given the coalescing of power in Chinese leadership.

We're still working through what that would look like, when, and, of course, the final details. So we don't quite have them yet.

Q Secondly, the President indicated last night that he had spoken to President Xi about Taiwan. Was this in their more recent phone call? And what exactly did he tell him?

MS. PSAKI: So just -- you didn't ask this, but some others have asked us -- he did not have a new call that you're not aware of.

Q Okay. Okay.

MS. PSAKI: So, just for full clarity on that. He has spoken with him twice, as you know.

And certainly, reiterating our position as it relates to -- you know, which is guided by the Taiwan Relations Act and our view that we need to uphold that commitment -- our commitment under the act -- that is what the President reiterated to President Xi last time he talked, and it is something that is raised nearly every time he speaks at a leader level and at other levels as well.

Q And last thing -- and sorry to prolong -- the Energy Secretary, Granholm, in a conference today did not rule out a ban on crude oil exports to keep U.S. energy prices down. Is that something that's seriously being looked at?

MS. PSAKI: I would defer to the Energy Secretary, but I don't have anything new to report on that from internally in the White House.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Hey, Jen. So, I understand that you're obviously waiting for more details of this proposal from the Senate Minority Leader, but, you know, would the President accept a short-term deal to raise the debt ceiling while you try and find a broader path out of this crisis?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as I said a few minutes ago, we don't need to kick the can. We don't need to go through a cumbersome process that every day brings additional risks. And you heard many of the business leaders convey that, even as we look to risk tomorrow, the next day, as American -- the American people are looking at the retirement accounts, worrying about their Social Security savings, members of the military worrying about their payments. We don't need to incur that risk uncertainty.

And I think it's important to also remember we're at this point because Republicans in Congress treated the savings accounts and retirement savings of the American people, Social Security checks of retirees, and veterans benefits like a game of Monopoly, putting the stability and security of the American people at risk.

We're at this point because Republicans in Congress blocked efforts by Democrats to raise the debt limit and protect the full faith and credit of the United States, despite having voted for it three times during the Trump administration.

So, obviously, as has been reported, and the vote has been delayed, there's still an opportunity for Republicans to join us in



being adults in the room and ensure that people have confidence in the economic security and their own retirement savings.

Q The Minority Leader's proposal, though, seems to go at one of the key arguments that the President was making yesterday about why he's opposed to using budget reconciliation, which is that it would take time, it's cumbersome, it could lead to, you know, unexpected scenarios.

So, is the Minority Leader taking off the arguments against reconciliation by offering this one-month extension? And if not, then what are your remaining objections? Is it simply that you don't want Democrats to take a vote that will put a specific dollar amount on raising the debt ceiling?

MS. PSAKI: Democrats are very willing to be the adults in the room and take a vote to raise the debt limit. They're not even asking Republicans to do that anymore, since they've clearly shown their refusal to do exactly that.

The point I'm making is that there is a very clear -- the least risky option here that can ensure that there is confidence from the American people about their own checking accounts or about their own retirement savings, that's something Republicans still have the opportunity to participate in and be a part of.

Q And just on Afghanistan, if I could. The ISIS-K suicide bomber had -- you know, who was -- who carried out the attack that resulted in the deaths of 13 U.S. service members and dozens more Afghans had been released from the Parwan prison at Bagram Air Base just days before that attack took place, when the Taliban took control of that base.

Should the Biden administration have done more to secure Bagram or transfer ISIS-K prisoners outside of that? And do you now accept that this attack would not have happened had the United States retained control of Bagram?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I can't speak to the specific case. I'd let it -- leave it to the intelligence community to speak to that. So I'd point you to them.

I'd remind you that, as it relates to Bagram, there was a decision made to close Bagram because it wasn't strategically in the interest of the United States and our national security to keep it open with 5,000 troops there protecting Bagram at a distance that was far away from the capital and far away from where people from the embassy would be evacuated. So, that was the broad-based decision.

I understand you're asking me a different question than that, but I just wanted to reiterate.

Q But would he have made the same decision had he known that it would result --

MS. PSAKI: Again, I can't speak --

Q -- in the deaths of 13 service members?

MS. PSAKI: -- to this particular report. I'd point you to the intelligence community.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. You know, Congress has passed countless short-term government funding measures. They have funded the government for 48 hours before. Wouldn't a short-term debt ceiling hike be preferable to default?

MS. PSAKI: The preference would be just getting this done today so we can move on to more business for the American people. And that option is still on the table.

Q But you -- you know, the White House brought in all of these banking CEOs today to talk about how catastrophic it would be if the U.S. were to default. Why not send the markets that assurance, if you have the opportunity, that, at least



for the next eight weeks, the debt ceiling is going to be secure?

MS. PSAKI: Well, if we're looking at the best options, why kick the can down the road a couple of more weeks? Why create an additional layer of uncertainty? Why not just get it done now? That's what we're continuing to press for, and that's our first choice.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. A week ago, the National School Boards Association wrote to the President to say that their teachers feel like some parents protesting recently "could be the equivalent to a form of domestic terrorism." And then, the Attorney General put the FBI on the case.

So, does the administration agree that parents upset about their kids' curriculums could be considered domestic terrorists?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me unravel this a little bit, because the National School Board Association is not a part of the U.S. government. I'd point you to them.

What the Department of Justice said in a letter from the Attorney General is that, quote, "Threats against public servants are not only illegal, they run counter to our nation's core values." That is true. These were threats against public servants, threats against members of the school board. Regardless of the reasoning, threats and violence against public servants is illegal. That's what he was conveying from the Department of Justice.

Q But the Department of Justice does now have the FBI on this. Something that the School Boards Association is asking for is for the administration to consider using the PATRIOT Act to investigate some of these school board protestors. So, would the administration be okay with the FBI using the PATRIOT Act to surveil these parents, if that is what they decide?

MS. PSAKI: I don't speak on behalf of the National School Board Association; I speak on behalf of this government. The Attorney General has put out a letter. They will take actions they take, and I would point you to them for more information.

Q And something that you said on Monday after some protestors were hounding Kyrsten Sinema into a restroom -- you said, "The President stands for the fundamental right of people to protest, to object, [and] to criticize." So does the President support the fundamental rights of these parents to protest at school board meetings?

MS. PSAKI: Of course. But he doesn't stand for the fundamental right -- I assume you don't either -- for people to take violent action against members -- public servants. And that's what the threats are about. And so, no, he doesn't stand for that; no one should.

Q Just one more. John Kerry says that after France was cut out of the nuclear submarine deal, and they were upset enough about being left in the dark that they pulled their ambassador, he went to the President and, quote, "The President, literally, had not been aware of what had transpired." So what else are you guys not telling the President?

MS. PSAKI: Of course, he was aware of the French being upset -- let me finish --

Q No, Kerry --

MS. PSAKI: Let me --

Q -- said he "literally..." --

MS. PSAKI: Let me -- let me finish.



Q -- "had not been aware."

MS. PSAKI: I know John Kerry quite well. He, of course, was aware -- the President -- of the French being displeased about the deal with the Australians. John Kerry also speaks regularly to the French, as a part of his role as the Climate Envoy. He's someone who also served as Secretary of State. He's someone I -- alone -- traveled to France with him 25 times.

He, of course, conveyed to the President what his read is -- was of what they were specifically unhappy about and how to help address it.

Q A follow-up on France, Jen?

Q You said -- you've said this President's first love is foreign policy. So, why doesn't he know about these things in real time?

MS. PSAKI: Of course, he knew about the French being displeased about --

Q John Kerry said --

MS. PSAKI: Let me finish.

Q -- he "literally had not be aware."

MS. PSAKI: Peter, I would encourage you to ask John Kerry specifically about the context of his comments. The President and John -- and the former Secretary are also good friends. He relies on his counsel, and -- as he does with many members of his national security team. But that certainly is not what he was intending to convey.

Q Follow-up on France?

Q Jen, if I could --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q -- let me ask you quickly: Yesterday, the President said that he would be speaking with Mitch McConnell, as it related to the debt limit. Has that conversation happened? And what did he -- what did he tell him?

MS. PSAKI: They have not spoken. I think what the President has repeatedly conveyed is that he's certainly open to, as he -- as he has shown throughout the course of his presidency, having conversations with Democrats and Republicans when he feels it would be constructive.

Q He said they will be -- he said they will be speaking. So you were saying he was saying they will at some point, but there was no --

MS. PSAKI: At some -- at some point, if it's constructive in moving things forward.

Q Okay. Does the President trust Mitch McConnell to be an honest broker in this process?

MS. PSAKI: I don't think this is about trust. This is about -- he has known him a long time, but this is about whether you're going to be a leader and take steps that are not based on -- on political calculations and more based on what's in the interest of the United States and the full faith and of the United States.

Q The President discussed that there was a possibility of a filibuster -- a carveout -- as it related to the debt ceiling. If that

were the case, would the President be open to a filibuster carveout for voting rights? Where does that line get drawn for the President?

MS. PSAKI: The President was just simply conveying that there are a range of options that leaders on the Hill are discussing. I think you all have reported that, or your colleagues on the Hill have. Nothing more than that. We'll be in touch with them, and we'll see what the next best options look like.

But what is very clear is that there is an easy, risk-free option here that Republicans could allow Democrats to vote to raise the debt ceiling. We could be done with this today.

Q Can I just follow up very quickly? Why wouldn't the President, given that relationship he has with Mitch McConnell, just call Mitch McConnell and have this conversation with him? Why do this through public events?

MS. PSAKI: What's the conversation about?

Q I don't know. They have the relationship. He's the one who said he could bring the two sides together. So, wouldn't there be some value in having that conversation with one another?

MS. PSAKI: We know what the -- we know what the risk-free option is here. We know what the clear path forward is here. And I think the President has made no secret about his belief on that.

Go ahead.

Q Has the President had time to absorb the criticism of the Fed Chairman? And then, specifically, what does the White House believe should happen -- Fed policy about investments made by top officials there?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we obviously leave the independence of the Fed to an independent Fed -- Federal Reserve. And I'm not going to speak to that from here.

The President is confident in the Chairman of the Federal Reserve, and, beyond that, I don't have any personnel announcements for you.

Q Given that confidence, and also given what you just said, I mean, how close is he to making a decision on that?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything to preview for you at this point.

Q Yesterday, the President said he would sign a reconciliation bill that included the Hyde Amendment. You told us earlier this week that he remains opposed to that. So, is he backtracking on a campaign promise, something that's -- a lot of his supporters believe strongly in?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President's position hasn't changed. The context of his comments were that there is still a negotiation happening. There's a range of views. His view remains what is reflected in his budget, which is that getting rid of -- which he released in May -- which shows that getting rid of the Hyde Amendment was a priority. That remains his position. This is a package that's still being negotiated, and he said that much -- as much last night as well.

Go ahead.

Q Just confirming what you told Peter: The President, when he signaled yesterday that it's possible that the Senate could change its rules, that -- we should not read that as him expressing support for that notion?

MS. PSAKI: The President was certain simply reporting out what you already have reported out, which is that there are a range of options being discussed on Capitol Hill.



Q I want to ask you separately: The ambassador-designate to India was seen, reportedly, at an event in Los Angeles last week at an art gallery event that featured the artwork of the President's son, Hunter.

The ethicists who have pointed to this arrangement have expressed concern that the President's son selling art could potentially put the President in a situation where those who seek jobs either in this administration or favors from this administration could put this White House in an awkward position.

Should -- first of all, what is the White House's response to the fact that an ambassador nominee was at this event? And secondly, should we expect to see more people who seek jobs in this administration attending events like this in the future?

MS. PSAKI: Well, to be clear, we've spoken to the arrangement that is run by the gallerist and Hunter Biden's representatives that the White House provided suggestions for. I'd refer you to the gallerist for questions about the event and -- as well as the representatives of Mr. Garcetti, in terms of his attendance.

Q But, Jen, just to follow up: This is exactly what ethicists said they were worried about.

MS. PSAKI: What is, specifically?

Q The fact that the President's son --

MS. PSAKI: That he reportedly attended an event?

Q Well, that the President's son would be selling artwork and then meeting, potentially, with people who would seek to buy it. If you have attendees at that event who might be seeking either jobs in this administration or favors from this administration, isn't it an awkward situation to put the President in?

MS. PSAKI: Again, the gallerist has spoken to -- we've spoken to the specifics of what the gallerist has agreed to and what recommendations were made. I've done that several times. I don't have additional details for it from here. I'd point you to them.

Go ahead.

Q So -- but does this White House not have any concerns about the photos that have emerged showing Hunter Biden at that gallery alongside prospective buyers?

MS. PSAKI: I'd point you to the gallerist on specifics of the restrictions that were put in place.

Q Great. But what about the position of this White House? This is a President who ran on being transparent and you've got -- are there no concerns?

MS. PSAKI: And we were very transparent about what recommendations were made to the gallerist, and I would again point you to them or the many times I've spoken about that from here.

Q And just to clarify, has the President's position on doing away with the filibuster changed?

MS. PSAKI: Nothing has -- no, it has not changed.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. The administration reportedly will invest \$1 billion into making rapid-testing COVID kits available. But there are concerns that the tests will be too expensive. I think a lot of Americans are wondering: Is there a universe where these available tests will be free or affordable, or at least less expensive than \$25 a pop?



MS. PSAKI: Yeah, so, there's no question, to your point, that there has been a huge increase and an interest in testing, and getting tests, and making them, and people going out and being able to get them easily.

We announced a \$2 billion investment in September. So, right now, we're on track to ~~double~~ [triple] the number of rapid, at-home tests on the market by early November. And we're also now on track to triple the number of rapid, at-home tests on the market by -- and thanks to the approval of ACON -- sorry -- this Monday, which accelerates the pace. We're now on track to triple the number. Triple the number, not double. I apologize.

So, right now, with these investments, we'll be at 200 million tests per month starting in December, with tens of millions more coming on the market in the coming weeks.

And we're also working to ensure that these tests, in addition to making them more available -- so you could go to CVS or Walmart, or wherever, to get them -- we've been working hard to make sure they are accessible and available in pharmacies, in community centers, in schools. So, we're also working to do that simultaneously and separate from that.

We recognize there's a need. We recognized we needed to do more. And we are pleased by the fact that we are now on track to not only triple by November but also quadruple by December.

Q There was a school shooting in Texas today. The school safety group Everytown says that this year has been the most dangerous back-to-school period for students since they began tracking the data in 2013. That's some 30 instances of gunfire on schoolgrounds since August 1st, and today's shooting means that number is out of date.

Is the administration discussing ways that schools can keep children safe from school violence -- from gun violence?

MS. PSAKI: Absolutely. I mean, one, I would say the President has been an advocate for doing more for gun safety measures through the course of his career. Not only did he fight to get the Brady Bill passed, he fought for the Assault Weapons Ban. It remains a cause of his public life in office.

We, of course, are frustrated by the inability to get commonsense gun reforms through Congress. We should be able to get universal background checks approved. They're supported by the vast majority of the public, as are assault weapons bans.

But in addition to that, we also have taken a number of steps, both by working through the Department of Justice to increase our strike force teams that are going out to specific communities and cities to help address violence. A lot of that is driven by gun violence. That's something that we've been implementing from there. And, of course, our Department of Education is engaged in this effort as well.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Yesterday's hearing by a Facebook whistleblower underscored several major issues with the company, including, as many senators pointed out, issues with Section 230.

On the campaign trail, Biden said that Section 230 should, quote, "immediately be revoked" and that it should be revoked because, quote, Facebook "is not just an Internet company. It is propagating falsehoods they know to be false." Does the White House stand by that assessment for Section 230, given the revelations now?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President has long said, as you referenced, that tech platforms must be held accountable for the harms that they cause. And he has been a strong supporter of fundamental reforms to achieve that goal. This includes Section 230 reforms. It also includes privacy and antitrust reforms as well as more transparency. That should also be on the table.

And he looks forward to working with Congress on these bipartisan issues.



He's also called, I would note -- because there were a number -- a range of issues that were raised during the whistleblower's testimony yesterday -- on the FTC to adopt rules to address unfair data collection and surveillance practice -- practices in his Executive Order on Promoting Competition in the American Economy.

So, yes, more needs to be done, reform should happen. We also need to do more on privacy and antitrust. And certainly, watching testimony yesterday raised a lot of those issues again for people.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Does the President have any intention of speaking with Senators Manchin or Sinema at all this week?

MS. PSAKI: I can't predict for you day by day. I -- we have been in touch with Senator Manchin and Sinema at a senior-staff level, and certainly, I wouldn't rule it out.

Q I wanted to ask a follow-up question on an earlier question about the Hyde Amendment. The President has not been shy about his opposition, in recent years, to the Hyde Amendment. As you mentioned, you know, he made that clear in his budget blueprint; he made that clear as a candidate, when he was running for President.

So, can you explain why it is he's saying that he would sign this bill either way -- you know, with or without this language in it?

MS. PSAKI: He's reflecting that it's a negotiation. It's ongoing. We don't know what the final product will look like.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, can I ask a little bit about energy prices? There -- you know, gas prices in the U.S. are fairly high. We're seeing exceptionally high prices of certain energy products in --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- Europe right now. Is the U.S. domestically considering a release from the SPR to bring down oil prices at this time?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to make any prediction of that from here. I would note that we have seen, as you said, some ticks-up in parts of the country, also in re- -- as a follow-up to Hurricane Ida, because the hurricane hit a region that is a key center of the nation's oil production and refining infrastructure.

So that's something we've been working to focus on. And we took actions in the days and weeks following to help address that, including, at the time, authorizing several million barrels of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve exchanges.

We've also taken steps into -- including engaging with members of OPEC. We've also taken steps to reach out to the FTC to ensure they're using every available tool to monitor the U.S. gasoline market and address any illegal conduct. But I'm not going to make any other predictions at this point in time. We're continuously monitoring. We'll look to take additional steps as needed.

Q Are you or would you consider restricting LNG exports to, I guess, head off the type of shortages and price spikes that we're seeing in Europe -- in parts of Europe?

MS. PSAKI: I'm just not going to make any additional policy predictions at this point in time.

Q Can I, like, broadly say: Overall, these are fundamentally price crunches on, you know, nonrenewable sources of fuel. And we're heading into COP summit here.



MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Do you worry that this could impact the pledges that countries are willing to make? Will other governments get weak-kneed about going green at a time when they're facing brewing, sort of, political crises at home over, really, skyrocketing prices of non-renewable fuel sources?

MS. PSAKI: We certainly hope not. I mean, I think what COP26 is about is to continue the conversation on the international stage, at the leader level -- that has been going on below the leader level continuously, basically -- about our need to work together to address the climate crisis -- one of the greatest national security crises the President sees. A number of other world leaders agree on that front.

Certainly, we all want to keep gasoline prices low, but the threat of the crisis -- the climate crisis -- certainly can't wait any longer.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead. Oh, go ahead. Go ahead.

Q Yeah, thanks very much. On the -- you sound pretty lukewarm about the McConnell idea. If the Democratic Caucus were to get behind it, is it a given that the President will get on board? Or --

MS. PSAKI: We'll see where things are. This is an ever-moving news cycle.

Q Because, you know, as we speak, there seems to be some positive vibes there regarding this, whereas you're giving, you know, quite the opposite.

MS. PSAKI: I would say, actually, in my read of it, there's a diversity of views in the Democratic Caucus, as is to be expected. And they're meeting now. We'll be in close touch with them, so I just don't want to get ahead of that process.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q I know we're still a few weeks away from the G20, but I wanted to see if the President would be open to meeting with Putin again at the G20. And does he feel like his last meeting with Putin was effective? Does the President feel like he's seen any change in Russia or Putin's behavior since then?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I don't have any predictions for you on the bilateral meetings. That's something that we're still working through at this point in time, every day.

And in terms of the -- how constructive his meeting was with President Putin, as he said at the time, we didn't expect it to be a light switch where, all of a sudden, everything would be hunky-dory in the relationship. It's not. We have remaining concerns, but it was an opportunity to express them at a high level, see what work could be done over the course of the long term to address it.

So I don't know that we're going to do a month-by-month assessment. It's something that we have continued conversations from -- with members of the national security team about many of the issues were raised. Those are ongoing. We're continuing to strive to make progress.

Q Can I follow up on that?

O And do you have any update on Afghanistan and how many Americans are still there? And is the -- do you -- does the



President feel the Taliban is cooperating still with efforts to get those remaining Americans out?

MS. PSAKI: We remain -- through appropriate channels of course -- in touch with Taliban officials. In terms of the specific numbers, I'd point you to the State Department. And they have the most updated number on that, given they oversee that process.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, there's been some reporting that Senate Democrats are planning to accept the short-term debt limit increase. So, given that we now have some reporting on that, can you just give us some guidance on what the White House thinks about that idea?

MS. PSAKI: Not yet. I have to -- I have to dig further into that reporting -- not to question it -- and talk to the team here about where things stand. And as far as when I came out here, they were still meeting, but we'll venture to get back to you as soon as we have something more concrete to convey.

Q Thanks, Jen. When the President was talking today about Republicans and the debt ceiling, he said, "If they don't want to do the job, just get out of the way. We'll take the heat. We'll do it." When he says, "We'll take the heat," what did he mean by that? What political risk is he acknowledging there for Democrats?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think one of the reasons we're at this point is because Republicans in Congress would rather bet on a misleading and inaccurate campaign season talking point. We're not betting that that's going to work, but his point -- the President's point is: Regardless, we're willing -- Democrats are willing to vote alone, without any Republican votes, to raise the debt ceiling. You just need to allow us to proceed with that vote.

Q And on the testing question that had come up, on rapid tests, this \$1 billion investment will quadruple the tests by December, in addition to everything else from the past couple of weeks. But why has it taken so long to get this rapid testing to this point where it will be -- by December, when Europe is flooded with rapid tests? Is it the authorization process and the timeline on that, or is it on the production side, or both?

MS. PSAKI: Well, one of the things we've been working on is to increase production, as you know, and also increase -- I would say that the demand for these tests here has increased a lot in the last several weeks, so we're also working to meet that and ensure that we are meeting the moment here in the United States.

In terms of the specific mechanics, I would encourage you to ask the COVID team that question.

Q Is that missing the moment though by -- you know, the demand has gone up in recent weeks because kids have gone back to school. Should this have been ready for back-to-school so that you could go to a CVS or any of the pharmacies or government sites and get these tests?

MS. PSAKI: I mean, again, we just announced, last month, an enormous investment: We're quadrupling availability by December, tripling by November. I think that is speaking to how seriously we take this and how we're working to ensure there are accessible, cost-effective tests out there and available to the public.

Go ahead.

Q What plans does the White House have to address the risk of oil spills from existing platforms, existing leases that are still operating?

MS. PSAKI: You mean like the one that happened in California?

O Correct.



MS. PSAKI: I would really point you to the Department of Energy for specifics there.

Q But, you know, the White House policies on stopping future leases possibly --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- things like that. But, you know, this is an ongoing threat, you know, that happens as, you know, offshore drilling continues. Is there an interest in investing in the infrastructure of the pipeline to enhance their safety, shutting them down? You know, what are your thoughts on that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, I think there -- as we've seen, and there's been an ongoing investigation about what exactly was the root cause here, so I don't want to, kind of, speak to that as that's been ongoing. But, beyond that, I would point you to the Department of Energy.

Q And two very quick things on the spill: Does the White House have a working theory on what caused the spill? And secondly, do you have an update on federal resources that have been dispatched to respond to the spill?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. I think I do have an update on federal resources. Let me see.

On the leak, just so I don't forget to answer this part, it's still under investigation. As you may know, the oil has stopped leaking; the pipeline has been removed from service.

In terms of our government efforts, 4,788 gallons of oil have been recovered and 11,360 feet of containment boom have been deployed. As of yesterday, six miles of shoreline have been cleaned, 328 response personnel with additional assets are on -- have -- on the way have been deployed.

As we said earlier this week, the Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration investigators are on the ground in the Unified/Incident Command Center. And on Monday, we also issued a corrective order -- action order to the operator mandating immediate corrective action, including performing a root cause failure analysis, integrity assessment, and remedial work plan.

Beyond that, Unified Command, of course, who are on the ground would have any additional steps we're taking and that are up to date.

Go ahead, April.

Q Jen, we see there are crisis moments -- everything is in crisis mode here -- but there are other issues that are percolating as well that some feel are at crisis levels -- Black agenda issues. The Vice President just had the heads of Divine Nine in a meeting -- frank, good, direct discussion, we were told -- about issues, particularly voting rights.

What is the President expecting when it comes to dealing with the Black agenda, particularly with those that have this small window, like voting rights and also the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act? What is he expected to do? What is he planning on committing to make sure these things happen?

MS. PSAKI: He wants to get both done. He wants to sign them into law. As you know, and you've told me in the past, the Black agenda is bigger than voting rights and bigger than the George Floyd Police and Justice Act.

Both are hugely important. The President has committed to getting them both done. He wants to sign them into law. We need Congress to move forward on both to get that done.

Q They are -- the Black agenda is huge. It's vast. But in this moment, there's a small window of time before elections



happen, and the concern is is that this President is not doing enough; he has not armed the Vice President or helped her to be able to fight the fight for these things.

MS. PSAKI: I would say the Vice President is more than capable of fighting the fight and the lead on this particular issue and any issue.

Q So how is he --

MS. PSAKI: She's the Vice President of the United States. Pretty powerful.

Q Right, but if the President -- the argument is, if the President is not supporting her with the tools that she needs --

MS. PSAKI: Which tools is she --

Q -- i.e. the filibuster --

MS. PSAKI: -- is she -- is he not providing to her?

Q -- i.e. the filibuster for voting rights, and that is in her portfolio.

You have one of her friends -- and a Democrat, a strategist -- Bakari Sellers, who says her portfolio is trash because he's not supporting her in the way that she needs to be supported for this to pass. So, what do you say? Can he, will he, shall he push for the filibuster for voting rights, even as he's doing it -- thinking about it for the debt ceiling?

MS. PSAKI: Well, that's not exactly what I conveyed earlier, but I will say that the President has conveyed many times that getting voting rights done, signing it into law is top of his agenda.

The Vice President, one of the most powerful people in the world, is leading this effort. He is her -- she is his partner. She's the first in the room, the last in the room, and he's going to continue to work by her side to get it done.

But beyond that and the legislative process and how that will work, I don't have any update on that front.

Go ahead.

Q Sticking on voting rights, with S.4 being introduced in the Senate: The President has, over and over, talked about the pathways that voting rights legislation could take, same thing that he -- apparently, yesterday, you said he was alluding to when he said "real possibility" -- right? -- talking about what could possibly happen on the Hill.

He's never talked about voting rights with any kind of real possibility of a filibuster carveout, and there's a real frustration -- some people have got arrested just yesterday -- among activists on the voting rights issues.

So, other than, "We're frustrated; we stand with you," what do you have to say to activists who are saying this White House, the President isn't doing enough on voting rights specifically?

MS. PSAKI: I think that was just the question I just answered, no?

Q But we're trying to get an answer from you. I mean, it's a legitimate question. And we're trying to --

MS. PSAKI: I'm not saying -- I'm not saying it's not. I'm not saying it's not. I would say that the President is also frustrated that voting rights has not been done. He's also frustrated that Republicans are so afraid of making reforms that would make it easier for people to vote that they have blocked this effort.



And he is frustrated that, despite everything that's happened around the country, there isn't more of a movement to get this done -- I don't mean by activists; certainly, there's a movement there -- in Congress.

What he was certainly -- what he was speaking to yesterday was the fact that there is live conversations right now about a range of options on the debt limit. He was not speaking to anything beyond that. And that's what is happening on the -- on Capitol Hill in this particular moment. That's it.

And so, I would convey to activists that he is absolutely committed. He wants to get this done. He wants to sign it into law. The Vice President just had meetings today on it. She is in the lead on this effort, as one of the most powerful people in this country, maybe even in the world, leading this effort.

Q But, I mean, he's the President. So, when I talk to activists, you know, they say, "You're the President. If you're frustrated, do something." Right? So, I guess that is the -- that is what we're constantly hearing --

MS. PSAKI: Congress is a separate body.

Q Sure, but there's things that he could --

MS. PSAKI: It's a --

Q There are things that he --

MS. PSAKI: It's a -- it's a separate body. You need 50 votes to change the filibuster. You also need the majority of votes to pass legislation into law.

He has made clear that he wants voting rights to be passed into law. He will continue to advocate publicly, privately, and continue to be a partner to the Vice President. He absolutely feels this is essential and we need to get it done.

Go ahead, Patsy.

Q Thank you, Jen. I want to follow up on Taiwan. Administration officials -- including yourself, I believe, on Monday, and Secretary Blinken today -- essentially have issued warnings to China urging China to stop its military activities in Taiwan. However, China has ignored that. In fact, it has dialed up sending even more military jets. So, what does that say about the credibility of U.S. deterrence on this issue?

MS. PSAKI: I think the Secretary of State spoke to this earlier. I don't think I have anything more to add to what he said.

Q Can I -- can I just follow up?

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q How concerned are you that these recent activities might actually escalate and then draw the U.S. into some sort of great power war with China? And so, what are you doing to maintain tensions beyond, kind of, ad hoc meetings like the Zurich meeting that Jake Sullivan is --

MS. PSAKI: I wouldn't call a meeting with our National Security Advisor and his counterpart an "ad hoc" meeting.

Obviously, we raise our concerns through a range of channels. The State Department also put out a public statement -- a proactive statement on this, which is not something they do frequently, and the Secretary of State spoke to it today.

Q Do you have regular, you know, meetings to make sure that things like this don't escalate into something bigger?



MS. PSAKI: Of course, we do, as you well know.  
Go ahead.

Q I have another debt ceiling question --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- but zooming much farther out.

Earlier today, Jamie Dimon suggested getting rid of the debt ceiling altogether so that this scenario would not happen again.

Secretary Yellen seemed to lend her support to that idea of getting rid of the debt ceiling altogether in the past. Has she spoken with the President about that idea? And does he have a position on, sort of, the larger question of whether or not it should or should not be abolished?

MS. PSAKI: Right now, our focus is on raising the debt ceiling in the limited amount of time we have left to do that and do it without impacting the retirement savings accounts, the Social Security, and the economic security of millions of Americans. There's plenty of time to have a conversation after that.

Q And then a quick follow-up. You were asked about the -- the Uyghur anti-slave labor bill.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah. You asked me about it last week, too -- or the week before. I don't remember.

Q That's right.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q You've noted several times that the President has put out statements.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q There is sanctions as well. Does this administration -- does the President feel that there is anyone in his administration that is opposed to this kind of bipartisan legislation?

MS. PSAKI: I think it's all about taking a look at the legislation and figuring out if it's something we'd support moving forward -- every component of it -- and I'll check and see if we have a statement of administration policy on it.

Q But you don't know of anyone in the administration who currently opposes this?

MS. PSAKI: Again, we're not talking about whether or not we think the treatment of the Uyghurs is outrageous. It is. We've all said that. We're talking about a piece of legislation that has several components, and so I just want to make sure I go through the proper process with that.

Q On food shortages --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Hi. I was just wanting to talk to you about food shortages real quick. I'm not sure if you were looking here. But I just wanted to say that, on food shortages, we're seeing in schools the supply chain is kinked and affecting school lunches to the degree that kids are having bread -- or meat with no bread to make sandwiches, for example. And grocery stores, ahead of the holidays, are limiting the amount of food that you can actually purchase.

So, in regard to the debt ceiling talks, if the Senate votes "no" ahead of Thanksgiving, ahead of Christmas, and the coming holiday season -- if they say "no," what will that mean in the big picture for this nation and food shortages and other product delinquencies?

MS. PSAKI: Well, look, I would say -- I just want to dis- -- to make sure we're sending a clear message here about what the impacts of different things are. I know that's why you asked the question.

You'd have to get me more information about how broadly the school issue you're referencing is. I have not heard that from the Department of Education. It doesn't mean that it is not the case in certain schools, but if you have more information on that --

Q I do. (Inaudible) get it to you.

MS. PSAKI: -- come share that with me.

I would say that we know that unless Congress acts to raise the debt limit, what we're talking about here is people's retirement savings, their Social Security benefits, their economic security being at risk. That could mean all sorts of things, to your point about people's economic security, especially people who are at or below the poverty line or above the poverty line. And we're seeing the impact on markets across the country.

We don't want that to be the case, of course. That's why we're working to prevent this from happening.

I would say, in terms of the cost of meat and the cost of goods, we think -- there's a range of issues here. You referenced the supply chain. Another issue is the fact that there's not enough competition among big meat producers. It's something Secretary Vilsack spoke to when he was here just a few weeks ago and something our Department of Agriculture and the Department of Justice also are working to take steps to address.

Q Thank you for that, but just a real quick --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q -- one -- one more on the shots. We do have an approval for FlowFlex -- I believe is the name of the rapid results test -- and we were expecting today to have -- hear more information about that. But I've written about this, and the New York Times is saying that one of the problems even in going to places like CVS to get a test is, in some places, you don't even -- you can't even buy a rapid results test. And being that school is in session and that we are going to be having more events, for example --

MS. PSAKI: So, Mona, that's exactly why we just announced a \$2 billion investment that's going to quadruple the number of tests that are available at schools, community centers, and also to purchase at home.

Q But that's future focused. I'm talking about --

MS. PSAKI: It's starting to happen now.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. Just to follow up on John Kerry's comments.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q You mentioned that he was, of course, aware of the displeasure after the deal was announced. Was he not aware of something before the deal was announced? Was he not aware that the French weren't read in? Was he not aware of the



French deal on conventional submarines?

MS. PSAKI: Look, I think, right now, what our focus is on is moving forward. As you know and as President Macron spoke to, they're going to be meeting next month. We're working to finalize the details of that.

As you saw, our National Security Advisor and members of our national security team have met with their counterparts or high-level officials in recent weeks.

So, at this point, what our focus is on is how we work with the French moving forward.

Q Thank you, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Thanks, everyone.

4:56 P.M. EDT

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

October 6, 2021

**Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, October 6, 2021**

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

4:13 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Okay --

Q Or maybe not.

MS. PSAKI: Oh, what did you think was going to happen? (Laughter.) I'm sorry to disappoint. Okay, sorry to disappoint. You never know who's behind the door.

Okay. Okay, tomorrow -- just one item for all of you at the top: Tomorrow, the President will travel to Elk Grove Village, Illinois -- a trip he had planned to do last week -- to meet with public and private sector leaders who have implemented vaccination requirements. The President will visit with a company local to the Chicago area that is imposing its own vaccine requirement ahead of the OSHA rule.

The President's message will be clear: Vaccination requirements work. Vaccination requirements get more people vaccinated, helping to end the pandemic and strengthen the economy.

That's why he's leading and implementing on -- implementing vaccination requirements for 100 million workers, two thirds of all workers in the United States, and that's why we're seeing growing momentum for vaccination requirements across the sectors and across the country.



Alex, go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. I was hoping to get you to weigh in on three different debt limit scenarios since there's so many --

MS. PSAKI: Great.

Q -- developing. So, off the top, Senator Mitch McConnell has proposed for Republicans to either support a short-term hike in the debt limit through December or to support a expedited reconciliation process where Democrats would vote to hike it long term. What's the White House response to that? Is there support for either of those from the President?

And then, I was hoping to get clarification on something the President said yesterday. He seemed to suggest that he would support a carveout in the filibuster, if all else fails, to hike the debt limit. Is that where he stands? Would he be open to that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, right now -- and perhaps this the awkwardness of 4:15, while people are still meeting on the Hill -- right now, Democratic members are meeting on the Hill to discuss options on the path forward. I think Republican members may also be meeting or discussing among themselves.

My understanding, at the point I walked out here, is that there's been no formal offer made. A press release is not a formal offer.

And regardless, even the scant details that have been reported present more complicated, more difficult options than the one that is quite obvious, in the President's view, and is in front of the faces of every member up on the Hill. We could get this done today. We don't need to kick the can. We don't need to go through a cumbersome process that every day brings additional risks.

So, they're discussing up there. We'll, obviously, be in close touch with them, as we will continue to be, and we'll see where we -- where we are at the end of today.

Q And then one foreign policy question. Does the White House have a position yet on the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act which passed unanimously in the Senate?

And just broadly in that same context, how do you respond to the criticism from Senator Rubio and some Republicans that the administration is sort of letting Beijing have some advantage on human rights abuses to try to win over their cooperation on climate issues?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we would absolutely dispute that notion. Unlike the former President, this President has spoken out against human rights abuses, has raised his concerns about human rights abuses directly with President Xi, and we have done that at every level from our national security team.

In terms of the legislation, obviously we have spoken out about our concerns of human rights abuses in Xinjiang. And I would also note that the President also led an effort to have coordination on the international stage to address this issue, unlike his predecessors.

But I'd have to talk to our legislative team about specific views on the -- in the piece of legislation. I know I spoke to it briefly last week, but I'll -- I'll come back to you with that.

Go ahead, Steve.

Q Jake Sullivan reached a deal with the Chinese today for President Biden and President Xi to have a virtual summit before the end of the year. Do you see this happening around the G20 Summit? And what's the advantage of them seeing each other face-to-face?



MS. PSAKI: Well, as I understand it, what came out of the discussions was an agreement to continue dialogue at a very high level.

So, what we've said, of course -- and we continue to believe -- is that leader-level engagement is an important part of our effort to responsibly manage the competition with China, especially given the coalescing of power in Chinese leadership.

We're still working through what that would look like, when, and, of course, the final details. So we don't quite have them yet.

Q Secondly, the President indicated last night that he had spoken to President Xi about Taiwan. Was this in their more recent phone call? And what exactly did he tell him?

MS. PSAKI: So just -- you didn't ask this, but some others have asked us -- he did not have a new call that you're not aware of.

Q Okay. Okay.

MS. PSAKI: So, just for full clarity on that. He has spoken with him twice, as you know.

And certainly, reiterating our position as it relates to -- you know, which is guided by the Taiwan Relations Act and our view that we need to uphold that commitment -- our commitment under the act -- that is what the President reiterated to President Xi last time he talked, and it is something that is raised nearly every time he speaks at a leader level and at other levels as well.

Q And last thing -- and sorry to prolong -- the Energy Secretary, Granholm, in a conference today did not rule out a ban on crude oil exports to keep U.S. energy prices down. Is that something that's seriously being looked at?

MS. PSAKI: I would defer to the Energy Secretary, but I don't have anything new to report on that from internally in the White House.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Hey, Jen. So, I understand that you're obviously waiting for more details of this proposal from the Senate Minority Leader, but, you know, would the President accept a short-term deal to raise the debt ceiling while you try and find a broader path out of this crisis?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as I said a few minutes ago, we don't need to kick the can. We don't need to go through a cumbersome process that every day brings additional risks. And you heard many of the business leaders convey that, even as we look to risk tomorrow, the next day, as American -- the American people are looking at the retirement accounts, worrying about their Social Security savings, members of the military worrying about their payments. We don't need to incur that risk uncertainty.

And I think it's important to also remember we're at this point because Republicans in Congress treated the savings accounts and retirement savings of the American people, Social Security checks of retirees, and veterans benefits like a game of Monopoly, putting the stability and security of the American people at risk.

We're at this point because Republicans in Congress blocked efforts by Democrats to raise the debt limit and protect the full faith and credit of the United States, despite having voted for it three times during the Trump administration.

So, obviously, as has been reported, and the vote has been delayed, there's still an opportunity for Republicans to join us in



being adults in the room and ensure that people have confidence in the economic security and their own retirement savings.

Q The Minority Leader's proposal, though, seems to go at one of the key arguments that the President was making yesterday about why he's opposed to using budget reconciliation, which is that it would take time, it's cumbersome, it could lead to, you know, unexpected scenarios.

So, is the Minority Leader taking off the arguments against reconciliation by offering this one-month extension? And if not, then what are your remaining objections? Is it simply that you don't want Democrats to take a vote that will put a specific dollar amount on raising the debt ceiling?

MS. PSAKI: Democrats are very willing to be the adults in the room and take a vote to raise the debt limit. They're not even asking Republicans to do that anymore, since they've clearly shown their refusal to do exactly that.

The point I'm making is that there is a very clear -- the least risky option here that can ensure that there is confidence from the American people about their own checking accounts or about their own retirement savings, that's something Republicans still have the opportunity to participate in and be a part of.

Q And just on Afghanistan, if I could. The ISIS-K suicide bomber had -- you know, who was -- who carried out the attack that resulted in the deaths of 13 U.S. service members and dozens more Afghans had been released from the Parwan prison at Bagram Air Base just days before that attack took place, when the Taliban took control of that base.

Should the Biden administration have done more to secure Bagram or transfer ISIS-K prisoners outside of that? And do you now accept that this attack would not have happened had the United States retained control of Bagram?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I can't speak to the specific case. I'd let it -- leave it to the intelligence community to speak to that. So I'd point you to them.

I'd remind you that, as it relates to Bagram, there was a decision made to close Bagram because it wasn't strategically in the interest of the United States and our national security to keep it open with 5,000 troops there protecting Bagram at a distance that was far away from the capital and far away from where people from the embassy would be evacuated. So, that was the broad-based decision.

I understand you're asking me a different question than that, but I just wanted to reiterate.

Q But would he have made the same decision had he known that it would result --

MS. PSAKI: Again, I can't speak --

Q -- in the deaths of 13 service members?

MS. PSAKI: -- to this particular report. I'd point you to the intelligence community.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. You know, Congress has passed countless short-term government funding measures. They have funded the government for 48 hours before. Wouldn't a short-term debt ceiling hike be preferable to default?

MS. PSAKI: The preference would be just getting this done today so we can move on to more business for the American people. And that option is still on the table.

Q But you -- you know, the White House brought in all of these banking CEOs today to talk about how catastrophic it would be if the U.S. were to default. Why not send the markets that assurance, if you have the opportunity, that, at least



for the next eight weeks, the debt ceiling is going to be secure?

MS. PSAKI: Well, if we're looking at the best options, why kick the can down the road a couple of more weeks? Why create an additional layer of uncertainty? Why not just get it done now? That's what we're continuing to press for, and that's our first choice.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. A week ago, the National School Boards Association wrote to the President to say that their teachers feel like some parents protesting recently "could be the equivalent to a form of domestic terrorism." And then, the Attorney General put the FBI on the case.

So, does the administration agree that parents upset about their kids' curriculums could be considered domestic terrorists?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me unravel this a little bit, because the National School Board Association is not a part of the U.S. government. I'd point you to them.

What the Department of Justice said in a letter from the Attorney General is that, quote, "Threats against public servants are not only illegal, they run counter to our nation's core values." That is true. These were threats against public servants, threats against members of the school board. Regardless of the reasoning, threats and violence against public servants is illegal. That's what he was conveying from the Department of Justice.

Q But the Department of Justice does now have the FBI on this. Something that the School Boards Association is asking for is for the administration to consider using the PATRIOT Act to investigate some of these school board protestors. So, would the administration be okay with the FBI using the PATRIOT Act to surveil these parents, if that is what they decide?

MS. PSAKI: I don't speak on behalf of the National School Board Association; I speak on behalf of this government. The Attorney General has put out a letter. They will take actions they take, and I would point you to them for more information.

Q And something that you said on Monday after some protestors were hounding Kyrsten Sinema into a restroom -- you said, "The President stands for the fundamental right of people to protest, to object, [and] to criticize." So does the President support the fundamental rights of these parents to protest at school board meetings?

MS. PSAKI: Of course. But he doesn't stand for the fundamental right -- I assume you don't either -- for people to take violent action against members -- public servants. And that's what the threats are about. And so, no, he doesn't stand for that; no one should.

Q Just one more. John Kerry says that after France was cut out of the nuclear submarine deal, and they were upset enough about being left in the dark that they pulled their ambassador, he went to the President and, quote, "The President, literally, had not been aware of what had transpired." So what else are you guys not telling the President?

MS. PSAKI: Of course, he was aware of the French being upset -- let me finish --

Q No, Kerry --

MS. PSAKI: Let me --

Q -- said he "literally..." --

MS. PSAKI: Let me -- let me finish.



Q -- "had not been aware."

MS. PSAKI: I know John Kerry quite well. He, of course, was aware -- the President -- of the French being displeased about the deal with the Australians. John Kerry also speaks regularly to the French, as a part of his role as the Climate Envoy. He's someone who also served as Secretary of State. He's someone I -- alone -- traveled to France with him 25 times.

He, of course, conveyed to the President what his read is -- was of what they were specifically unhappy about and how to help address it.

Q A follow-up on France, Jen?

Q You said -- you've said this President's first love is foreign policy. So, why doesn't he know about these things in real time?

MS. PSAKI: Of course, he knew about the French being displeased about --

Q John Kerry said --

MS. PSAKI: Let me finish.

Q -- he "literally had not be aware."

MS. PSAKI: Peter, I would encourage you to ask John Kerry specifically about the context of his comments. The President and John -- and the former Secretary are also good friends. He relies on his counsel, and -- as he does with many members of his national security team. But that certainly is not what he was intending to convey.

Q Follow-up on France?

Q Jen, if I could --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q -- let me ask you quickly: Yesterday, the President said that he would be speaking with Mitch McConnell, as it related to the debt limit. Has that conversation happened? And what did he -- what did he tell him?

MS. PSAKI: They have not spoken. I think what the President has repeatedly conveyed is that he's certainly open to, as he -- as he has shown throughout the course of his presidency, having conversations with Democrats and Republicans when he feels it would be constructive.

Q He said they will be -- he said they will be speaking. So you were saying he was saying they will at some point, but there was no --

MS. PSAKI: At some -- at some point, if it's constructive in moving things forward.

Q Okay. Does the President trust Mitch McConnell to be an honest broker in this process?

MS. PSAKI: I don't think this is about trust. This is about -- he has known him a long time, but this is about whether you're going to be a leader and take steps that are not based on -- on political calculations and more based on what's in the interest of the United States and the full faith and of the United States.

Q The President discussed that there was a possibility of a filibuster -- a carveout -- as it related to the debt ceiling. If that

were the case, would the President be open to a filibuster carveout for voting rights? Where does that line get drawn for the President?

MS. PSAKI: The President was just simply conveying that there are a range of options that leaders on the Hill are discussing. I think you all have reported that, or your colleagues on the Hill have. Nothing more than that. We'll be in touch with them, and we'll see what the next best options look like.

But what is very clear is that there is an easy, risk-free option here that Republicans could allow Democrats to vote to raise the debt ceiling. We could be done with this today.

Q Can I just follow up very quickly? Why wouldn't the President, given that relationship he has with Mitch McConnell, just call Mitch McConnell and have this conversation with him? Why do this through public events?

MS. PSAKI: What's the conversation about?

Q I don't know. They have the relationship. He's the one who said he could bring the two sides together. So, wouldn't there be some value in having that conversation with one another?

MS. PSAKI: We know what the -- we know what the risk-free option is here. We know what the clear path forward is here. And I think the President has made no secret about his belief on that.

Go ahead.

Q Has the President had time to absorb the criticism of the Fed Chairman? And then, specifically, what does the White House believe should happen -- Fed policy about investments made by top officials there?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we obviously leave the independence of the Fed to an independent Fed -- Federal Reserve. And I'm not going to speak to that from here.

The President is confident in the Chairman of the Federal Reserve, and, beyond that, I don't have any personnel announcements for you.

Q Given that confidence, and also given what you just said, I mean, how close is he to making a decision on that?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything to preview for you at this point.

Q Yesterday, the President said he would sign a reconciliation bill that included the Hyde Amendment. You told us earlier this week that he remains opposed to that. So, is he backtracking on a campaign promise, something that's -- a lot of his supporters believe strongly in?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President's position hasn't changed. The context of his comments were that there is still a negotiation happening. There's a range of views. His view remains what is reflected in his budget, which is that getting rid of -- which he released in May -- which shows that getting rid of the Hyde Amendment was a priority. That remains his position. This is a package that's still being negotiated, and he said that much -- as much last night as well.

Go ahead.

Q Just confirming what you told Peter: The President, when he signaled yesterday that it's possible that the Senate could change its rules, that -- we should not read that as him expressing support for that notion?

MS. PSAKI: The President was certain simply reporting out what you already have reported out, which is that there are a range of options being discussed on Capitol Hill.



Q I want to ask you separately: The ambassador-designate to India was seen, reportedly, at an event in Los Angeles last week at an art gallery event that featured the artwork of the President's son, Hunter.

The ethicists who have pointed to this arrangement have expressed concern that the President's son selling art could potentially put the President in a situation where those who seek jobs either in this administration or favors from this administration could put this White House in an awkward position.

Should -- first of all, what is the White House's response to the fact that an ambassador nominee was at this event? And secondly, should we expect to see more people who seek jobs in this administration attending events like this in the future?

MS. PSAKI: Well, to be clear, we've spoken to the arrangement that is run by the gallerist and Hunter Biden's representatives that the White House provided suggestions for. I'd refer you to the gallerist for questions about the event and -- as well as the representatives of Mr. Garcetti, in terms of his attendance.

Q But, Jen, just to follow up: This is exactly what ethicists said they were worried about.

MS. PSAKI: What is, specifically?

Q The fact that the President's son --

MS. PSAKI: That he reportedly attended an event?

Q Well, that the President's son would be selling artwork and then meeting, potentially, with people who would seek to buy it. If you have attendees at that event who might be seeking either jobs in this administration or favors from this administration, isn't it an awkward situation to put the President in?

MS. PSAKI: Again, the gallerist has spoken to -- we've spoken to the specifics of what the gallerist has agreed to and what recommendations were made. I've done that several times. I don't have additional details for it from here. I'd point you to them.

Go ahead.

Q So -- but does this White House not have any concerns about the photos that have emerged showing Hunter Biden at that gallery alongside prospective buyers?

MS. PSAKI: I'd point you to the gallerist on specifics of the restrictions that were put in place.

Q Great. But what about the position of this White House? This is a President who ran on being transparent and you've got -- are there no concerns?

MS. PSAKI: And we were very transparent about what recommendations were made to the gallerist, and I would again point you to them or the many times I've spoken about that from here.

Q And just to clarify, has the President's position on doing away with the filibuster changed?

MS. PSAKI: Nothing has -- no, it has not changed.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. The administration reportedly will invest \$1 billion into making rapid-testing COVID kits available. But there are concerns that the tests will be too expensive. I think a lot of Americans are wondering: Is there a universe where these available tests will be free or affordable, or at least less expensive than \$25 a pop?



MS. PSAKI: Yeah, so, there's no question, to your point, that there has been a huge increase and an interest in testing, and getting tests, and making them, and people going out and being able to get them easily.

We announced a \$2 billion investment in September. So, right now, we're on track to ~~double~~ [triple] the number of rapid, at-home tests on the market by early November. And we're also now on track to triple the number of rapid, at-home tests on the market by -- and thanks to the approval of ACON -- sorry -- this Monday, which accelerates the pace. We're now on track to triple the number. Triple the number, not double. I apologize.

So, right now, with these investments, we'll be at 200 million tests per month starting in December, with tens of millions more coming on the market in the coming weeks.

And we're also working to ensure that these tests, in addition to making them more available -- so you could go to CVS or Walmart, or wherever, to get them -- we've been working hard to make sure they are accessible and available in pharmacies, in community centers, in schools. So, we're also working to do that simultaneously and separate from that.

We recognize there's a need. We recognized we needed to do more. And we are pleased by the fact that we are now on track to not only triple by November but also quadruple by December.

Q There was a school shooting in Texas today. The school safety group Everytown says that this year has been the most dangerous back-to-school period for students since they began tracking the data in 2013. That's some 30 instances of gunfire on schoolgrounds since August 1st, and today's shooting means that number is out of date.

Is the administration discussing ways that schools can keep children safe from school violence -- from gun violence?

MS. PSAKI: Absolutely. I mean, one, I would say the President has been an advocate for doing more for gun safety measures through the course of his career. Not only did he fight to get the Brady Bill passed, he fought for the Assault Weapons Ban. It remains a cause of his public life in office.

We, of course, are frustrated by the inability to get commonsense gun reforms through Congress. We should be able to get universal background checks approved. They're supported by the vast majority of the public, as are assault weapons bans.

But in addition to that, we also have taken a number of steps, both by working through the Department of Justice to increase our strike force teams that are going out to specific communities and cities to help address violence. A lot of that is driven by gun violence. That's something that we've been implementing from there. And, of course, our Department of Education is engaged in this effort as well.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Yesterday's hearing by a Facebook whistleblower underscored several major issues with the company, including, as many senators pointed out, issues with Section 230.

On the campaign trail, Biden said that Section 230 should, quote, "immediately be revoked" and that it should be revoked because, quote, Facebook "is not just an Internet company. It is propagating falsehoods they know to be false." Does the White House stand by that assessment for Section 230, given the revelations now?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President has long said, as you referenced, that tech platforms must be held accountable for the harms that they cause. And he has been a strong supporter of fundamental reforms to achieve that goal. This includes Section 230 reforms. It also includes privacy and antitrust reforms as well as more transparency. That should also be on the table.

And he looks forward to working with Congress on these bipartisan issues.



He's also called, I would note -- because there were a number -- a range of issues that were raised during the whistleblower's testimony yesterday -- on the FTC to adopt rules to address unfair data collection and surveillance practice -- practices in his Executive Order on Promoting Competition in the American Economy.

So, yes, more needs to be done, reform should happen. We also need to do more on privacy and antitrust. And certainly, watching testimony yesterday raised a lot of those issues again for people.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Does the President have any intention of speaking with Senators Manchin or Sinema at all this week?

MS. PSAKI: I can't predict for you day by day. I -- we have been in touch with Senator Manchin and Sinema at a senior-staff level, and certainly, I wouldn't rule it out.

Q I wanted to ask a follow-up question on an earlier question about the Hyde Amendment. The President has not been shy about his opposition, in recent years, to the Hyde Amendment. As you mentioned, you know, he made that clear in his budget blueprint; he made that clear as a candidate, when he was running for President.

So, can you explain why it is he's saying that he would sign this bill either way -- you know, with or without this language in it?

MS. PSAKI: He's reflecting that it's a negotiation. It's ongoing. We don't know what the final product will look like.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, can I ask a little bit about energy prices? There -- you know, gas prices in the U.S. are fairly high. We're seeing exceptionally high prices of certain energy products in --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- Europe right now. Is the U.S. domestically considering a release from the SPR to bring down oil prices at this time?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to make any prediction of that from here. I would note that we have seen, as you said, some ticks-up in parts of the country, also in re- -- as a follow-up to Hurricane Ida, because the hurricane hit a region that is a key center of the nation's oil production and refining infrastructure.

So that's something we've been working to focus on. And we took actions in the days and weeks following to help address that, including, at the time, authorizing several million barrels of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve exchanges.

We've also taken steps into -- including engaging with members of OPEC. We've also taken steps to reach out to the FTC to ensure they're using every available tool to monitor the U.S. gasoline market and address any illegal conduct. But I'm not going to make any other predictions at this point in time. We're continuously monitoring. We'll look to take additional steps as needed.

Q Are you or would you consider restricting LNG exports to, I guess, head off the type of shortages and price spikes that we're seeing in Europe -- in parts of Europe?

MS. PSAKI: I'm just not going to make any additional policy predictions at this point in time.

Q Can I, like, broadly say: Overall, these are fundamentally price crunches on, you know, nonrenewable sources of fuel. And we're heading into COP summit here.



MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Do you worry that this could impact the pledges that countries are willing to make? Will other governments get weak-kneed about going green at a time when they're facing brewing, sort of, political crises at home over, really, skyrocketing prices of non-renewable fuel sources?

MS. PSAKI: We certainly hope not. I mean, I think what COP26 is about is to continue the conversation on the international stage, at the leader level -- that has been going on below the leader level continuously, basically -- about our need to work together to address the climate crisis -- one of the greatest national security crises the President sees. A number of other world leaders agree on that front.

Certainly, we all want to keep gasoline prices low, but the threat of the crisis -- the climate crisis -- certainly can't wait any longer.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead. Oh, go ahead. Go ahead.

Q Yeah, thanks very much. On the -- you sound pretty lukewarm about the McConnell idea. If the Democratic Caucus were to get behind it, is it a given that the President will get on board? Or --

MS. PSAKI: We'll see where things are. This is an ever-moving news cycle.

Q Because, you know, as we speak, there seems to be some positive vibes there regarding this, whereas you're giving, you know, quite the opposite.

MS. PSAKI: I would say, actually, in my read of it, there's a diversity of views in the Democratic Caucus, as is to be expected. And they're meeting now. We'll be in close touch with them, so I just don't want to get ahead of that process.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q I know we're still a few weeks away from the G20, but I wanted to see if the President would be open to meeting with Putin again at the G20. And does he feel like his last meeting with Putin was effective? Does the President feel like he's seen any change in Russia or Putin's behavior since then?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I don't have any predictions for you on the bilateral meetings. That's something that we're still working through at this point in time, every day.

And in terms of the -- how constructive his meeting was with President Putin, as he said at the time, we didn't expect it to be a light switch where, all of a sudden, everything would be hunky-dory in the relationship. It's not. We have remaining concerns, but it was an opportunity to express them at a high level, see what work could be done over the course of the long term to address it.

So I don't know that we're going to do a month-by-month assessment. It's something that we have continued conversations from -- with members of the national security team about many of the issues were raised. Those are ongoing. We're continuing to strive to make progress.

Q Can I follow up on that?

O And do you have any update on Afghanistan and how many Americans are still there? And is the -- do you -- does the



President feel the Taliban is cooperating still with efforts to get those remaining Americans out?

MS. PSAKI: We remain -- through appropriate channels of course -- in touch with Taliban officials. In terms of the specific numbers, I'd point you to the State Department. And they have the most updated number on that, given they oversee that process.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, there's been some reporting that Senate Democrats are planning to accept the short-term debt limit increase. So, given that we now have some reporting on that, can you just give us some guidance on what the White House thinks about that idea?

MS. PSAKI: Not yet. I have to -- I have to dig further into that reporting -- not to question it -- and talk to the team here about where things stand. And as far as when I came out here, they were still meeting, but we'll venture to get back to you as soon as we have something more concrete to convey.

Q Thanks, Jen. When the President was talking today about Republicans and the debt ceiling, he said, "If they don't want to do the job, just get out of the way. We'll take the heat. We'll do it." When he says, "We'll take the heat," what did he mean by that? What political risk is he acknowledging there for Democrats?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think one of the reasons we're at this point is because Republicans in Congress would rather bet on a misleading and inaccurate campaign season talking point. We're not betting that that's going to work, but his point -- the President's point is: Regardless, we're willing -- Democrats are willing to vote alone, without any Republican votes, to raise the debt ceiling. You just need to allow us to proceed with that vote.

Q And on the testing question that had come up, on rapid tests, this \$1 billion investment will quadruple the tests by December, in addition to everything else from the past couple of weeks. But why has it taken so long to get this rapid testing to this point where it will be -- by December, when Europe is flooded with rapid tests? Is it the authorization process and the timeline on that, or is it on the production side, or both?

MS. PSAKI: Well, one of the things we've been working on is to increase production, as you know, and also increase -- I would say that the demand for these tests here has increased a lot in the last several weeks, so we're also working to meet that and ensure that we are meeting the moment here in the United States.

In terms of the specific mechanics, I would encourage you to ask the COVID team that question.

Q Is that missing the moment though by -- you know, the demand has gone up in recent weeks because kids have gone back to school. Should this have been ready for back-to-school so that you could go to a CVS or any of the pharmacies or government sites and get these tests?

MS. PSAKI: I mean, again, we just announced, last month, an enormous investment: We're quadrupling availability by December, tripling by November. I think that is speaking to how seriously we take this and how we're working to ensure there are accessible, cost-effective tests out there and available to the public.

Go ahead.

Q What plans does the White House have to address the risk of oil spills from existing platforms, existing leases that are still operating?

MS. PSAKI: You mean like the one that happened in California?

O Correct.



MS. PSAKI: I would really point you to the Department of Energy for specifics there.

Q But, you know, the White House policies on stopping future leases possibly --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- things like that. But, you know, this is an ongoing threat, you know, that happens as, you know, offshore drilling continues. Is there an interest in investing in the infrastructure of the pipeline to enhance their safety, shutting them down? You know, what are your thoughts on that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, I think there -- as we've seen, and there's been an ongoing investigation about what exactly was the root cause here, so I don't want to, kind of, speak to that as that's been ongoing. But, beyond that, I would point you to the Department of Energy.

Q And two very quick things on the spill: Does the White House have a working theory on what caused the spill? And secondly, do you have an update on federal resources that have been dispatched to respond to the spill?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. I think I do have an update on federal resources. Let me see.

On the leak, just so I don't forget to answer this part, it's still under investigation. As you may know, the oil has stopped leaking; the pipeline has been removed from service.

In terms of our government efforts, 4,788 gallons of oil have been recovered and 11,360 feet of containment boom have been deployed. As of yesterday, six miles of shoreline have been cleaned, 328 response personnel with additional assets are on -- have -- on the way have been deployed.

As we said earlier this week, the Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration investigators are on the ground in the Unified/Incident Command Center. And on Monday, we also issued a corrective order -- action order to the operator mandating immediate corrective action, including performing a root cause failure analysis, integrity assessment, and remedial work plan.

Beyond that, Unified Command, of course, who are on the ground would have any additional steps we're taking and that are up to date.

Go ahead, April.

Q Jen, we see there are crisis moments -- everything is in crisis mode here -- but there are other issues that are percolating as well that some feel are at crisis levels -- Black agenda issues. The Vice President just had the heads of Divine Nine in a meeting -- frank, good, direct discussion, we were told -- about issues, particularly voting rights.

What is the President expecting when it comes to dealing with the Black agenda, particularly with those that have this small window, like voting rights and also the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act? What is he expected to do? What is he planning on committing to make sure these things happen?

MS. PSAKI: He wants to get both done. He wants to sign them into law. As you know, and you've told me in the past, the Black agenda is bigger than voting rights and bigger than the George Floyd Police and Justice Act.

Both are hugely important. The President has committed to getting them both done. He wants to sign them into law. We need Congress to move forward on both to get that done.

Q They are -- the Black agenda is huge. It's vast. But in this moment, there's a small window of time before elections



happen, and the concern is that this President is not doing enough; he has not armed the Vice President or helped her to be able to fight the fight for these things.

MS. PSAKI: I would say the Vice President is more than capable of fighting the fight and the lead on this particular issue and any issue.

Q So how is he --

MS. PSAKI: She's the Vice President of the United States. Pretty powerful.

Q Right, but if the President -- the argument is, if the President is not supporting her with the tools that she needs --

MS. PSAKI: Which tools is she --

Q -- i.e. the filibuster --

MS. PSAKI: -- is she -- is he not providing to her?

Q -- i.e. the filibuster for voting rights, and that is in her portfolio.

You have one of her friends -- and a Democrat, a strategist -- Bakari Sellers, who says her portfolio is trash because he's not supporting her in the way that she needs to be supported for this to pass. So, what do you say? Can he, will he, shall he push for the filibuster for voting rights, even as he's doing it -- thinking about it for the debt ceiling?

MS. PSAKI: Well, that's not exactly what I conveyed earlier, but I will say that the President has conveyed many times that getting voting rights done, signing it into law is top of his agenda.

The Vice President, one of the most powerful people in the world, is leading this effort. He is her -- she is his partner. She's the first in the room, the last in the room, and he's going to continue to work by her side to get it done.

But beyond that and the legislative process and how that will work, I don't have any update on that front.

Go ahead.

Q Sticking on voting rights, with S.4 being introduced in the Senate: The President has, over and over, talked about the pathways that voting rights legislation could take, same thing that he -- apparently, yesterday, you said he was alluding to when he said "real possibility" -- right? -- talking about what could possibly happen on the Hill.

He's never talked about voting rights with any kind of real possibility of a filibuster carveout, and there's a real frustration -- some people have got arrested just yesterday -- among activists on the voting rights issues.

So, other than, "We're frustrated; we stand with you," what do you have to say to activists who are saying this White House, the President isn't doing enough on voting rights specifically?

MS. PSAKI: I think that was just the question I just answered, no?

Q But we're trying to get an answer from you. I mean, it's a legitimate question. And we're trying to --

MS. PSAKI: I'm not saying -- I'm not saying it's not. I'm not saying it's not. I would say that the President is also frustrated that voting rights has not been done. He's also frustrated that Republicans are so afraid of making reforms that would make it easier for people to vote that they have blocked this effort.



And he is frustrated that, despite everything that's happened around the country, there isn't more of a movement to get this done -- I don't mean by activists; certainly, there's a movement there -- in Congress.

What he was certainly -- what he was speaking to yesterday was the fact that there is live conversations right now about a range of options on the debt limit. He was not speaking to anything beyond that. And that's what is happening on the -- on Capitol Hill in this particular moment. That's it.

And so, I would convey to activists that he is absolutely committed. He wants to get this done. He wants to sign it into law. The Vice President just had meetings today on it. She is in the lead on this effort, as one of the most powerful people in this country, maybe even in the world, leading this effort.

Q But, I mean, he's the President. So, when I talk to activists, you know, they say, "You're the President. If you're frustrated, do something." Right? So, I guess that is the -- that is what we're constantly hearing --

MS. PSAKI: Congress is a separate body.

Q Sure, but there's things that he could --

MS. PSAKI: It's a --

Q There are things that he --

MS. PSAKI: It's a -- it's a separate body. You need 50 votes to change the filibuster. You also need the majority of votes to pass legislation into law.

He has made clear that he wants voting rights to be passed into law. He will continue to advocate publicly, privately, and continue to be a partner to the Vice President. He absolutely feels this is essential and we need to get it done.

Go ahead, Patsy.

Q Thank you, Jen. I want to follow up on Taiwan. Administration officials -- including yourself, I believe, on Monday, and Secretary Blinken today -- essentially have issued warnings to China urging China to stop its military activities in Taiwan. However, China has ignored that. In fact, it has dialed up sending even more military jets. So, what does that say about the credibility of U.S. deterrence on this issue?

MS. PSAKI: I think the Secretary of State spoke to this earlier. I don't think I have anything more to add to what he said.

Q Can I -- can I just follow up?

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q How concerned are you that these recent activities might actually escalate and then draw the U.S. into some sort of great power war with China? And so, what are you doing to maintain tensions beyond, kind of, ad hoc meetings like the Zurich meeting that Jake Sullivan is --

MS. PSAKI: I wouldn't call a meeting with our National Security Advisor and his counterpart an "ad hoc" meeting.

Obviously, we raise our concerns through a range of channels. The State Department also put out a public statement -- a proactive statement on this, which is not something they do frequently, and the Secretary of State spoke to it today.

Q Do you have regular, you know, meetings to make sure that things like this don't escalate into something bigger?



MS. PSAKI: Of course, we do, as you well know.  
Go ahead.

Q I have another debt ceiling question --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- but zooming much farther out.

Earlier today, Jamie Dimon suggested getting rid of the debt ceiling altogether so that this scenario would not happen again.

Secretary Yellen seemed to lend her support to that idea of getting rid of the debt ceiling altogether in the past. Has she spoken with the President about that idea? And does he have a position on, sort of, the larger question of whether or not it should or should not be abolished?

MS. PSAKI: Right now, our focus is on raising the debt ceiling in the limited amount of time we have left to do that and do it without impacting the retirement savings accounts, the Social Security, and the economic security of millions of Americans. There's plenty of time to have a conversation after that.

Q And then a quick follow-up. You were asked about the -- the Uyghur anti-slave labor bill.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah. You asked me about it last week, too -- or the week before. I don't remember.

Q That's right.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q You've noted several times that the President has put out statements.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q There is sanctions as well. Does this administration -- does the President feel that there is anyone in his administration that is opposed to this kind of bipartisan legislation?

MS. PSAKI: I think it's all about taking a look at the legislation and figuring out if it's something we'd support moving forward -- every component of it -- and I'll check and see if we have a statement of administration policy on it.

Q But you don't know of anyone in the administration who currently opposes this?

MS. PSAKI: Again, we're not talking about whether or not we think the treatment of the Uyghurs is outrageous. It is. We've all said that. We're talking about a piece of legislation that has several components, and so I just want to make sure I go through the proper process with that.

Q On food shortages --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Hi. I was just wanting to talk to you about food shortages real quick. I'm not sure if you were looking here. But I just wanted to say that, on food shortages, we're seeing in schools the supply chain is kinked and affecting school lunches to the degree that kids are having bread -- or meat with no bread to make sandwiches, for example. And grocery stores, ahead of the holidays, are limiting the amount of food that you can actually purchase.

So, in regard to the debt ceiling talks, if the Senate votes "no" ahead of Thanksgiving, ahead of Christmas, and the coming holiday season -- if they say "no," what will that mean in the big picture for this nation and food shortages and other product delinquencies?

MS. PSAKI: Well, look, I would say -- I just want to dis- -- to make sure we're sending a clear message here about what the impacts of different things are. I know that's why you asked the question.

You'd have to get me more information about how broadly the school issue you're referencing is. I have not heard that from the Department of Education. It doesn't mean that it is not the case in certain schools, but if you have more information on that --

Q I do. (Inaudible) get it to you.

MS. PSAKI: -- come share that with me.

I would say that we know that unless Congress acts to raise the debt limit, what we're talking about here is people's retirement savings, their Social Security benefits, their economic security being at risk. That could mean all sorts of things, to your point about people's economic security, especially people who are at or below the poverty line or above the poverty line. And we're seeing the impact on markets across the country.

We don't want that to be the case, of course. That's why we're working to prevent this from happening.

I would say, in terms of the cost of meat and the cost of goods, we think -- there's a range of issues here. You referenced the supply chain. Another issue is the fact that there's not enough competition among big meat producers. It's something Secretary Vilsack spoke to when he was here just a few weeks ago and something our Department of Agriculture and the Department of Justice also are working to take steps to address.

Q Thank you for that, but just a real quick --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q -- one -- one more on the shots. We do have an approval for FlowFlex -- I believe is the name of the rapid results test -- and we were expecting today to have -- hear more information about that. But I've written about this, and the New York Times is saying that one of the problems even in going to places like CVS to get a test is, in some places, you don't even -- you can't even buy a rapid results test. And being that school is in session and that we are going to be having more events, for example --

MS. PSAKI: So, Mona, that's exactly why we just announced a \$2 billion investment that's going to quadruple the number of tests that are available at schools, community centers, and also to purchase at home.

Q But that's future focused. I'm talking about --

MS. PSAKI: It's starting to happen now.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. Just to follow up on John Kerry's comments.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q You mentioned that he was, of course, aware of the displeasure after the deal was announced. Was he not aware of something before the deal was announced? Was he not aware that the French weren't read in? Was he not aware of the



French deal on conventional submarines?

MS. PSAKI: Look, I think, right now, what our focus is on is moving forward. As you know and as President Macron spoke to, they're going to be meeting next month. We're working to finalize the details of that.

As you saw, our National Security Advisor and members of our national security team have met with their counterparts or high-level officials in recent weeks.

So, at this point, what our focus is on is how we work with the French moving forward.

Q Thank you, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Thanks, everyone.

4:56 P.M. EDT

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**From:** White House Press Office  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

October 6, 2021

**Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, October 6, 2021**

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

4:13 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Okay --

Q Or maybe not.

MS. PSAKI: Oh, what did you think was going to happen? (Laughter.) I'm sorry to disappoint. Okay, sorry to disappoint. You never know who's behind the door.

Okay. Okay, tomorrow -- just one item for all of you at the top: Tomorrow, the President will travel to Elk Grove Village, Illinois -- a trip he had planned to do last week -- to meet with public and private sector leaders who have implemented vaccination requirements. The President will visit with a company local to the Chicago area that is imposing its own vaccine requirement ahead of the OSHA rule.

The President's message will be clear: Vaccination requirements work. Vaccination requirements get more people vaccinated, helping to end the pandemic and strengthen the economy.

That's why he's leading and implementing on -- implementing vaccination requirements for 100 million workers, two thirds of all workers in the United States, and that's why we're seeing growing momentum for vaccination requirements across the sectors and across the country.



Alex, go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. I was hoping to get you to weigh in on three different debt limit scenarios since there's so many --

MS. PSAKI: Great.

Q -- developing. So, off the top, Senator Mitch McConnell has proposed for Republicans to either support a short-term hike in the debt limit through December or to support a expedited reconciliation process where Democrats would vote to hike it long term. What's the White House response to that? Is there support for either of those from the President?

And then, I was hoping to get clarification on something the President said yesterday. He seemed to suggest that he would support a carveout in the filibuster, if all else fails, to hike the debt limit. Is that where he stands? Would he be open to that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, right now -- and perhaps this the awkwardness of 4:15, while people are still meeting on the Hill -- right now, Democratic members are meeting on the Hill to discuss options on the path forward. I think Republican members may also be meeting or discussing among themselves.

My understanding, at the point I walked out here, is that there's been no formal offer made. A press release is not a formal offer.

And regardless, even the scant details that have been reported present more complicated, more difficult options than the one that is quite obvious, in the President's view, and is in front of the faces of every member up on the Hill. We could get this done today. We don't need to kick the can. We don't need to go through a cumbersome process that every day brings additional risks.

So, they're discussing up there. We'll, obviously, be in close touch with them, as we will continue to be, and we'll see where we -- where we are at the end of today.

Q And then one foreign policy question. Does the White House have a position yet on the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act which passed unanimously in the Senate?

And just broadly in that same context, how do you respond to the criticism from Senator Rubio and some Republicans that the administration is sort of letting Beijing have some advantage on human rights abuses to try to win over their cooperation on climate issues?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we would absolutely dispute that notion. Unlike the former President, this President has spoken out against human rights abuses, has raised his concerns about human rights abuses directly with President Xi, and we have done that at every level from our national security team.

In terms of the legislation, obviously we have spoken out about our concerns of human rights abuses in Xinjiang. And I would also note that the President also led an effort to have coordination on the international stage to address this issue, unlike his predecessors.

But I'd have to talk to our legislative team about specific views on the -- in the piece of legislation. I know I spoke to it briefly last week, but I'll -- I'll come back to you with that.

Go ahead, Steve.

Q Jake Sullivan reached a deal with the Chinese today for President Biden and President Xi to have a virtual summit before the end of the year. Do you see this happening around the G20 Summit? And what's the advantage of them seeing each other face-to-face?



MS. PSAKI: Well, as I understand it, what came out of the discussions was an agreement to continue dialogue at a very high level.

So, what we've said, of course -- and we continue to believe -- is that leader-level engagement is an important part of our effort to responsibly manage the competition with China, especially given the coalescing of power in Chinese leadership.

We're still working through what that would look like, when, and, of course, the final details. So we don't quite have them yet.

Q Secondly, the President indicated last night that he had spoken to President Xi about Taiwan. Was this in their more recent phone call? And what exactly did he tell him?

MS. PSAKI: So just -- you didn't ask this, but some others have asked us -- he did not have a new call that you're not aware of.

Q Okay. Okay.

MS. PSAKI: So, just for full clarity on that. He has spoken with him twice, as you know.

And certainly, reiterating our position as it relates to -- you know, which is guided by the Taiwan Relations Act and our view that we need to uphold that commitment -- our commitment under the act -- that is what the President reiterated to President Xi last time he talked, and it is something that is raised nearly every time he speaks at a leader level and at other levels as well.

Q And last thing -- and sorry to prolong -- the Energy Secretary, Granholm, in a conference today did not rule out a ban on crude oil exports to keep U.S. energy prices down. Is that something that's seriously being looked at?

MS. PSAKI: I would defer to the Energy Secretary, but I don't have anything new to report on that from internally in the White House.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Hey, Jen. So, I understand that you're obviously waiting for more details of this proposal from the Senate Minority Leader, but, you know, would the President accept a short-term deal to raise the debt ceiling while you try and find a broader path out of this crisis?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as I said a few minutes ago, we don't need to kick the can. We don't need to go through a cumbersome process that every day brings additional risks. And you heard many of the business leaders convey that, even as we look to risk tomorrow, the next day, as American -- the American people are looking at the retirement accounts, worrying about their Social Security savings, members of the military worrying about their payments. We don't need to incur that risk uncertainty.

And I think it's important to also remember we're at this point because Republicans in Congress treated the savings accounts and retirement savings of the American people, Social Security checks of retirees, and veterans benefits like a game of Monopoly, putting the stability and security of the American people at risk.

We're at this point because Republicans in Congress blocked efforts by Democrats to raise the debt limit and protect the full faith and credit of the United States, despite having voted for it three times during the Trump administration.

So, obviously, as has been reported, and the vote has been delayed, there's still an opportunity for Republicans to join us in



being adults in the room and ensure that people have confidence in the economic security and their own retirement savings.

Q The Minority Leader's proposal, though, seems to go at one of the key arguments that the President was making yesterday about why he's opposed to using budget reconciliation, which is that it would take time, it's cumbersome, it could lead to, you know, unexpected scenarios.

So, is the Minority Leader taking off the arguments against reconciliation by offering this one-month extension? And if not, then what are your remaining objections? Is it simply that you don't want Democrats to take a vote that will put a specific dollar amount on raising the debt ceiling?

MS. PSAKI: Democrats are very willing to be the adults in the room and take a vote to raise the debt limit. They're not even asking Republicans to do that anymore, since they've clearly shown their refusal to do exactly that.

The point I'm making is that there is a very clear -- the least risky option here that can ensure that there is confidence from the American people about their own checking accounts or about their own retirement savings, that's something Republicans still have the opportunity to participate in and be a part of.

Q And just on Afghanistan, if I could. The ISIS-K suicide bomber had -- you know, who was -- who carried out the attack that resulted in the deaths of 13 U.S. service members and dozens more Afghans had been released from the Parwan prison at Bagram Air Base just days before that attack took place, when the Taliban took control of that base.

Should the Biden administration have done more to secure Bagram or transfer ISIS-K prisoners outside of that? And do you now accept that this attack would not have happened had the United States retained control of Bagram?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I can't speak to the specific case. I'd let it -- leave it to the intelligence community to speak to that. So I'd point you to them.

I'd remind you that, as it relates to Bagram, there was a decision made to close Bagram because it wasn't strategically in the interest of the United States and our national security to keep it open with 5,000 troops there protecting Bagram at a distance that was far away from the capital and far away from where people from the embassy would be evacuated. So, that was the broad-based decision.

I understand you're asking me a different question than that, but I just wanted to reiterate.

Q But would he have made the same decision had he known that it would result --

MS. PSAKI: Again, I can't speak --

Q -- in the deaths of 13 service members?

MS. PSAKI: -- to this particular report. I'd point you to the intelligence community.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. You know, Congress has passed countless short-term government funding measures. They have funded the government for 48 hours before. Wouldn't a short-term debt ceiling hike be preferable to default?

MS. PSAKI: The preference would be just getting this done today so we can move on to more business for the American people. And that option is still on the table.

Q But you -- you know, the White House brought in all of these banking CEOs today to talk about how catastrophic it would be if the U.S. were to default. Why not send the markets that assurance, if you have the opportunity, that, at least



for the next eight weeks, the debt ceiling is going to be secure?

MS. PSAKI: Well, if we're looking at the best options, why kick the can down the road a couple of more weeks? Why create an additional layer of uncertainty? Why not just get it done now? That's what we're continuing to press for, and that's our first choice.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. A week ago, the National School Boards Association wrote to the President to say that their teachers feel like some parents protesting recently "could be the equivalent to a form of domestic terrorism." And then, the Attorney General put the FBI on the case.

So, does the administration agree that parents upset about their kids' curriculums could be considered domestic terrorists?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me unravel this a little bit, because the National School Board Association is not a part of the U.S. government. I'd point you to them.

What the Department of Justice said in a letter from the Attorney General is that, quote, "Threats against public servants are not only illegal, they run counter to our nation's core values." That is true. These were threats against public servants, threats against members of the school board. Regardless of the reasoning, threats and violence against public servants is illegal. That's what he was conveying from the Department of Justice.

Q But the Department of Justice does now have the FBI on this. Something that the School Boards Association is asking for is for the administration to consider using the PATRIOT Act to investigate some of these school board protestors. So, would the administration be okay with the FBI using the PATRIOT Act to surveil these parents, if that is what they decide?

MS. PSAKI: I don't speak on behalf of the National School Board Association; I speak on behalf of this government. The Attorney General has put out a letter. They will take actions they take, and I would point you to them for more information.

Q And something that you said on Monday after some protestors were hounding Kyrsten Sinema into a restroom -- you said, "The President stands for the fundamental right of people to protest, to object, [and] to criticize." So does the President support the fundamental rights of these parents to protest at school board meetings?

MS. PSAKI: Of course. But he doesn't stand for the fundamental right -- I assume you don't either -- for people to take violent action against members -- public servants. And that's what the threats are about. And so, no, he doesn't stand for that; no one should.

Q Just one more. John Kerry says that after France was cut out of the nuclear submarine deal, and they were upset enough about being left in the dark that they pulled their ambassador, he went to the President and, quote, "The President, literally, had not been aware of what had transpired." So what else are you guys not telling the President?

MS. PSAKI: Of course, he was aware of the French being upset -- let me finish --

Q No, Kerry --

MS. PSAKI: Let me --

Q -- said he "literally..." --

MS. PSAKI: Let me -- let me finish.



Q -- "had not been aware."

MS. PSAKI: I know John Kerry quite well. He, of course, was aware -- the President -- of the French being displeased about the deal with the Australians. John Kerry also speaks regularly to the French, as a part of his role as the Climate Envoy. He's someone who also served as Secretary of State. He's someone I -- alone -- traveled to France with him 25 times.

He, of course, conveyed to the President what his read is -- was of what they were specifically unhappy about and how to help address it.

Q A follow-up on France, Jen?

Q You said -- you've said this President's first love is foreign policy. So, why doesn't he know about these things in real time?

MS. PSAKI: Of course, he knew about the French being displeased about --

Q John Kerry said --

MS. PSAKI: Let me finish.

Q -- he "literally had not be aware."

MS. PSAKI: Peter, I would encourage you to ask John Kerry specifically about the context of his comments. The President and John -- and the former Secretary are also good friends. He relies on his counsel, and -- as he does with many members of his national security team. But that certainly is not what he was intending to convey.

Q Follow-up on France?

Q Jen, if I could --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q -- let me ask you quickly: Yesterday, the President said that he would be speaking with Mitch McConnell, as it related to the debt limit. Has that conversation happened? And what did he -- what did he tell him?

MS. PSAKI: They have not spoken. I think what the President has repeatedly conveyed is that he's certainly open to, as he -- as he has shown throughout the course of his presidency, having conversations with Democrats and Republicans when he feels it would be constructive.

Q He said they will be -- he said they will be speaking. So you were saying he was saying they will at some point, but there was no --

MS. PSAKI: At some -- at some point, if it's constructive in moving things forward.

Q Okay. Does the President trust Mitch McConnell to be an honest broker in this process?

MS. PSAKI: I don't think this is about trust. This is about -- he has known him a long time, but this is about whether you're going to be a leader and take steps that are not based on -- on political calculations and more based on what's in the interest of the United States and the full faith and of the United States.

Q The President discussed that there was a possibility of a filibuster -- a carveout -- as it related to the debt ceiling. If that

were the case, would the President be open to a filibuster carveout for voting rights? Where does that line get drawn for the President?

MS. PSAKI: The President was just simply conveying that there are a range of options that leaders on the Hill are discussing. I think you all have reported that, or your colleagues on the Hill have. Nothing more than that. We'll be in touch with them, and we'll see what the next best options look like.

But what is very clear is that there is an easy, risk-free option here that Republicans could allow Democrats to vote to raise the debt ceiling. We could be done with this today.

Q Can I just follow up very quickly? Why wouldn't the President, given that relationship he has with Mitch McConnell, just call Mitch McConnell and have this conversation with him? Why do this through public events?

MS. PSAKI: What's the conversation about?

Q I don't know. They have the relationship. He's the one who said he could bring the two sides together. So, wouldn't there be some value in having that conversation with one another?

MS. PSAKI: We know what the -- we know what the risk-free option is here. We know what the clear path forward is here. And I think the President has made no secret about his belief on that.

Go ahead.

Q Has the President had time to absorb the criticism of the Fed Chairman? And then, specifically, what does the White House believe should happen -- Fed policy about investments made by top officials there?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we obviously leave the independence of the Fed to an independent Fed -- Federal Reserve. And I'm not going to speak to that from here.

The President is confident in the Chairman of the Federal Reserve, and, beyond that, I don't have any personnel announcements for you.

Q Given that confidence, and also given what you just said, I mean, how close is he to making a decision on that?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything to preview for you at this point.

Q Yesterday, the President said he would sign a reconciliation bill that included the Hyde Amendment. You told us earlier this week that he remains opposed to that. So, is he backtracking on a campaign promise, something that's -- a lot of his supporters believe strongly in?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President's position hasn't changed. The context of his comments were that there is still a negotiation happening. There's a range of views. His view remains what is reflected in his budget, which is that getting rid of -- which he released in May -- which shows that getting rid of the Hyde Amendment was a priority. That remains his position. This is a package that's still being negotiated, and he said that much -- as much last night as well.

Go ahead.

Q Just confirming what you told Peter: The President, when he signaled yesterday that it's possible that the Senate could change its rules, that -- we should not read that as him expressing support for that notion?

MS. PSAKI: The President was certain simply reporting out what you already have reported out, which is that there are a range of options being discussed on Capitol Hill.



Q I want to ask you separately: The ambassador-designate to India was seen, reportedly, at an event in Los Angeles last week at an art gallery event that featured the artwork of the President's son, Hunter.

The ethicists who have pointed to this arrangement have expressed concern that the President's son selling art could potentially put the President in a situation where those who seek jobs either in this administration or favors from this administration could put this White House in an awkward position.

Should -- first of all, what is the White House's response to the fact that an ambassador nominee was at this event? And secondly, should we expect to see more people who seek jobs in this administration attending events like this in the future?

MS. PSAKI: Well, to be clear, we've spoken to the arrangement that is run by the gallerist and Hunter Biden's representatives that the White House provided suggestions for. I'd refer you to the gallerist for questions about the event and -- as well as the representatives of Mr. Garcetti, in terms of his attendance.

Q But, Jen, just to follow up: This is exactly what ethicists said they were worried about.

MS. PSAKI: What is, specifically?

Q The fact that the President's son --

MS. PSAKI: That he reportedly attended an event?

Q Well, that the President's son would be selling artwork and then meeting, potentially, with people who would seek to buy it. If you have attendees at that event who might be seeking either jobs in this administration or favors from this administration, isn't it an awkward situation to put the President in?

MS. PSAKI: Again, the gallerist has spoken to -- we've spoken to the specifics of what the gallerist has agreed to and what recommendations were made. I've done that several times. I don't have additional details for it from here. I'd point you to them.

Go ahead.

Q So -- but does this White House not have any concerns about the photos that have emerged showing Hunter Biden at that gallery alongside prospective buyers?

MS. PSAKI: I'd point you to the gallerist on specifics of the restrictions that were put in place.

Q Great. But what about the position of this White House? This is a President who ran on being transparent and you've got -- are there no concerns?

MS. PSAKI: And we were very transparent about what recommendations were made to the gallerist, and I would again point you to them or the many times I've spoken about that from here.

Q And just to clarify, has the President's position on doing away with the filibuster changed?

MS. PSAKI: Nothing has -- no, it has not changed.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. The administration reportedly will invest \$1 billion into making rapid-testing COVID kits available. But there are concerns that the tests will be too expensive. I think a lot of Americans are wondering: Is there a universe where these available tests will be free or affordable, or at least less expensive than \$25 a pop?



MS. PSAKI: Yeah, so, there's no question, to your point, that there has been a huge increase and an interest in testing, and getting tests, and making them, and people going out and being able to get them easily.

We announced a \$2 billion investment in September. So, right now, we're on track to ~~double~~ [triple] the number of rapid, at-home tests on the market by early November. And we're also now on track to triple the number of rapid, at-home tests on the market by -- and thanks to the approval of ACON -- sorry -- this Monday, which accelerates the pace. We're now on track to triple the number. Triple the number, not double. I apologize.

So, right now, with these investments, we'll be at 200 million tests per month starting in December, with tens of millions more coming on the market in the coming weeks.

And we're also working to ensure that these tests, in addition to making them more available -- so you could go to CVS or Walmart, or wherever, to get them -- we've been working hard to make sure they are accessible and available in pharmacies, in community centers, in schools. So, we're also working to do that simultaneously and separate from that.

We recognize there's a need. We recognized we needed to do more. And we are pleased by the fact that we are now on track to not only triple by November but also quadruple by December.

Q There was a school shooting in Texas today. The school safety group Everytown says that this year has been the most dangerous back-to-school period for students since they began tracking the data in 2013. That's some 30 instances of gunfire on schoolgrounds since August 1st, and today's shooting means that number is out of date.

Is the administration discussing ways that schools can keep children safe from school violence -- from gun violence?

MS. PSAKI: Absolutely. I mean, one, I would say the President has been an advocate for doing more for gun safety measures through the course of his career. Not only did he fight to get the Brady Bill passed, he fought for the Assault Weapons Ban. It remains a cause of his public life in office.

We, of course, are frustrated by the inability to get commonsense gun reforms through Congress. We should be able to get universal background checks approved. They're supported by the vast majority of the public, as are assault weapons bans.

But in addition to that, we also have taken a number of steps, both by working through the Department of Justice to increase our strike force teams that are going out to specific communities and cities to help address violence. A lot of that is driven by gun violence. That's something that we've been implementing from there. And, of course, our Department of Education is engaged in this effort as well.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Yesterday's hearing by a Facebook whistleblower underscored several major issues with the company, including, as many senators pointed out, issues with Section 230.

On the campaign trail, Biden said that Section 230 should, quote, "immediately be revoked" and that it should be revoked because, quote, Facebook "is not just an Internet company. It is propagating falsehoods they know to be false." Does the White House stand by that assessment for Section 230, given the revelations now?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President has long said, as you referenced, that tech platforms must be held accountable for the harms that they cause. And he has been a strong supporter of fundamental reforms to achieve that goal. This includes Section 230 reforms. It also includes privacy and antitrust reforms as well as more transparency. That should also be on the table.

And he looks forward to working with Congress on these bipartisan issues.



He's also called, I would note -- because there were a number -- a range of issues that were raised during the whistleblower's testimony yesterday -- on the FTC to adopt rules to address unfair data collection and surveillance practice -- practices in his Executive Order on Promoting Competition in the American Economy.

So, yes, more needs to be done, reform should happen. We also need to do more on privacy and antitrust. And certainly, watching testimony yesterday raised a lot of those issues again for people.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Does the President have any intention of speaking with Senators Manchin or Sinema at all this week?

MS. PSAKI: I can't predict for you day by day. I -- we have been in touch with Senator Manchin and Sinema at a senior-staff level, and certainly, I wouldn't rule it out.

Q I wanted to ask a follow-up question on an earlier question about the Hyde Amendment. The President has not been shy about his opposition, in recent years, to the Hyde Amendment. As you mentioned, you know, he made that clear in his budget blueprint; he made that clear as a candidate, when he was running for President.

So, can you explain why it is he's saying that he would sign this bill either way -- you know, with or without this language in it?

MS. PSAKI: He's reflecting that it's a negotiation. It's ongoing. We don't know what the final product will look like.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, can I ask a little bit about energy prices? There -- you know, gas prices in the U.S. are fairly high. We're seeing exceptionally high prices of certain energy products in --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- Europe right now. Is the U.S. domestically considering a release from the SPR to bring down oil prices at this time?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to make any prediction of that from here. I would note that we have seen, as you said, some ticks-up in parts of the country, also in re- -- as a follow-up to Hurricane Ida, because the hurricane hit a region that is a key center of the nation's oil production and refining infrastructure.

So that's something we've been working to focus on. And we took actions in the days and weeks following to help address that, including, at the time, authorizing several million barrels of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve exchanges.

We've also taken steps into -- including engaging with members of OPEC. We've also taken steps to reach out to the FTC to ensure they're using every available tool to monitor the U.S. gasoline market and address any illegal conduct. But I'm not going to make any other predictions at this point in time. We're continuously monitoring. We'll look to take additional steps as needed.

Q Are you or would you consider restricting LNG exports to, I guess, head off the type of shortages and price spikes that we're seeing in Europe -- in parts of Europe?

MS. PSAKI: I'm just not going to make any additional policy predictions at this point in time.

Q Can I, like, broadly say: Overall, these are fundamentally price crunches on, you know, nonrenewable sources of fuel. And we're heading into COP summit here.



MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Do you worry that this could impact the pledges that countries are willing to make? Will other governments get weak-kneed about going green at a time when they're facing brewing, sort of, political crises at home over, really, skyrocketing prices of non-renewable fuel sources?

MS. PSAKI: We certainly hope not. I mean, I think what COP26 is about is to continue the conversation on the international stage, at the leader level -- that has been going on below the leader level continuously, basically -- about our need to work together to address the climate crisis -- one of the greatest national security crises the President sees. A number of other world leaders agree on that front.

Certainly, we all want to keep gasoline prices low, but the threat of the crisis -- the climate crisis -- certainly can't wait any longer.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead. Oh, go ahead. Go ahead.

Q Yeah, thanks very much. On the -- you sound pretty lukewarm about the McConnell idea. If the Democratic Caucus were to get behind it, is it a given that the President will get on board? Or --

MS. PSAKI: We'll see where things are. This is an ever-moving news cycle.

Q Because, you know, as we speak, there seems to be some positive vibes there regarding this, whereas you're giving, you know, quite the opposite.

MS. PSAKI: I would say, actually, in my read of it, there's a diversity of views in the Democratic Caucus, as is to be expected. And they're meeting now. We'll be in close touch with them, so I just don't want to get ahead of that process.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q I know we're still a few weeks away from the G20, but I wanted to see if the President would be open to meeting with Putin again at the G20. And does he feel like his last meeting with Putin was effective? Does the President feel like he's seen any change in Russia or Putin's behavior since then?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I don't have any predictions for you on the bilateral meetings. That's something that we're still working through at this point in time, every day.

And in terms of the -- how constructive his meeting was with President Putin, as he said at the time, we didn't expect it to be a light switch where, all of a sudden, everything would be hunky-dory in the relationship. It's not. We have remaining concerns, but it was an opportunity to express them at a high level, see what work could be done over the course of the long term to address it.

So I don't know that we're going to do a month-by-month assessment. It's something that we have continued conversations from -- with members of the national security team about many of the issues were raised. Those are ongoing. We're continuing to strive to make progress.

Q Can I follow up on that?

O And do you have any update on Afghanistan and how many Americans are still there? And is the -- do you -- does the



President feel the Taliban is cooperating still with efforts to get those remaining Americans out?

MS. PSAKI: We remain -- through appropriate channels of course -- in touch with Taliban officials. In terms of the specific numbers, I'd point you to the State Department. And they have the most updated number on that, given they oversee that process.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, there's been some reporting that Senate Democrats are planning to accept the short-term debt limit increase. So, given that we now have some reporting on that, can you just give us some guidance on what the White House thinks about that idea?

MS. PSAKI: Not yet. I have to -- I have to dig further into that reporting -- not to question it -- and talk to the team here about where things stand. And as far as when I came out here, they were still meeting, but we'll venture to get back to you as soon as we have something more concrete to convey.

Q Thanks, Jen. When the President was talking today about Republicans and the debt ceiling, he said, "If they don't want to do the job, just get out of the way. We'll take the heat. We'll do it." When he says, "We'll take the heat," what did he mean by that? What political risk is he acknowledging there for Democrats?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think one of the reasons we're at this point is because Republicans in Congress would rather bet on a misleading and inaccurate campaign season talking point. We're not betting that that's going to work, but his point -- the President's point is: Regardless, we're willing -- Democrats are willing to vote alone, without any Republican votes, to raise the debt ceiling. You just need to allow us to proceed with that vote.

Q And on the testing question that had come up, on rapid tests, this \$1 billion investment will quadruple the tests by December, in addition to everything else from the past couple of weeks. But why has it taken so long to get this rapid testing to this point where it will be -- by December, when Europe is flooded with rapid tests? Is it the authorization process and the timeline on that, or is it on the production side, or both?

MS. PSAKI: Well, one of the things we've been working on is to increase production, as you know, and also increase -- I would say that the demand for these tests here has increased a lot in the last several weeks, so we're also working to meet that and ensure that we are meeting the moment here in the United States.

In terms of the specific mechanics, I would encourage you to ask the COVID team that question.

Q Is that missing the moment though by -- you know, the demand has gone up in recent weeks because kids have gone back to school. Should this have been ready for back-to-school so that you could go to a CVS or any of the pharmacies or government sites and get these tests?

MS. PSAKI: I mean, again, we just announced, last month, an enormous investment: We're quadrupling availability by December, tripling by November. I think that is speaking to how seriously we take this and how we're working to ensure there are accessible, cost-effective tests out there and available to the public.

Go ahead.

Q What plans does the White House have to address the risk of oil spills from existing platforms, existing leases that are still operating?

MS. PSAKI: You mean like the one that happened in California?

O Correct.



MS. PSAKI: I would really point you to the Department of Energy for specifics there.

Q But, you know, the White House policies on stopping future leases possibly --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- things like that. But, you know, this is an ongoing threat, you know, that happens as, you know, offshore drilling continues. Is there an interest in investing in the infrastructure of the pipeline to enhance their safety, shutting them down? You know, what are your thoughts on that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, I think there -- as we've seen, and there's been an ongoing investigation about what exactly was the root cause here, so I don't want to, kind of, speak to that as that's been ongoing. But, beyond that, I would point you to the Department of Energy.

Q And two very quick things on the spill: Does the White House have a working theory on what caused the spill? And secondly, do you have an update on federal resources that have been dispatched to respond to the spill?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. I think I do have an update on federal resources. Let me see.

On the leak, just so I don't forget to answer this part, it's still under investigation. As you may know, the oil has stopped leaking; the pipeline has been removed from service.

In terms of our government efforts, 4,788 gallons of oil have been recovered and 11,360 feet of containment boom have been deployed. As of yesterday, six miles of shoreline have been cleaned, 328 response personnel with additional assets are on -- have -- on the way have been deployed.

As we said earlier this week, the Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration investigators are on the ground in the Unified/Incident Command Center. And on Monday, we also issued a corrective order -- action order to the operator mandating immediate corrective action, including performing a root cause failure analysis, integrity assessment, and remedial work plan.

Beyond that, Unified Command, of course, who are on the ground would have any additional steps we're taking and that are up to date.

Go ahead, April.

Q Jen, we see there are crisis moments -- everything is in crisis mode here -- but there are other issues that are percolating as well that some feel are at crisis levels -- Black agenda issues. The Vice President just had the heads of Divine Nine in a meeting -- frank, good, direct discussion, we were told -- about issues, particularly voting rights.

What is the President expecting when it comes to dealing with the Black agenda, particularly with those that have this small window, like voting rights and also the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act? What is he expected to do? What is he planning on committing to make sure these things happen?

MS. PSAKI: He wants to get both done. He wants to sign them into law. As you know, and you've told me in the past, the Black agenda is bigger than voting rights and bigger than the George Floyd Police and Justice Act.

Both are hugely important. The President has committed to getting them both done. He wants to sign them into law. We need Congress to move forward on both to get that done.

Q They are -- the Black agenda is huge. It's vast. But in this moment, there's a small window of time before elections



happen, and the concern is is that this President is not doing enough; he has not armed the Vice President or helped her to be able to fight the fight for these things.

MS. PSAKI: I would say the Vice President is more than capable of fighting the fight and the lead on this particular issue and any issue.

Q So how is he --

MS. PSAKI: She's the Vice President of the United States. Pretty powerful.

Q Right, but if the President -- the argument is, if the President is not supporting her with the tools that she needs --

MS. PSAKI: Which tools is she --

Q -- i.e. the filibuster --

MS. PSAKI: -- is she -- is he not providing to her?

Q -- i.e. the filibuster for voting rights, and that is in her portfolio.

You have one of her friends -- and a Democrat, a strategist -- Bakari Sellers, who says her portfolio is trash because he's not supporting her in the way that she needs to be supported for this to pass. So, what do you say? Can he, will he, shall he push for the filibuster for voting rights, even as he's doing it -- thinking about it for the debt ceiling?

MS. PSAKI: Well, that's not exactly what I conveyed earlier, but I will say that the President has conveyed many times that getting voting rights done, signing it into law is top of his agenda.

The Vice President, one of the most powerful people in the world, is leading this effort. He is her -- she is his partner. She's the first in the room, the last in the room, and he's going to continue to work by her side to get it done.

But beyond that and the legislative process and how that will work, I don't have any update on that front.

Go ahead.

Q Sticking on voting rights, with S.4 being introduced in the Senate: The President has, over and over, talked about the pathways that voting rights legislation could take, same thing that he -- apparently, yesterday, you said he was alluding to when he said "real possibility" -- right? -- talking about what could possibly happen on the Hill.

He's never talked about voting rights with any kind of real possibility of a filibuster carveout, and there's a real frustration -- some people have got arrested just yesterday -- among activists on the voting rights issues.

So, other than, "We're frustrated; we stand with you," what do you have to say to activists who are saying this White House, the President isn't doing enough on voting rights specifically?

MS. PSAKI: I think that was just the question I just answered, no?

Q But we're trying to get an answer from you. I mean, it's a legitimate question. And we're trying to --

MS. PSAKI: I'm not saying -- I'm not saying it's not. I'm not saying it's not. I would say that the President is also frustrated that voting rights has not been done. He's also frustrated that Republicans are so afraid of making reforms that would make it easier for people to vote that they have blocked this effort.



And he is frustrated that, despite everything that's happened around the country, there isn't more of a movement to get this done -- I don't mean by activists; certainly, there's a movement there -- in Congress.

What he was certainly -- what he was speaking to yesterday was the fact that there is live conversations right now about a range of options on the debt limit. He was not speaking to anything beyond that. And that's what is happening on the -- on Capitol Hill in this particular moment. That's it.

And so, I would convey to activists that he is absolutely committed. He wants to get this done. He wants to sign it into law. The Vice President just had meetings today on it. She is in the lead on this effort, as one of the most powerful people in this country, maybe even in the world, leading this effort.

Q But, I mean, he's the President. So, when I talk to activists, you know, they say, "You're the President. If you're frustrated, do something." Right? So, I guess that is the -- that is what we're constantly hearing --

MS. PSAKI: Congress is a separate body.

Q Sure, but there's things that he could --

MS. PSAKI: It's a --

Q There are things that he --

MS. PSAKI: It's a -- it's a separate body. You need 50 votes to change the filibuster. You also need the majority of votes to pass legislation into law.

He has made clear that he wants voting rights to be passed into law. He will continue to advocate publicly, privately, and continue to be a partner to the Vice President. He absolutely feels this is essential and we need to get it done.

Go ahead, Patsy.

Q Thank you, Jen. I want to follow up on Taiwan. Administration officials -- including yourself, I believe, on Monday, and Secretary Blinken today -- essentially have issued warnings to China urging China to stop its military activities in Taiwan. However, China has ignored that. In fact, it has dialed up sending even more military jets. So, what does that say about the credibility of U.S. deterrence on this issue?

MS. PSAKI: I think the Secretary of State spoke to this earlier. I don't think I have anything more to add to what he said.

Q Can I -- can I just follow up?

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q How concerned are you that these recent activities might actually escalate and then draw the U.S. into some sort of great power war with China? And so, what are you doing to maintain tensions beyond, kind of, ad hoc meetings like the Zurich meeting that Jake Sullivan is --

MS. PSAKI: I wouldn't call a meeting with our National Security Advisor and his counterpart an "ad hoc" meeting.

Obviously, we raise our concerns through a range of channels. The State Department also put out a public statement -- a proactive statement on this, which is not something they do frequently, and the Secretary of State spoke to it today.

Q Do you have regular, you know, meetings to make sure that things like this don't escalate into something bigger?



MS. PSAKI: Of course, we do, as you well know.  
Go ahead.

Q I have another debt ceiling question --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- but zooming much farther out.

Earlier today, Jamie Dimon suggested getting rid of the debt ceiling altogether so that this scenario would not happen again.

Secretary Yellen seemed to lend her support to that idea of getting rid of the debt ceiling altogether in the past. Has she spoken with the President about that idea? And does he have a position on, sort of, the larger question of whether or not it should or should not be abolished?

MS. PSAKI: Right now, our focus is on raising the debt ceiling in the limited amount of time we have left to do that and do it without impacting the retirement savings accounts, the Social Security, and the economic security of millions of Americans. There's plenty of time to have a conversation after that.

Q And then a quick follow-up. You were asked about the -- the Uyghur anti-slave labor bill.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah. You asked me about it last week, too -- or the week before. I don't remember.

Q That's right.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q You've noted several times that the President has put out statements.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q There is sanctions as well. Does this administration -- does the President feel that there is anyone in his administration that is opposed to this kind of bipartisan legislation?

MS. PSAKI: I think it's all about taking a look at the legislation and figuring out if it's something we'd support moving forward -- every component of it -- and I'll check and see if we have a statement of administration policy on it.

Q But you don't know of anyone in the administration who currently opposes this?

MS. PSAKI: Again, we're not talking about whether or not we think the treatment of the Uyghurs is outrageous. It is. We've all said that. We're talking about a piece of legislation that has several components, and so I just want to make sure I go through the proper process with that.

Q On food shortages --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Hi. I was just wanting to talk to you about food shortages real quick. I'm not sure if you were looking here. But I just wanted to say that, on food shortages, we're seeing in schools the supply chain is kinked and affecting school lunches to the degree that kids are having bread -- or meat with no bread to make sandwiches, for example. And grocery stores, ahead of the holidays, are limiting the amount of food that you can actually purchase.

So, in regard to the debt ceiling talks, if the Senate votes "no" ahead of Thanksgiving, ahead of Christmas, and the coming holiday season -- if they say "no," what will that mean in the big picture for this nation and food shortages and other product delinquencies?

MS. PSAKI: Well, look, I would say -- I just want to dis- -- to make sure we're sending a clear message here about what the impacts of different things are. I know that's why you asked the question.

You'd have to get me more information about how broadly the school issue you're referencing is. I have not heard that from the Department of Education. It doesn't mean that it is not the case in certain schools, but if you have more information on that --

Q I do. (Inaudible) get it to you.

MS. PSAKI: -- come share that with me.

I would say that we know that unless Congress acts to raise the debt limit, what we're talking about here is people's retirement savings, their Social Security benefits, their economic security being at risk. That could mean all sorts of things, to your point about people's economic security, especially people who are at or below the poverty line or above the poverty line. And we're seeing the impact on markets across the country.

We don't want that to be the case, of course. That's why we're working to prevent this from happening.

I would say, in terms of the cost of meat and the cost of goods, we think -- there's a range of issues here. You referenced the supply chain. Another issue is the fact that there's not enough competition among big meat producers. It's something Secretary Vilsack spoke to when he was here just a few weeks ago and something our Department of Agriculture and the Department of Justice also are working to take steps to address.

Q Thank you for that, but just a real quick --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q -- one -- one more on the shots. We do have an approval for FlowFlex -- I believe is the name of the rapid results test -- and we were expecting today to have -- hear more information about that. But I've written about this, and the New York Times is saying that one of the problems even in going to places like CVS to get a test is, in some places, you don't even -- you can't even buy a rapid results test. And being that school is in session and that we are going to be having more events, for example --

MS. PSAKI: So, Mona, that's exactly why we just announced a \$2 billion investment that's going to quadruple the number of tests that are available at schools, community centers, and also to purchase at home.

Q But that's future focused. I'm talking about --

MS. PSAKI: It's starting to happen now.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. Just to follow up on John Kerry's comments.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q You mentioned that he was, of course, aware of the displeasure after the deal was announced. Was he not aware of something before the deal was announced? Was he not aware that the French weren't read in? Was he not aware of the



French deal on conventional submarines?

MS. PSAKI: Look, I think, right now, what our focus is on is moving forward. As you know and as President Macron spoke to, they're going to be meeting next month. We're working to finalize the details of that.

As you saw, our National Security Advisor and members of our national security team have met with their counterparts or high-level officials in recent weeks.

So, at this point, what our focus is on is how we work with the French moving forward.

Q Thank you, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Thanks, everyone.

4:56 P.M. EDT

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

October 6, 2021

**Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, October 6, 2021**

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

4:13 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Okay --

Q Or maybe not.

MS. PSAKI: Oh, what did you think was going to happen? (Laughter.) I'm sorry to disappoint. Okay, sorry to disappoint. You never know who's behind the door.

Okay. Okay, tomorrow -- just one item for all of you at the top: Tomorrow, the President will travel to Elk Grove Village, Illinois -- a trip he had planned to do last week -- to meet with public and private sector leaders who have implemented vaccination requirements. The President will visit with a company local to the Chicago area that is imposing its own vaccine requirement ahead of the OSHA rule.

The President's message will be clear: Vaccination requirements work. Vaccination requirements get more people vaccinated, helping to end the pandemic and strengthen the economy.

That's why he's leading and implementing on -- implementing vaccination requirements for 100 million workers, two thirds of all workers in the United States, and that's why we're seeing growing momentum for vaccination requirements across the sectors and across the country.



Alex, go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. I was hoping to get you to weigh in on three different debt limit scenarios since there's so many --

MS. PSAKI: Great.

Q -- developing. So, off the top, Senator Mitch McConnell has proposed for Republicans to either support a short-term hike in the debt limit through December or to support a expedited reconciliation process where Democrats would vote to hike it long term. What's the White House response to that? Is there support for either of those from the President?

And then, I was hoping to get clarification on something the President said yesterday. He seemed to suggest that he would support a carveout in the filibuster, if all else fails, to hike the debt limit. Is that where he stands? Would he be open to that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, right now -- and perhaps this the awkwardness of 4:15, while people are still meeting on the Hill -- right now, Democratic members are meeting on the Hill to discuss options on the path forward. I think Republican members may also be meeting or discussing among themselves.

My understanding, at the point I walked out here, is that there's been no formal offer made. A press release is not a formal offer.

And regardless, even the scant details that have been reported present more complicated, more difficult options than the one that is quite obvious, in the President's view, and is in front of the faces of every member up on the Hill. We could get this done today. We don't need to kick the can. We don't need to go through a cumbersome process that every day brings additional risks.

So, they're discussing up there. We'll, obviously, be in close touch with them, as we will continue to be, and we'll see where we -- where we are at the end of today.

Q And then one foreign policy question. Does the White House have a position yet on the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act which passed unanimously in the Senate?

And just broadly in that same context, how do you respond to the criticism from Senator Rubio and some Republicans that the administration is sort of letting Beijing have some advantage on human rights abuses to try to win over their cooperation on climate issues?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we would absolutely dispute that notion. Unlike the former President, this President has spoken out against human rights abuses, has raised his concerns about human rights abuses directly with President Xi, and we have done that at every level from our national security team.

In terms of the legislation, obviously we have spoken out about our concerns of human rights abuses in Xinjiang. And I would also note that the President also led an effort to have coordination on the international stage to address this issue, unlike his predecessors.

But I'd have to talk to our legislative team about specific views on the -- in the piece of legislation. I know I spoke to it briefly last week, but I'll -- I'll come back to you with that.

Go ahead, Steve.

Q Jake Sullivan reached a deal with the Chinese today for President Biden and President Xi to have a virtual summit before the end of the year. Do you see this happening around the G20 Summit? And what's the advantage of them seeing each other face-to-face?



MS. PSAKI: Well, as I understand it, what came out of the discussions was an agreement to continue dialogue at a very high level.

So, what we've said, of course -- and we continue to believe -- is that leader-level engagement is an important part of our effort to responsibly manage the competition with China, especially given the coalescing of power in Chinese leadership.

We're still working through what that would look like, when, and, of course, the final details. So we don't quite have them yet.

Q Secondly, the President indicated last night that he had spoken to President Xi about Taiwan. Was this in their more recent phone call? And what exactly did he tell him?

MS. PSAKI: So just -- you didn't ask this, but some others have asked us -- he did not have a new call that you're not aware of.

Q Okay. Okay.

MS. PSAKI: So, just for full clarity on that. He has spoken with him twice, as you know.

And certainly, reiterating our position as it relates to -- you know, which is guided by the Taiwan Relations Act and our view that we need to uphold that commitment -- our commitment under the act -- that is what the President reiterated to President Xi last time he talked, and it is something that is raised nearly every time he speaks at a leader level and at other levels as well.

Q And last thing -- and sorry to prolong -- the Energy Secretary, Granholm, in a conference today did not rule out a ban on crude oil exports to keep U.S. energy prices down. Is that something that's seriously being looked at?

MS. PSAKI: I would defer to the Energy Secretary, but I don't have anything new to report on that from internally in the White House.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Hey, Jen. So, I understand that you're obviously waiting for more details of this proposal from the Senate Minority Leader, but, you know, would the President accept a short-term deal to raise the debt ceiling while you try and find a broader path out of this crisis?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as I said a few minutes ago, we don't need to kick the can. We don't need to go through a cumbersome process that every day brings additional risks. And you heard many of the business leaders convey that, even as we look to risk tomorrow, the next day, as American -- the American people are looking at the retirement accounts, worrying about their Social Security savings, members of the military worrying about their payments. We don't need to incur that risk uncertainty.

And I think it's important to also remember we're at this point because Republicans in Congress treated the savings accounts and retirement savings of the American people, Social Security checks of retirees, and veterans benefits like a game of Monopoly, putting the stability and security of the American people at risk.

We're at this point because Republicans in Congress blocked efforts by Democrats to raise the debt limit and protect the full faith and credit of the United States, despite having voted for it three times during the Trump administration.

So, obviously, as has been reported, and the vote has been delayed, there's still an opportunity for Republicans to join us in



being adults in the room and ensure that people have confidence in the economic security and their own retirement savings.

Q The Minority Leader's proposal, though, seems to go at one of the key arguments that the President was making yesterday about why he's opposed to using budget reconciliation, which is that it would take time, it's cumbersome, it could lead to, you know, unexpected scenarios.

So, is the Minority Leader taking off the arguments against reconciliation by offering this one-month extension? And if not, then what are your remaining objections? Is it simply that you don't want Democrats to take a vote that will put a specific dollar amount on raising the debt ceiling?

MS. PSAKI: Democrats are very willing to be the adults in the room and take a vote to raise the debt limit. They're not even asking Republicans to do that anymore, since they've clearly shown their refusal to do exactly that.

The point I'm making is that there is a very clear -- the least risky option here that can ensure that there is confidence from the American people about their own checking accounts or about their own retirement savings, that's something Republicans still have the opportunity to participate in and be a part of.

Q And just on Afghanistan, if I could. The ISIS-K suicide bomber had -- you know, who was -- who carried out the attack that resulted in the deaths of 13 U.S. service members and dozens more Afghans had been released from the Parwan prison at Bagram Air Base just days before that attack took place, when the Taliban took control of that base.

Should the Biden administration have done more to secure Bagram or transfer ISIS-K prisoners outside of that? And do you now accept that this attack would not have happened had the United States retained control of Bagram?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I can't speak to the specific case. I'd let it -- leave it to the intelligence community to speak to that. So I'd point you to them.

I'd remind you that, as it relates to Bagram, there was a decision made to close Bagram because it wasn't strategically in the interest of the United States and our national security to keep it open with 5,000 troops there protecting Bagram at a distance that was far away from the capital and far away from where people from the embassy would be evacuated. So, that was the broad-based decision.

I understand you're asking me a different question than that, but I just wanted to reiterate.

Q But would he have made the same decision had he known that it would result --

MS. PSAKI: Again, I can't speak --

Q -- in the deaths of 13 service members?

MS. PSAKI: -- to this particular report. I'd point you to the intelligence community.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. You know, Congress has passed countless short-term government funding measures. They have funded the government for 48 hours before. Wouldn't a short-term debt ceiling hike be preferable to default?

MS. PSAKI: The preference would be just getting this done today so we can move on to more business for the American people. And that option is still on the table.

Q But you -- you know, the White House brought in all of these banking CEOs today to talk about how catastrophic it would be if the U.S. were to default. Why not send the markets that assurance, if you have the opportunity, that, at least



for the next eight weeks, the debt ceiling is going to be secure?

MS. PSAKI: Well, if we're looking at the best options, why kick the can down the road a couple of more weeks? Why create an additional layer of uncertainty? Why not just get it done now? That's what we're continuing to press for, and that's our first choice.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. A week ago, the National School Boards Association wrote to the President to say that their teachers feel like some parents protesting recently "could be the equivalent to a form of domestic terrorism." And then, the Attorney General put the FBI on the case.

So, does the administration agree that parents upset about their kids' curriculums could be considered domestic terrorists?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me unravel this a little bit, because the National School Board Association is not a part of the U.S. government. I'd point you to them.

What the Department of Justice said in a letter from the Attorney General is that, quote, "Threats against public servants are not only illegal, they run counter to our nation's core values." That is true. These were threats against public servants, threats against members of the school board. Regardless of the reasoning, threats and violence against public servants is illegal. That's what he was conveying from the Department of Justice.

Q But the Department of Justice does now have the FBI on this. Something that the School Boards Association is asking for is for the administration to consider using the PATRIOT Act to investigate some of these school board protestors. So, would the administration be okay with the FBI using the PATRIOT Act to surveil these parents, if that is what they decide?

MS. PSAKI: I don't speak on behalf of the National School Board Association; I speak on behalf of this government. The Attorney General has put out a letter. They will take actions they take, and I would point you to them for more information.

Q And something that you said on Monday after some protestors were hounding Kyrsten Sinema into a restroom -- you said, "The President stands for the fundamental right of people to protest, to object, [and] to criticize." So does the President support the fundamental rights of these parents to protest at school board meetings?

MS. PSAKI: Of course. But he doesn't stand for the fundamental right -- I assume you don't either -- for people to take violent action against members -- public servants. And that's what the threats are about. And so, no, he doesn't stand for that; no one should.

Q Just one more. John Kerry says that after France was cut out of the nuclear submarine deal, and they were upset enough about being left in the dark that they pulled their ambassador, he went to the President and, quote, "The President, literally, had not been aware of what had transpired." So what else are you guys not telling the President?

MS. PSAKI: Of course, he was aware of the French being upset -- let me finish --

Q No, Kerry --

MS. PSAKI: Let me --

Q -- said he "literally..." --

MS. PSAKI: Let me -- let me finish.



Q -- "had not been aware."

MS. PSAKI: I know John Kerry quite well. He, of course, was aware -- the President -- of the French being displeased about the deal with the Australians. John Kerry also speaks regularly to the French, as a part of his role as the Climate Envoy. He's someone who also served as Secretary of State. He's someone I -- alone -- traveled to France with him 25 times.

He, of course, conveyed to the President what his read is -- was of what they were specifically unhappy about and how to help address it.

Q A follow-up on France, Jen?

Q You said -- you've said this President's first love is foreign policy. So, why doesn't he know about these things in real time?

MS. PSAKI: Of course, he knew about the French being displeased about --

Q John Kerry said --

MS. PSAKI: Let me finish.

Q -- he "literally had not be aware."

MS. PSAKI: Peter, I would encourage you to ask John Kerry specifically about the context of his comments. The President and John -- and the former Secretary are also good friends. He relies on his counsel, and -- as he does with many members of his national security team. But that certainly is not what he was intending to convey.

Q Follow-up on France?

Q Jen, if I could --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q -- let me ask you quickly: Yesterday, the President said that he would be speaking with Mitch McConnell, as it related to the debt limit. Has that conversation happened? And what did he -- what did he tell him?

MS. PSAKI: They have not spoken. I think what the President has repeatedly conveyed is that he's certainly open to, as he -- as he has shown throughout the course of his presidency, having conversations with Democrats and Republicans when he feels it would be constructive.

Q He said they will be -- he said they will be speaking. So you were saying he was saying they will at some point, but there was no --

MS. PSAKI: At some -- at some point, if it's constructive in moving things forward.

Q Okay. Does the President trust Mitch McConnell to be an honest broker in this process?

MS. PSAKI: I don't think this is about trust. This is about -- he has known him a long time, but this is about whether you're going to be a leader and take steps that are not based on -- on political calculations and more based on what's in the interest of the United States and the full faith and of the United States.

Q The President discussed that there was a possibility of a filibuster -- a carveout -- as it related to the debt ceiling. If that

were the case, would the President be open to a filibuster carveout for voting rights? Where does that line get drawn for the President?

MS. PSAKI: The President was just simply conveying that there are a range of options that leaders on the Hill are discussing. I think you all have reported that, or your colleagues on the Hill have. Nothing more than that. We'll be in touch with them, and we'll see what the next best options look like.

But what is very clear is that there is an easy, risk-free option here that Republicans could allow Democrats to vote to raise the debt ceiling. We could be done with this today.

Q Can I just follow up very quickly? Why wouldn't the President, given that relationship he has with Mitch McConnell, just call Mitch McConnell and have this conversation with him? Why do this through public events?

MS. PSAKI: What's the conversation about?

Q I don't know. They have the relationship. He's the one who said he could bring the two sides together. So, wouldn't there be some value in having that conversation with one another?

MS. PSAKI: We know what the -- we know what the risk-free option is here. We know what the clear path forward is here. And I think the President has made no secret about his belief on that.

Go ahead.

Q Has the President had time to absorb the criticism of the Fed Chairman? And then, specifically, what does the White House believe should happen -- Fed policy about investments made by top officials there?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we obviously leave the independence of the Fed to an independent Fed -- Federal Reserve. And I'm not going to speak to that from here.

The President is confident in the Chairman of the Federal Reserve, and, beyond that, I don't have any personnel announcements for you.

Q Given that confidence, and also given what you just said, I mean, how close is he to making a decision on that?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything to preview for you at this point.

Q Yesterday, the President said he would sign a reconciliation bill that included the Hyde Amendment. You told us earlier this week that he remains opposed to that. So, is he backtracking on a campaign promise, something that's -- a lot of his supporters believe strongly in?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President's position hasn't changed. The context of his comments were that there is still a negotiation happening. There's a range of views. His view remains what is reflected in his budget, which is that getting rid of -- which he released in May -- which shows that getting rid of the Hyde Amendment was a priority. That remains his position. This is a package that's still being negotiated, and he said that much -- as much last night as well.

Go ahead.

Q Just confirming what you told Peter: The President, when he signaled yesterday that it's possible that the Senate could change its rules, that -- we should not read that as him expressing support for that notion?

MS. PSAKI: The President was certain simply reporting out what you already have reported out, which is that there are a range of options being discussed on Capitol Hill.



Q I want to ask you separately: The ambassador-designate to India was seen, reportedly, at an event in Los Angeles last week at an art gallery event that featured the artwork of the President's son, Hunter.

The ethicists who have pointed to this arrangement have expressed concern that the President's son selling art could potentially put the President in a situation where those who seek jobs either in this administration or favors from this administration could put this White House in an awkward position.

Should -- first of all, what is the White House's response to the fact that an ambassador nominee was at this event? And secondly, should we expect to see more people who seek jobs in this administration attending events like this in the future?

MS. PSAKI: Well, to be clear, we've spoken to the arrangement that is run by the gallerist and Hunter Biden's representatives that the White House provided suggestions for. I'd refer you to the gallerist for questions about the event and -- as well as the representatives of Mr. Garcetti, in terms of his attendance.

Q But, Jen, just to follow up: This is exactly what ethicists said they were worried about.

MS. PSAKI: What is, specifically?

Q The fact that the President's son --

MS. PSAKI: That he reportedly attended an event?

Q Well, that the President's son would be selling artwork and then meeting, potentially, with people who would seek to buy it. If you have attendees at that event who might be seeking either jobs in this administration or favors from this administration, isn't it an awkward situation to put the President in?

MS. PSAKI: Again, the gallerist has spoken to -- we've spoken to the specifics of what the gallerist has agreed to and what recommendations were made. I've done that several times. I don't have additional details for it from here. I'd point you to them.

Go ahead.

Q So -- but does this White House not have any concerns about the photos that have emerged showing Hunter Biden at that gallery alongside prospective buyers?

MS. PSAKI: I'd point you to the gallerist on specifics of the restrictions that were put in place.

Q Great. But what about the position of this White House? This is a President who ran on being transparent and you've got -- are there no concerns?

MS. PSAKI: And we were very transparent about what recommendations were made to the gallerist, and I would again point you to them or the many times I've spoken about that from here.

Q And just to clarify, has the President's position on doing away with the filibuster changed?

MS. PSAKI: Nothing has -- no, it has not changed.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. The administration reportedly will invest \$1 billion into making rapid-testing COVID kits available. But there are concerns that the tests will be too expensive. I think a lot of Americans are wondering: Is there a universe where these available tests will be free or affordable, or at least less expensive than \$25 a pop?



MS. PSAKI: Yeah, so, there's no question, to your point, that there has been a huge increase and an interest in testing, and getting tests, and making them, and people going out and being able to get them easily.

We announced a \$2 billion investment in September. So, right now, we're on track to ~~double~~ [triple] the number of rapid, at-home tests on the market by early November. And we're also now on track to triple the number of rapid, at-home tests on the market by -- and thanks to the approval of ACON -- sorry -- this Monday, which accelerates the pace. We're now on track to triple the number. Triple the number, not double. I apologize.

So, right now, with these investments, we'll be at 200 million tests per month starting in December, with tens of millions more coming on the market in the coming weeks.

And we're also working to ensure that these tests, in addition to making them more available -- so you could go to CVS or Walmart, or wherever, to get them -- we've been working hard to make sure they are accessible and available in pharmacies, in community centers, in schools. So, we're also working to do that simultaneously and separate from that.

We recognize there's a need. We recognized we needed to do more. And we are pleased by the fact that we are now on track to not only triple by November but also quadruple by December.

Q There was a school shooting in Texas today. The school safety group Everytown says that this year has been the most dangerous back-to-school period for students since they began tracking the data in 2013. That's some 30 instances of gunfire on schoolgrounds since August 1st, and today's shooting means that number is out of date.

Is the administration discussing ways that schools can keep children safe from school violence -- from gun violence?

MS. PSAKI: Absolutely. I mean, one, I would say the President has been an advocate for doing more for gun safety measures through the course of his career. Not only did he fight to get the Brady Bill passed, he fought for the Assault Weapons Ban. It remains a cause of his public life in office.

We, of course, are frustrated by the inability to get commonsense gun reforms through Congress. We should be able to get universal background checks approved. They're supported by the vast majority of the public, as are assault weapons bans.

But in addition to that, we also have taken a number of steps, both by working through the Department of Justice to increase our strike force teams that are going out to specific communities and cities to help address violence. A lot of that is driven by gun violence. That's something that we've been implementing from there. And, of course, our Department of Education is engaged in this effort as well.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Yesterday's hearing by a Facebook whistleblower underscored several major issues with the company, including, as many senators pointed out, issues with Section 230.

On the campaign trail, Biden said that Section 230 should, quote, "immediately be revoked" and that it should be revoked because, quote, Facebook "is not just an Internet company. It is propagating falsehoods they know to be false." Does the White House stand by that assessment for Section 230, given the revelations now?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President has long said, as you referenced, that tech platforms must be held accountable for the harms that they cause. And he has been a strong supporter of fundamental reforms to achieve that goal. This includes Section 230 reforms. It also includes privacy and antitrust reforms as well as more transparency. That should also be on the table.

And he looks forward to working with Congress on these bipartisan issues.



He's also called, I would note -- because there were a number -- a range of issues that were raised during the whistleblower's testimony yesterday -- on the FTC to adopt rules to address unfair data collection and surveillance practice -- practices in his Executive Order on Promoting Competition in the American Economy.

So, yes, more needs to be done, reform should happen. We also need to do more on privacy and antitrust. And certainly, watching testimony yesterday raised a lot of those issues again for people.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Does the President have any intention of speaking with Senators Manchin or Sinema at all this week?

MS. PSAKI: I can't predict for you day by day. I -- we have been in touch with Senator Manchin and Sinema at a senior-staff level, and certainly, I wouldn't rule it out.

Q I wanted to ask a follow-up question on an earlier question about the Hyde Amendment. The President has not been shy about his opposition, in recent years, to the Hyde Amendment. As you mentioned, you know, he made that clear in his budget blueprint; he made that clear as a candidate, when he was running for President.

So, can you explain why it is he's saying that he would sign this bill either way -- you know, with or without this language in it?

MS. PSAKI: He's reflecting that it's a negotiation. It's ongoing. We don't know what the final product will look like.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, can I ask a little bit about energy prices? There -- you know, gas prices in the U.S. are fairly high. We're seeing exceptionally high prices of certain energy products in --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- Europe right now. Is the U.S. domestically considering a release from the SPR to bring down oil prices at this time?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to make any prediction of that from here. I would note that we have seen, as you said, some ticks-up in parts of the country, also in re- -- as a follow-up to Hurricane Ida, because the hurricane hit a region that is a key center of the nation's oil production and refining infrastructure.

So that's something we've been working to focus on. And we took actions in the days and weeks following to help address that, including, at the time, authorizing several million barrels of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve exchanges.

We've also taken steps into -- including engaging with members of OPEC. We've also taken steps to reach out to the FTC to ensure they're using every available tool to monitor the U.S. gasoline market and address any illegal conduct. But I'm not going to make any other predictions at this point in time. We're continuously monitoring. We'll look to take additional steps as needed.

Q Are you or would you consider restricting LNG exports to, I guess, head off the type of shortages and price spikes that we're seeing in Europe -- in parts of Europe?

MS. PSAKI: I'm just not going to make any additional policy predictions at this point in time.

Q Can I, like, broadly say: Overall, these are fundamentally price crunches on, you know, nonrenewable sources of fuel. And we're heading into COP summit here.



MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Do you worry that this could impact the pledges that countries are willing to make? Will other governments get weak-kneed about going green at a time when they're facing brewing, sort of, political crises at home over, really, skyrocketing prices of non-renewable fuel sources?

MS. PSAKI: We certainly hope not. I mean, I think what COP26 is about is to continue the conversation on the international stage, at the leader level -- that has been going on below the leader level continuously, basically -- about our need to work together to address the climate crisis -- one of the greatest national security crises the President sees. A number of other world leaders agree on that front.

Certainly, we all want to keep gasoline prices low, but the threat of the crisis -- the climate crisis -- certainly can't wait any longer.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead. Oh, go ahead. Go ahead.

Q Yeah, thanks very much. On the -- you sound pretty lukewarm about the McConnell idea. If the Democratic Caucus were to get behind it, is it a given that the President will get on board? Or --

MS. PSAKI: We'll see where things are. This is an ever-moving news cycle.

Q Because, you know, as we speak, there seems to be some positive vibes there regarding this, whereas you're giving, you know, quite the opposite.

MS. PSAKI: I would say, actually, in my read of it, there's a diversity of views in the Democratic Caucus, as is to be expected. And they're meeting now. We'll be in close touch with them, so I just don't want to get ahead of that process.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q I know we're still a few weeks away from the G20, but I wanted to see if the President would be open to meeting with Putin again at the G20. And does he feel like his last meeting with Putin was effective? Does the President feel like he's seen any change in Russia or Putin's behavior since then?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I don't have any predictions for you on the bilateral meetings. That's something that we're still working through at this point in time, every day.

And in terms of the -- how constructive his meeting was with President Putin, as he said at the time, we didn't expect it to be a light switch where, all of a sudden, everything would be hunky-dory in the relationship. It's not. We have remaining concerns, but it was an opportunity to express them at a high level, see what work could be done over the course of the long term to address it.

So I don't know that we're going to do a month-by-month assessment. It's something that we have continued conversations from -- with members of the national security team about many of the issues were raised. Those are ongoing. We're continuing to strive to make progress.

Q Can I follow up on that?

O And do you have any update on Afghanistan and how many Americans are still there? And is the -- do you -- does the



President feel the Taliban is cooperating still with efforts to get those remaining Americans out?

MS. PSAKI: We remain -- through appropriate channels of course -- in touch with Taliban officials. In terms of the specific numbers, I'd point you to the State Department. And they have the most updated number on that, given they oversee that process.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, there's been some reporting that Senate Democrats are planning to accept the short-term debt limit increase. So, given that we now have some reporting on that, can you just give us some guidance on what the White House thinks about that idea?

MS. PSAKI: Not yet. I have to -- I have to dig further into that reporting -- not to question it -- and talk to the team here about where things stand. And as far as when I came out here, they were still meeting, but we'll venture to get back to you as soon as we have something more concrete to convey.

Q Thanks, Jen. When the President was talking today about Republicans and the debt ceiling, he said, "If they don't want to do the job, just get out of the way. We'll take the heat. We'll do it." When he says, "We'll take the heat," what did he mean by that? What political risk is he acknowledging there for Democrats?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think one of the reasons we're at this point is because Republicans in Congress would rather bet on a misleading and inaccurate campaign season talking point. We're not betting that that's going to work, but his point -- the President's point is: Regardless, we're willing -- Democrats are willing to vote alone, without any Republican votes, to raise the debt ceiling. You just need to allow us to proceed with that vote.

Q And on the testing question that had come up, on rapid tests, this \$1 billion investment will quadruple the tests by December, in addition to everything else from the past couple of weeks. But why has it taken so long to get this rapid testing to this point where it will be -- by December, when Europe is flooded with rapid tests? Is it the authorization process and the timeline on that, or is it on the production side, or both?

MS. PSAKI: Well, one of the things we've been working on is to increase production, as you know, and also increase -- I would say that the demand for these tests here has increased a lot in the last several weeks, so we're also working to meet that and ensure that we are meeting the moment here in the United States.

In terms of the specific mechanics, I would encourage you to ask the COVID team that question.

Q Is that missing the moment though by -- you know, the demand has gone up in recent weeks because kids have gone back to school. Should this have been ready for back-to-school so that you could go to a CVS or any of the pharmacies or government sites and get these tests?

MS. PSAKI: I mean, again, we just announced, last month, an enormous investment: We're quadrupling availability by December, tripling by November. I think that is speaking to how seriously we take this and how we're working to ensure there are accessible, cost-effective tests out there and available to the public.

Go ahead.

Q What plans does the White House have to address the risk of oil spills from existing platforms, existing leases that are still operating?

MS. PSAKI: You mean like the one that happened in California?

O Correct.



MS. PSAKI: I would really point you to the Department of Energy for specifics there.

Q But, you know, the White House policies on stopping future leases possibly --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- things like that. But, you know, this is an ongoing threat, you know, that happens as, you know, offshore drilling continues. Is there an interest in investing in the infrastructure of the pipeline to enhance their safety, shutting them down? You know, what are your thoughts on that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, I think there -- as we've seen, and there's been an ongoing investigation about what exactly was the root cause here, so I don't want to, kind of, speak to that as that's been ongoing. But, beyond that, I would point you to the Department of Energy.

Q And two very quick things on the spill: Does the White House have a working theory on what caused the spill? And secondly, do you have an update on federal resources that have been dispatched to respond to the spill?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. I think I do have an update on federal resources. Let me see.

On the leak, just so I don't forget to answer this part, it's still under investigation. As you may know, the oil has stopped leaking; the pipeline has been removed from service.

In terms of our government efforts, 4,788 gallons of oil have been recovered and 11,360 feet of containment boom have been deployed. As of yesterday, six miles of shoreline have been cleaned, 328 response personnel with additional assets are on -- have -- on the way have been deployed.

As we said earlier this week, the Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration investigators are on the ground in the Unified/Incident Command Center. And on Monday, we also issued a corrective order -- action order to the operator mandating immediate corrective action, including performing a root cause failure analysis, integrity assessment, and remedial work plan.

Beyond that, Unified Command, of course, who are on the ground would have any additional steps we're taking and that are up to date.

Go ahead, April.

Q Jen, we see there are crisis moments -- everything is in crisis mode here -- but there are other issues that are percolating as well that some feel are at crisis levels -- Black agenda issues. The Vice President just had the heads of Divine Nine in a meeting -- frank, good, direct discussion, we were told -- about issues, particularly voting rights.

What is the President expecting when it comes to dealing with the Black agenda, particularly with those that have this small window, like voting rights and also the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act? What is he expected to do? What is he planning on committing to make sure these things happen?

MS. PSAKI: He wants to get both done. He wants to sign them into law. As you know, and you've told me in the past, the Black agenda is bigger than voting rights and bigger than the George Floyd Police and Justice Act.

Both are hugely important. The President has committed to getting them both done. He wants to sign them into law. We need Congress to move forward on both to get that done.

Q They are -- the Black agenda is huge. It's vast. But in this moment, there's a small window of time before elections



happen, and the concern is is that this President is not doing enough; he has not armed the Vice President or helped her to be able to fight the fight for these things.

MS. PSAKI: I would say the Vice President is more than capable of fighting the fight and the lead on this particular issue and any issue.

Q So how is he --

MS. PSAKI: She's the Vice President of the United States. Pretty powerful.

Q Right, but if the President -- the argument is, if the President is not supporting her with the tools that she needs --

MS. PSAKI: Which tools is she --

Q -- i.e. the filibuster --

MS. PSAKI: -- is she -- is he not providing to her?

Q -- i.e. the filibuster for voting rights, and that is in her portfolio.

You have one of her friends -- and a Democrat, a strategist -- Bakari Sellers, who says her portfolio is trash because he's not supporting her in the way that she needs to be supported for this to pass. So, what do you say? Can he, will he, shall he push for the filibuster for voting rights, even as he's doing it -- thinking about it for the debt ceiling?

MS. PSAKI: Well, that's not exactly what I conveyed earlier, but I will say that the President has conveyed many times that getting voting rights done, signing it into law is top of his agenda.

The Vice President, one of the most powerful people in the world, is leading this effort. He is her -- she is his partner. She's the first in the room, the last in the room, and he's going to continue to work by her side to get it done.

But beyond that and the legislative process and how that will work, I don't have any update on that front.

Go ahead.

Q Sticking on voting rights, with S.4 being introduced in the Senate: The President has, over and over, talked about the pathways that voting rights legislation could take, same thing that he -- apparently, yesterday, you said he was alluding to when he said "real possibility" -- right? -- talking about what could possibly happen on the Hill.

He's never talked about voting rights with any kind of real possibility of a filibuster carveout, and there's a real frustration -- some people have got arrested just yesterday -- among activists on the voting rights issues.

So, other than, "We're frustrated; we stand with you," what do you have to say to activists who are saying this White House, the President isn't doing enough on voting rights specifically?

MS. PSAKI: I think that was just the question I just answered, no?

Q But we're trying to get an answer from you. I mean, it's a legitimate question. And we're trying to --

MS. PSAKI: I'm not saying -- I'm not saying it's not. I'm not saying it's not. I would say that the President is also frustrated that voting rights has not been done. He's also frustrated that Republicans are so afraid of making reforms that would make it easier for people to vote that they have blocked this effort.



And he is frustrated that, despite everything that's happened around the country, there isn't more of a movement to get this done -- I don't mean by activists; certainly, there's a movement there -- in Congress.

What he was certainly -- what he was speaking to yesterday was the fact that there is live conversations right now about a range of options on the debt limit. He was not speaking to anything beyond that. And that's what is happening on the -- on Capitol Hill in this particular moment. That's it.

And so, I would convey to activists that he is absolutely committed. He wants to get this done. He wants to sign it into law. The Vice President just had meetings today on it. She is in the lead on this effort, as one of the most powerful people in this country, maybe even in the world, leading this effort.

Q But, I mean, he's the President. So, when I talk to activists, you know, they say, "You're the President. If you're frustrated, do something." Right? So, I guess that is the -- that is what we're constantly hearing --

MS. PSAKI: Congress is a separate body.

Q Sure, but there's things that he could --

MS. PSAKI: It's a --

Q There are things that he --

MS. PSAKI: It's a -- it's a separate body. You need 50 votes to change the filibuster. You also need the majority of votes to pass legislation into law.

He has made clear that he wants voting rights to be passed into law. He will continue to advocate publicly, privately, and continue to be a partner to the Vice President. He absolutely feels this is essential and we need to get it done.

Go ahead, Patsy.

Q Thank you, Jen. I want to follow up on Taiwan. Administration officials -- including yourself, I believe, on Monday, and Secretary Blinken today -- essentially have issued warnings to China urging China to stop its military activities in Taiwan. However, China has ignored that. In fact, it has dialed up sending even more military jets. So, what does that say about the credibility of U.S. deterrence on this issue?

MS. PSAKI: I think the Secretary of State spoke to this earlier. I don't think I have anything more to add to what he said.

Q Can I -- can I just follow up?

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q How concerned are you that these recent activities might actually escalate and then draw the U.S. into some sort of great power war with China? And so, what are you doing to maintain tensions beyond, kind of, ad hoc meetings like the Zurich meeting that Jake Sullivan is --

MS. PSAKI: I wouldn't call a meeting with our National Security Advisor and his counterpart an "ad hoc" meeting.

Obviously, we raise our concerns through a range of channels. The State Department also put out a public statement -- a proactive statement on this, which is not something they do frequently, and the Secretary of State spoke to it today.

Q Do you have regular, you know, meetings to make sure that things like this don't escalate into something bigger?



MS. PSAKI: Of course, we do, as you well know.  
Go ahead.

Q I have another debt ceiling question --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- but zooming much farther out.

Earlier today, Jamie Dimon suggested getting rid of the debt ceiling altogether so that this scenario would not happen again.

Secretary Yellen seemed to lend her support to that idea of getting rid of the debt ceiling altogether in the past. Has she spoken with the President about that idea? And does he have a position on, sort of, the larger question of whether or not it should or should not be abolished?

MS. PSAKI: Right now, our focus is on raising the debt ceiling in the limited amount of time we have left to do that and do it without impacting the retirement savings accounts, the Social Security, and the economic security of millions of Americans. There's plenty of time to have a conversation after that.

Q And then a quick follow-up. You were asked about the -- the Uyghur anti-slave labor bill.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah. You asked me about it last week, too -- or the week before. I don't remember.

Q That's right.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q You've noted several times that the President has put out statements.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q There is sanctions as well. Does this administration -- does the President feel that there is anyone in his administration that is opposed to this kind of bipartisan legislation?

MS. PSAKI: I think it's all about taking a look at the legislation and figuring out if it's something we'd support moving forward -- every component of it -- and I'll check and see if we have a statement of administration policy on it.

Q But you don't know of anyone in the administration who currently opposes this?

MS. PSAKI: Again, we're not talking about whether or not we think the treatment of the Uyghurs is outrageous. It is. We've all said that. We're talking about a piece of legislation that has several components, and so I just want to make sure I go through the proper process with that.

Q On food shortages --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Hi. I was just wanting to talk to you about food shortages real quick. I'm not sure if you were looking here. But I just wanted to say that, on food shortages, we're seeing in schools the supply chain is kinked and affecting school lunches to the degree that kids are having bread -- or meat with no bread to make sandwiches, for example. And grocery stores, ahead of the holidays, are limiting the amount of food that you can actually purchase.

So, in regard to the debt ceiling talks, if the Senate votes "no" ahead of Thanksgiving, ahead of Christmas, and the coming holiday season -- if they say "no," what will that mean in the big picture for this nation and food shortages and other product delinquencies?

MS. PSAKI: Well, look, I would say -- I just want to dis- -- to make sure we're sending a clear message here about what the impacts of different things are. I know that's why you asked the question.

You'd have to get me more information about how broadly the school issue you're referencing is. I have not heard that from the Department of Education. It doesn't mean that it is not the case in certain schools, but if you have more information on that --

Q I do. (Inaudible) get it to you.

MS. PSAKI: -- come share that with me.

I would say that we know that unless Congress acts to raise the debt limit, what we're talking about here is people's retirement savings, their Social Security benefits, their economic security being at risk. That could mean all sorts of things, to your point about people's economic security, especially people who are at or below the poverty line or above the poverty line. And we're seeing the impact on markets across the country.

We don't want that to be the case, of course. That's why we're working to prevent this from happening.

I would say, in terms of the cost of meat and the cost of goods, we think -- there's a range of issues here. You referenced the supply chain. Another issue is the fact that there's not enough competition among big meat producers. It's something Secretary Vilsack spoke to when he was here just a few weeks ago and something our Department of Agriculture and the Department of Justice also are working to take steps to address.

Q Thank you for that, but just a real quick --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q -- one -- one more on the shots. We do have an approval for FlowFlex -- I believe is the name of the rapid results test -- and we were expecting today to have -- hear more information about that. But I've written about this, and the New York Times is saying that one of the problems even in going to places like CVS to get a test is, in some places, you don't even -- you can't even buy a rapid results test. And being that school is in session and that we are going to be having more events, for example --

MS. PSAKI: So, Mona, that's exactly why we just announced a \$2 billion investment that's going to quadruple the number of tests that are available at schools, community centers, and also to purchase at home.

Q But that's future focused. I'm talking about --

MS. PSAKI: It's starting to happen now.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. Just to follow up on John Kerry's comments.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q You mentioned that he was, of course, aware of the displeasure after the deal was announced. Was he not aware of something before the deal was announced? Was he not aware that the French weren't read in? Was he not aware of the



French deal on conventional submarines?

MS. PSAKI: Look, I think, right now, what our focus is on is moving forward. As you know and as President Macron spoke to, they're going to be meeting next month. We're working to finalize the details of that.

As you saw, our National Security Advisor and members of our national security team have met with their counterparts or high-level officials in recent weeks.

So, at this point, what our focus is on is how we work with the French moving forward.

Q Thank you, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Thanks, everyone.

4:56 P.M. EDT

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