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PRESS BRIEFING
BY PRESS SECRETARY SARAH SANDERS
AND HOMELAND SECURITY ADVISOR TOM BOSSERT

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

1:48 P.M. EDT

MS. SANDERS: Good afternoon. The President is constantly monitoring Hurricane Irma, and the federal government is working closely with our state and local partners to ensure the safety of the coastal communities.

In his Weekly Address to the nation this morning, the President noted that this is a storm of historic destructive potential, and he's asking that everyone in the storm's path remain vigilant and heed all recommendations from government officials and law enforcement.

Our message to the American people is this: With gratitude for our first responders, and prayers for those in the storm's path, we are behind you 100 percent.

With that, I'd like to bring up the President's Homeland Security Advisor, Tom Bossert, to discuss specifics on the federal government's ongoing preparedness and response efforts.

And after, I'll be up to take further questions. Thanks.

MR. BOSSERT: Thanks, Sarah. Thanks to each of you for being here. I can't add too much more to that, so let me see if I can just jump in a little bit to my thinking here. As you've heard me say before, I like to try to categorize my thoughts into informing, influencing, and inspiring, if I can.

In terms of informing, please recall the process here is that the federal government, under President Trump's leadership and the leadership of his Cabinet, is fully engaged, but they're fully engaged in support of the governors. Those governors at this point are engaged in various different forms and phases of what we consider incident management.

So as I walk through Irma, let me stop -- I'd be remiss if I didn't -- and talk about Texas and Harvey.

So, Governor Abbott and I have been in close contact and haven't stopped that contact, because his

people in Texas and the people of Louisiana, under Governor Edwards, are involved in the early stages of what will be a long recovery effort.

The people in the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and the other Caribbean islands affected by Irma already are in the middle of acute lifesaving and life-sustaining response operations.

And what we're seeing in Florida and South Carolina and Georgia are the final stages of preparation for the beginning of response operations.

So we're seeing all three play out for us at the same time. It requires us to juggle some of our thinking, but it doesn't require us to juggle our resources.

I'd also suggest now, in terms of influencing, that people stop watching so carefully this track, and start thinking a little bit more seriously about getting themselves into a safe place and out of danger. Now, I don't want them to take that as a call for shadow evacuations. Please listen to your local authorities on evacuation orders. They're not only looking out for your best interest, but they're carefully coordinating. This is a peninsula, and so people need to evacuate from south to north, and that is a staggered and carefully thought-through process.

But what I am suggesting is, at this point this is a large storm. And whether it wobbles left or wobbles right, you need to at this point start thinking through your own personal accountability. So please make sure -- it's kind of an oxygen mask theory -- take care of yourself first so you can take care of others, take care of your loved ones. And if you're able, please take care of strangers and others in need. I think that's something that we've seen in Texas and I have every reason to believe that the people of Florida and South Carolina will show that same American spirit and value.

Lastly, if I can, there's been a lot of kind of coverage of Florida but not necessarily media coverage of the U.S. Virgin Islands. And if I can, I'll give you a brief update on where we stand there.

We are, as I just talked to Department of State and Department of Defense officials, engaging in this lifesaving, life-sustaining operation in the following way: Governor Mapp is experiencing loss of power; loss of water, as a result; loss of communications; and some other sheltering needs. And so what we're doing is sending in air operations and surface operations to evacuate citizens. We're also doing that in St. Martin and St. Maarten, the Dutch-French island that's been reported there are some American citizens there.

We are currently in the final stages of operations planning to evacuate those citizens. There are numbers ranging from 350 to 6,000. That was our planning assumption parameter. Those American citizens will be removed via surface and air means. We've had to do some kind of planning adjustment for surf conditions for wind and for Hurricane Jose as we look forward to that hopefully missing the United States. It's unfortunately still causing some havoc in the islands, in our response operations, our evacuation operations.

So that's where we stand on that. They'll begin executing those plans, if not already, at some point soon

today. And we'll see some of those American citizens and other evacuated as necessary, to include anyone with critical or acute medical needs.

So that's where I would stop on the update, and I'll take your questions.

Q Tom, one of the big problems with the Florida evacuation is that so many gas stations are running out of gasoline. What, if anything, can the federal government do in the next 24 hours to assist in getting more fuel to the people in Florida?

MR. BOSSERT: So there's a number of things that we've done. I should stop and mention by name, Governor Scott -- tremendous leadership, tremendous confidence. He and the President have spoken, and I have spoken. I've got every confidence in the governor and his emergency manager. They're demonstrating the same leadership resolve and skill and quality of effort that we saw in Texas a week ago.

What we're seeing in Florida, though, are fuel shortages. We saw those same fuel shortages in Texas because people appropriately gas up their generators, their cars, their boats and so forth.

So what we'll see here now is a need to pull in additional fuel, and that need will run up against the onset of tropical storm force winds.

So what are we doing? We're bringing in as much supply of refined fuel as possible, and we've waived a particular statute that allows for foreign flag vessels to help in that effort. So it's little technical, but it's called the Jones Act. Some of you have reported on it. What happens is the Secretary of Homeland Security can waive that act. Until that's waived, only U.S. flag vessels can move fuel from point to point, domestically.

What we've done now is we've freed up that prohibition, so now foreign flag vessels -- so as many ships, tanker ships as possible are now being brought to bear on the effort to bring as much fuel as possible and to help Floridians, regardless of their flag vessel status. And that's the best we can do. In addition, they're planning all the intermodal points to get trucks from those tanker ship port locations into the gas stations. So that's what we're doing.

Q The window is rapidly closing. How much more can you get in there?

MR. BOSSERT: The conditions will dictate that. I don't think there will be too much more that we can get in. At some point here they'll have to stop those operations. And again, that's one of my messages here. It's not a tough love message, it's just a message of clarity and honesty.

At some point, people are going to be on their own, so to speak, for a period of time during which the flooding, the raining, and the wind bear down on them, and they need to be prepared if they are in that path and haven't taken some action to get themselves in a less dangerous position, to be ready for at least a 72-hour period. That would be my advice for them to have enough food, water, and shelter before the government can get back in.

We have pre-deployed and pre-staged, but we can't actually get to that final point of care until conditions permit.

Q One housekeeping question. For FEMA to have resources and no broken chain there, the President needs to sign legislation the House just passed this morning. Any indication of when that's going to happen?

MR. BOSSERT: So I'd like to start by thanking Congress. They came in in a fast way to give us the emergency supplemental funding. I think that's what you're alluding to.

First, FEMA still has the money that they need, so there's no break in operations -- I want to make sure to clarify on your question there -- but there will be a break in their operations if they run out of money. That's why that supplemental legislation was so necessary. Thank you to the House and Senate leadership for bringing everyone back in and passing that so quickly and responsibly.

We anticipate, honestly, this is a real-time event. The bill might be on its way up here right now, and requires signature by the Speaker, signature by the Senate leadership or the Vice President, and then a signature by the President of the United States. And so I think that will happen today, but as soon as we get it, the President will take that seriously.

Q Talk to us about the complication of a storm track -- and we don't know the wobbling nature of it, but it looks like it's going to cover the entire peninsula, running south to north. How does that complicate emergency management response as it moves up the state? And to Floridians who are veterans of hurricanes, there is sometimes a tendency to say, I can ride this one out, I've seen bad storms before. Could you address both of those?

MR. BOSSERT: Yes, of course. Some people call it "hurricane amnesia." Let's hope there's no hurricane amnesia, but I would start by saying there are some people -- probably some 20 percent of the population -- that might not remember or might not have gone through the last big hurricane in Florida. It was probably 2004 or 2005, right? There were four major hurricanes in 2004; Wilma in 2005, which was forgotten because of Katrina.

If you haven't experienced it, take it seriously and ask those who have. If you have experienced it, please recall that what I just described took place. You were without power, you were without comms, and you were without water, in some cases, or sewer treatment and so forth for a period of time afterwards. So plan for that.

In terms of the track, there's three considerations. The upper-right, northeast quadrant of the storm packs the most punch. The second consideration is, if the eyewall gets over land, it tends to lose steam a little faster; so if it stays over water, it tends to keep its strength a little longer. And so as this thing moves left and right, it can affect our operations because it can affect a different part of the state in a different way -- wind or flood.

What we'll see here over the next 24 hours is going to tell us which one we're going to face. We're planning for all those eventualities. I guess maybe worst-case scenario is if it dips down, moves west, and

curls around to the other side of the state. Because right now, it's my belief that people haven't been planning for that. I want to make sure -- I'm not suggesting that that's going to happen, but it seems to be within the cone of uncertainty.

And so this storm, at this point, could do everything from Tampa to Jacksonville and a direct hit on Miami. So please plan for those things accordingly. Don't necessarily evacuate based on those eventualities. Listen to your local officials as they're tracking it most closely. But do prepare to be in the storm's path just in case. So that's how we're doing it.

And then lastly, to answer your question, Major, what we're doing is instead of prepositioning all the commodities in places that might be affected by the storm, to continue support operations to the islands. The FEMA logistics team have thought through placing those supplies elsewhere, even up to Delaware and New York and elsewhere, so they continue barge operations and to support the islands, and that the next storm doesn't affect the storm before -- if that answers your question.

So I can go here.

Q The big question is, after the chemical fire that occurred in Texas, and the fact that you all are being taxed with a second storm, are there any extra precautions that are being taken from this time to ensure that that type of thing doesn't happen here? And how taxed is the system for this and for Jose coming in?

MR. BOSSERT: Well, the system can be taxed in different ways. I addressed already the lifesaving, life-sustaining operational capabilities that we have, all the USAR teams and so forth which are martialled by the federal government but provided by the states. They're all rested and refit and ready to come back into the fight. Same with the Coast Guard and United States Military National Guard and Title 10 forces.

We're preparing for environmental losses, as we should. I can't speak to each and every company's preparation efforts. As I stand here, we can continue to monitor that and follow up with you. There will be steps that are taken, from setting down the nuclear power facility to a position of safety. I think they take some kind of warm shutdown posture at some point, depending on the track. So we monitor those things. I was comfortable with the position of most of them. But also look at Okeechobee, because that's going to be a big flooding risk and an overflow risk.

Q Is there anything that you're not comfortable with right now that is an overriding concern?

MR. BOSSERT: Yeah, well, we're worried about the fuel shortages. We're worried about whatever worries the governor at this point. But no, to be honest with you, I am setting expectations appropriately here, because as we go through a storm, nobody is ever happy or completely safe. But I am extremely comfortable with the government efforts. Now I want to make sure that people understand that they have a part to play here as well.

Q I have two questions for you if you don't mind. Number one, taking a step back and looking a little more big picture, you've got wildfires out west, you've got the crisis in Texas that people are still

recovering from, you have Irma, Jose on its heels. The resources of the federal government are not unlimited. At what point do you worry that the resources are being stretched too thin, if you're not at the point now?

MR. BOSSERT: No, I don't -- as the Chief of Staff, General Kelly, says, the federal government should be able to walk and chew gum at the same time. He's absolutely right. We've had Cabinet meetings here today, yesterday, and throughout these storm events focusing on efforts and national security matters around the globe.

So I'm pretty comfortable in our ability and our capacity as leaders, but also as institutions to handle the various different things that come our way. I'm extremely comfortable with President Trump's capacity to do so. He's demonstrated an ability to juggle these issues of complexity on a regular basis, including today.

What I do worry about are the financial resources. Congress came and stepped up in a bipartisan way. I think President Trump deserves a lot of credit for putting that together over the last 48 hours. And they have done what the American people really want them to do, and that is act and do what's right instead of quibbling over things that tend to get in the way of efficient execution of services.

And so in this particular case, we're going to have to go back, I'm sure, for additional resources as these storms continue to hurt our states and our citizens. But for now, we're taking a responsible course of action, asking for the money in the appropriate small tranches, and then reassessing and getting better estimates so that we don't overestimate. But we're not doing it in a way that's going to stop or slow down operations.

Q And my second question -- and actually, do you know what a number would be on that yet, or is it too early?

MR. BOSSERT: On a subsequent request? No, a little too early. So as you know, the approximately \$7.5 billion that came for FEMA on the supplemental was a calculated estimate. There's a \$6.8 billion figure, roundabout, that would be a regular scheduled replenishment at the end of the month for FEMA's disaster relief fund. Those two together were contemplated. So we assume passage of both. The third, or future, request will be based on estimates of information as we refine them.

Q And while we have you here -- I know you're here to focus on Irma, but I've got to ask about DACA because there's still a question of what happens to DACA recipients currently serving in the military. There's still no decision. Can you explain why there's a delay in explaining to these folks what's going to happen and when they might be able to expect an answer?

MR. BOSSERT: No, I can't. I can tell you that the President put it back on Congress and then asked for his priorities to be met and their solution.

Q But in the interim window?

MR. BOSSERT: In the interim window, I'm not sure, to be honest with you, what the answer is on the military part of DACA. But I thought we were clear. I'll find and make sure I get back to you on that.

Q Tom, given Harvey and the flooding and the recovery efforts that you talked about, and then what may happen with Irma, there have been reports that you all are reconsidering the flood -- reversing the floodplain regulations that the Obama administration put in. Can you talk about whether you are, in fact, reconsidering that -- either putting back those regulations or drafting new regulations that would once again toughen back up the flood regulations given that we're going to facing a lot of those issues as both of these places recover?

MR. BOSSERT: Yeah, no, I won't necessarily accept the premise of the question, but I will answer the spirit of it. So it's not about tough or not tough, it's about smart or not smart. And I think the answer here -- I think I went out and did this in one of your publications -- the answer here is that we shouldn't use federal money to rebuild in ways that don't anticipate future flood risk. So we need to build back smarter and stronger against floodplain concerns when we use federal dollars.

What happened in the President's infrastructure executive order was the rescission of an Obama-era order that had a broad-ranging and overreaching scope into construction permitting. And at the time that we rescinded it, we did so in the hope of expediting infrastructure development in this country, which I think was a smart move, for what it's worth. The President certainly did as well.

But now what we have to do is replace with thoughtful -- whether it's an executive order, regulations, or both -- building standards and practices for the expenditure of federal money that makes floodplain and risk-mitigation sense.

Q But there will be some kind of affirmative effort to --

MR. BOSSERT: Yeah. In the interim, I should point out two things here, right? Not to be defensive, but first, that Obama-era executive order had not turned into a regulation yet. So nothing in this storm would have changed, whether we acted or didn't act, if that makes sense. So this was not an immediate or poorly thought-through step.

And then secondly, whether we put forward an executive order or not, we do have the latitude, under the current Stafford Act authorities and other laws to put into these rebuilding practices in Texas and Florida appropriate floodplain management practices. But we want to make sure we think through how to codify that for the future in the next month.

Ma'am.

Q Tom, on Monday, we're seeing an anniversary -- 9/11 -- and the nation right now is seeing a lot of vulnerabilities, speaking (inaudible). What is the threat level? And what is this administration doing as it relates to moving into this tragic anniversary -- remembering this tragic anniversary?

MR. BOSSERT: Well, I was kind of personally motivated into service on that day. And that's why I've

come back to service here again. The counterterrorism mission is the one I take the most seriously. And President Trump will, as Presidents before him and since 9/11, receive a comprehensive picture of the terrorist threat environment and what we're doing to counter it from his senior officials on 9/11 -- or I think on Monday we'll do this; we'll get the timing of that to you and we'll give you a readout.

He'll do that; that's a practice that we've started since 9/11. And Presidents Bush and Obama maintained that practice. President Trump intends to do the same. And then I'll let the team announce his planned event for -- or scheduled events for attending any ceremonies and paying some respects. But for the most part, I'd encourage the administration -- who will, I'm sure, fan out and give appropriate speeches -- to show some solemnity that day and not talk too much about policy. It's a day of remembrance and respect.

Q What's the threat level right now as we go into 9/11 and with the vulnerabilities that we are seeing throughout this nation?

MR. BOSSERT: Yeah, no terrorist should view us as vulnerable right now -- farthest thing from the truth, okay? Second, there is no actionable credible threat to the United States right now. We've run those regular risk-posture meetings here at the White House, and we bring together the entirety of the intelligence community when we do so. There is no current, credible, actionable threat -- terrorist threat -- against the homeland. But we will continue to track that, and if we learn of such a thing, we communicate it to our law enforcement authorities and to the public as soon as we learn it.

Q In addition to the issue of supplies of oil and gas, there's the issue of price, and gasoline has jacked up about 70 cents a gallon. I remember in an earlier briefing, you said you would be monitoring to make sure there isn't gouging. Are you monitoring beyond the issue of supply and demand? It does seem to be a pretty bad excuse just to raise prices. And to make sure that it's data-based?

MR. BOSSERT: Yeah, so the idea is trying to determine -- it's a fact-based determination -- the difference between gouging and supply-and-demand price indicators. So I'd ask you to remember one thing: that refineries, at least five or six of them in Houston, are still down. So we've got a refinery issue on one side, and we've got an increased demand issue on the other side. And so that's necessarily, generally, going to raise prices, but it's a short-term price spike in our experience. We'll try to differentiate that from gouging as we examine any potential allegations of that practice.

But for right now, Floridians are pretty well used to this, and I think they're pretty well used to their Attorney General prosecuting them in Florida. So I'm not of the opinion that I have to issue too many warnings from this podium again, but in case anybody missed me last time, gouging won't be tolerated, period -- period. Okay?

Let me see if I can come back real quickly, because I know Sarah is here and has a lot more to do. Governor Mapp, Governor Rosello, Governor McMaster of South Carolina, Scott of Florida, Deal of Georgia, and Abbott of Texas -- you're all on our minds. You're all our clients. You're our customer base right now. You're going to set the requirements, we're going to meet those requirements. And as Americans, we're going to get through this.

So remember, I started with inform, influence, and inspire. I'm pretty certain that the country saw the people of Texas show us what compassion is all about, and I'm pretty sure the Floridians and South Carolinians are going to step up and match that challenge in the next coming days. Let's say a little prayer for them, and I'll come back out and speak to you as the situation dictates.

So thank you very much. Appreciate it.

MS. SANDERS: Thank you, Tom.

As you can see, the safety and security of the American people is the President's top priority, and we'll continue to work with our local partners to keep the public fully informed as the events unfold.

Looking ahead to this weekend, the President and the First Lady will be hosting Cabinet members and their spouses at Camp David. This will be a working weekend, which will include the fourth Cabinet meeting since the President took office. That will take place on Saturday. The President will lead a discussion on the administration's priorities, in addition to receiving briefings on Hurricane Harvey recovery efforts and preparations for Hurricane Irma.

Secretary Mattis will obviously be among the Cabinet members attending this weekend. And on a lighter note, today happens to be his birthday. So I'd like to wish Secretary Mattis a happy birthday on behalf of all of us here.

Everybody knows I love a good birthday story. In a letter to his troops in the field in 2003, General Mattis encouraged them to fight with a happy heart and a strong spirit, and to demonstrate to the world that there is no better friend and no worse enemy than a U.S. Marine. I think it's safe to say that he has lived his own life by that advice. And, General, we hope your 67th birthday is a good one.

With that, I'll take your questions. Cecilia.

Q Is this agreement with the Democrats that the President reached a one-off? Is this something we can expect to see more of -- bipartisanship from this White House?

MS. SANDERS: I certainly think that the goal is to have bipartisan efforts and certainly legislation where you've got Republicans and Democrats both working towards it. That was something that the President talked about during the campaign, and certainly something that I think the American people expect, and one of the reasons they voted for him. And I certainly would expect to continue to see that.

Q Does the President care at all that Republican leadership is annoyed with this deal that he reached?

MS. SANDERS: I think that the President's focus was doing what was best for the American people, and that's why he's the President. The people wanted somebody to be a leader, they wanted somebody that was going to step up and take action and get things done, and that's exactly what the President did.

I think the last thing we want to do is play partisan politics when we have people in places like Texas and Louisiana that need financial support through the federal government. The President wanted to make sure that happened and that that got taken care, and that's what he did.

John.

Q Sarah, what's the thinking behind the President working with Nancy Pelosi and Chuck Schumer to eliminate the need to constantly go through this debt ceiling process?

MS. SANDERS: Look, I think that if you can take some of that partisan bickering out of the process, that's probably a good thing. This is a government that is always going to pay its debts and wants to make sure that our bills get paid and that we can support the needs that we have of our country, like we're having to do right now in a time of disaster relief efforts. And so that's certainly a priority moving forward.

Q But there's some conservatives in Congress who say taking away the battles over the debt ceiling just means that you're going to continue to add on debt, add on debt, add on debt, with no checks and balances.

MS. SANDERS: Well, I think that's if you have your priorities wrong. The President is focused on, one, balancing the budget, bringing that debt down overall, but also making sure, again, that the citizens of our country, particularly those in a really desperate time of need, like we are seeing right now in Texas and Louisiana, are taken care of.

Major.

Q Sarah, about tomorrow -- you said it's important for the public to be fully informed. I would just suggest you take in due seriousness having the pool be able to cover some portion of that Cabinet meeting at Camp David tomorrow so the country can be fully informed.

MS. SANDERS: We will be releasing some of the President's remarks from tomorrow and we'll keep you guys posted on that process and how that will work.

Q In this regard, you talked about eliminating partisan bickering from the debt-ceiling process. Is that a Republican problem?

MS. SANDERS: Is that a -- I'm sorry?

Q A Republican problem. We had 90 Republicans in the House vote against this emergency relief package, in large measure because it was decoupled, or coupled in a way --

MS. SANDERS: The majority of Republicans voted for it. Again, I think that the most important thing is that the deal got done, the President acted on it, and he worked with Democrats to get it done. And I think he's going to continue to work with whoever is interested in moving the ball forward to help the American people.

Q And to Republicans who are displeased with this, what is the White House message then? Just get over it? You're sore losers? What?

MS. SANDERS: I think the biggest message is that we're a lot less focused on what makes Congress happy, and what makes Americans better and stronger. And that was the decision that the President made -- that this was something that was important to get done, and he was willing to work with Democrats to make sure it happened.

Q Sarah, I think you -- just to change subjects for a second. There's been estimates that a quarter-million of Rohingya Muslims have left -- fled from the violence in Burma perpetrated by the military portion of the Burmese government. And I think, last week, you said you would ask whether the President had been briefed, and you weren't sure.

Can you give us an update as to whether the President has been briefed, made aware of it, if he has concerns about this because it could be regionally destabilizing? And also let us know whether the President, since taking office, has had any direct conversation with Aung San Suu Kyi, and would agree with some members of Congress who are now saying they would like her to take a stronger role in sort of denouncing this violence and trying to put an end to it.

MS. SANDERS: I know that he's aware of the situation and we're monitoring. I'm not aware of if they've had specific conversations. So I would have to look into that.

Q Do they have a statement though, about -- have some concern about this?

MS. SANDERS: Again, we're monitoring the situation and I would refer you to the State Department for specific details at this point.

Jeff.

Q Sarah, what specifically are some ideas that the President would like to work with Democrats next on? He's talked a lot about tax reform obviously, but is infrastructure also on the list here? Or when we will know if this new approach to bipartisanship is something that is his new plan versus just, as Cecilia asked, a one-off?

MS. SANDERS: Look, the President is committed to moving legislation through, he wants Congress to act, and he's happy to have Democrats be part of that. Tax reform is a huge part of the agenda moving into the fall. Infrastructure is something, certainly, we'd love to see. He had meetings on that just yesterday, and we're going to continue to work with anyone willing to sit down at the table and focus on those pieces of legislation.

Q Has he given up on healthcare repeal?

MS. SANDERS: No. And, you know, we're going to continue pushing and looking for new ways to

improve the healthcare system. And certainly, the ultimate goal would be to repeal Obamacare and replace it with something that actually works.

Q Would he work with Democrats on that to try and find out a solution or a fix?

MS. SANDERS: If Democrats are willing to work on an actual solution, sure.

Adam.

Q Thank you, Sarah. The President, this morning, talked about tax reform in a tweet, and he's focusing the country on tax reform after we get past the hurricanes and the immediate threats. Everyone in the administration says tax reform this year. One person, however -- that would be Leader McConnell -- keeps saying tax reform this Congress, which could be next year. Is the President willing to allow the focus on tax reform to move into 2018? And if not, what would he say to the Leader to get him onboard with everyone else in the administration to deliver tax reform to the American people by December 31st of this year?

MS. SANDERS: I think the ultimate goal is certainly to get it done. Ideally, we get it done as soon as possible. The most important thing, though, is that we're providing tax relief for middle-class Americans. And so, ideally, we get that done -- if we could get it done tomorrow, I think everybody would be happy with that, but obviously it's going to be a process. As soon as we can, that would be our ultimate goal. But we want to make sure we get it done right. And that's important.

Q But Leader McConnell keeps saying "this Congress" as if to give them a backdoor excuse or option to go into next year. What does the President say to him about that?

MS. SANDERS: I can only -- I certainly can't speak for Leader McConnell, but again, this administration -- our priority is to get this done and get it done as quickly as we can.

Catherine.

Q Sarah, is Mar-a-Lago following evacuation orders in Palm Beach?

MS. SANDERS: I can't speak for the Trump Organization. I'd direct you to them.

Q And do you know at all if Mar-a-Lago has survived a number of -- come through a number of hurricanes with very minimal damage, would the President consider evacuees or victims of the storm being housed there?

MS. SANDERS: Again, that's something that you would have to talk to the Trump Organization, not something I can comment.

Zeke.

Q Thanks, Sarah. Two for you. One, in regards to the deal reached with Democrats earlier this week,

the President talked a lot on the campaign about how he cuts the best deals. What would the White House's message be to Republicans who, on the issue of the debt ceiling or on the CRs of the past, ultimately achieved better deficit deals under President Barack Obama?

MS. SANDERS: I don't know that you could say that it's a better deal when you're helping people that are in a recovery effort. And that certainly was the priority of the President -- was making sure that we move things forward and quickly so that those people were taken care of. And that was the priority in that process.

Q There was a report earlier this week that Special Counsel Robert Mueller is looking to meet with or interview White House staff regarding the statement that was put out in early July about Donald Trump Jr.'s meeting with Russian (inaudible) and other individuals at Trump Tower. Has a formal request been made? And will White House staff be complying? And who was affected by that request?

MS. SANDERS: I'm now aware of a specific request at this time, but certainly we've been very clear that the White House will be fully cooperative and transparent through this process.

Noah.

Q Sarah, I have two questions -- one on DACA and one on the debt ceiling deal. On DACA, the President tweeted yesterday that DACA recipients have "nothing to worry about" over the next six months, and there would be no action. Can you definitively say that no DACA recipients will be deported in the next six months?

MS. SANDERS: I would imagine, unless there was there was some sort of criminal activity, I think that would change the situation --

Q Why can't you definitively say that no DACA recipient will be deported?

MS. SANDERS: Well, I was about to, if you'd let me finish my sentence. But I was going to say that, outside of circumstances where there may be criminal activity or something along those lines, the President has been clear that that's not something that would take place or change over those six-month period.

Q I think what most DACA recipients are worried about is that their status is scheduled to lapse by 2020. Can you speak to that? I mean, when the President says they have nothing to worry about, they're all going to be --

MS. SANDERS: During this six-month time, there are no changes that are being made to the program at this point. After that -- again, the goal is that Congress makes a permanent fix and that Congress actually does their job, and that we have responsible immigration reform that takes place over these six months, and those individuals won't be affected because they actually stepped up and did what they were asked to do by the American people.

Q On the debt ceiling deal -- when it comes to votes, is the President finding Schumer and Pelosi to be more reliable partners in getting votes than the Republican leaders?

MS. SANDERS: Look, the President is committed to working with both Republicans and Democrats, and we're going to continue doing that and trying to get the best legislation we can for the American people.

I hate to do this, but it's Friday and the President is departing, and I know several people have to step out for that. We'll be around the rest of the afternoon. If you guys have follow-up questions, we'll be happy to answer them.

Thanks, guys.

END

2:20 P.M. EDT