

REMARKS

Remarks by President Trump at Signing of Executive Orders on Lowering Drug Prices

HEALTHCARE

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THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Well, thank you very much, everybody. Please. (Applause.)

This promises to be a very big and very important meeting, so bear with me. Take a little while. But it has to do with a thing called “drug pricing.” And as you know, Congress has been working on this for decades and decades. And we are now doing something that is going to be incredible for the American public.

So today, I’m taking a bold and historic, very dramatic action to reduce the price of prescription drugs for American patients and American seniors.

Previous administrations did nothing — absolutely nothing — as drug lobbyists, special interests, and foreign countries freely ripped off our citizens. Under the last administration alone, drug prices rose a staggering 55 percent. Thanks to my administration’s aggressive actions since taking office, we have successfully lowered drug prices for the first time in 51 years. But this reduction is still not close to what I want, what I expect. And I’m looking for help for our great seniors especially, in particular. And that’s what we’re doing today. You’ll hear something which will be very shocking because we’re doing things that nobody thought could be done. And it’s going to have an incredible impact.

Unfortunately, we've been waiting for Congress to take action for many decades to reduce drug prices for more than — more than just a small handful of people. But even the small handful of people never got price reductions — and I'm unwilling to wait any longer.

Therefore, today I'm signing four sweeping executive orders that will lead to massive reduction in drug costs. Massive. We've already gotten them down a little bit, but that's not good enough. First time in 51 years, as I said — but that's not good enough. They represent the most far-reaching prescription drug reforms ever issued by a President. Nothing even close.

Joining us for this important occasion, our Secretary of Health and Human Services, Alex — where's Alex? Thank you. Alex Azar.

CMS Administrator — you're both doing a great job — Seema Verma. Seema. Thank you, Seema.

FDA administrator, Dr. Stephen Hahn. Stephen, who's really speeding up the process of therapeutics and vaccines. And I just heard from some of the big drug companies, and they're saying the FDA has really been moving the process along. That's very important, Stephen. Can you move it faster, please? Okay. (Laughter.) Thank you. Great job. We appreciate it.

And Administrator of Health Resources and Services Administration, Tom Engels. Tom, thank you. Thank you very much, Tom, for being here.

We're also pleased to have with us our great governor from the State of Florida — incredible state, incredible guy — Governor Ron DeSantis. Thank you, Ron, very much. Appreciate it. And you're going to say a few words in the end? Good.

Representative Matt Gaetz, our friend. Where is — hi, Matt. You're so quiet back there today. I've never seen you like that. Thank you, Matt. Great job you're doing. Appreciate it very much.

Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives, José Oliva. José. Thank you, José, very much. Good job.

And many other state and local leaders. We have a lot of them. Thank you very much for being here.

The four orders that I'm signing today will completely restructure the prescription drug market, in terms of pricing and everything else, to make these medications affordable and accessible for all Americans.

The first order will require federal community health centers to pass the giant discounts they receive from drug companies on insulin and EpiPens directly to their patients. You know, insulin became so expensive, people weren't able to use it. They desperately needed it. We have it to a level that you're not going to believe. EpiPens, likewise — you've been reading horrible stories about EpiPens over the last six, seven years. Horrible, horrible, horrible increases, where they went from almost nothing to massive amounts of money. We're changing that right now.

These providers should not be receiving discounts for themselves while charging their poorest patients massive, full prices. Under this order, the price of insulin for affected patients will come down to just pennies a day — pennies a day from numbers that you weren't even able to think about. It's a massive cost savings.

The second executive order I'm signing this afternoon will allow states, wholesalers, and pharmacies to do something other politicians have promised for decades and decades, but never done. They never delivered. We will finally allow the safe and legal importation of prescription drugs from Canada and other countries where the price for the identical drug is incredibly lower. It's a difference like you wouldn't believe — 70 percent, 80 percent, 90 percent, 30 percent — but massively lower than the identical drug made in the same plant, the same factory. The same exact drug — same everything, same box, same pill — and yet, it's 50, 60, 70 percent lower.

And this is something that Ron and I have been discussing from the time Ron got elected, and I've been wanting to do it. And it takes a long time from a legal standpoint, and we've got it all worked out.

So you're going to be getting mass of drug savings in Florida and other states. And we've had numerous states that wanted to do it. Ron really was at the forefront, I will say that. But you have other states that have caught on. It's caught on very quickly. It didn't take them long to figure that one out, Ron; it's too obvious.

We pay for all of the research and all of the development, and foreign countries pay absolutely nothing, and our consumer gets charged. This has been going on for decades.

The American people pay an average of over three times more for medicine than the Canadians. Many people go to Canada. I see it all the time. They go to Canada to buy drugs, and then they come back — prescription drugs — because they save so much money. The trip is well worth it. The Obama-Biden administration pledged to end this unfairness and allowed drug importation, but they never got it done. They were unable to get it done. They didn't get a lot of things done.

But under my administration, we're standing up to the lobbyists and special interests and fighting back against a rigged system. "Rigged system" — you've heard that word before. I'm unrigging the system that is many decades old. We're doing something that should have been done a long time ago.

The third revolutionary order I'm signing today will prevent middlemen — and women, I guess — but you've heard about the middleman, right? The middleman that makes so much money. Nobody knows who they are. Nobody has any idea who they are. They make more money, perhaps, than even the drug companies themselves. And the drug companies, in all fairness to them — big pharma — and they're doing a great job on the vaccines. They're doing a great job on therapeutics. I can tell you because I deal with them a lot. But I think the middlemen make more money than they do, and they don't do much. Maybe they don't do anything. Some people say they don't do anything. Nobody even knows who they are.

But the middlemen are making a fortune. And pharmacy benefit managers and people are just bilking Medicare patients with these high drug prices while they pocket gigantic discounts. Gigantic discounts.

The amount of money they have made over the decades is too incredible even to speculate or say. It's — it's massive. Some very rich people are not going to like me very much today, I can tell you. (Laughter.) I probably know them very well. I probably see them in Palm Beach. (Laughter.) But nobody ever talks about who they are.

Everyone — I hear "the middlemen" for years. "The middlemen." Right, Alex? And he doesn't know who they are either, but he knows they're rich. And they're not going to be so rich anymore because the money is going down to reduce the price of drugs — prescription drugs.

So that's a big thing. That's a tremendous step. It should have been taken a long time ago. But they have a great deal of power. And I don't have to tell you how many phone calls I've had in

the last few days when they heard I was going to be doing this. It's — I've heard from people that I haven't spoken to in a long time.

Frequently, drug companies give these middlemen discounts of up to 50 percent of the price of prescription drugs. But too often, those discounts are not passed on to the pharmacy counter — meaning the people.

This rule will pass those billions and billions of dollars a year — I mean, many, many billions a year in discounts onto patients — directly onto patients — saving Americans with high drug costs thousands of dollars a year. Individual people will make thousands of dollars a year. You're not going to believe the impact that the things we're talking about today are — are going to have.

Mark Meadows, our chief — our great chief — is sitting here and he's just — can't even believe it because he was a very successful congressman. He's been after people to do this for a long time, and they never got to the gate. I understand why. Tremendous pressure. Tremendous pressure put on the President not to do it.

The fourth and final order I'm signing today — this is the granddaddy of them all — will end global freeloading on the backs of American patients and American seniors. For decades, our citizens have paid the highest prices for drugs — prescription drugs — anywhere in the world, and it's not even close.

Foreign nations have paid vastly less for the exact same drug — again, in the exact same box, from the exact same plant, from the exact same company. They would pay 10 percent, 20 percent, 30 percent what our people are paying. A pill that would sell for — for \$1 in certain countries. I won't name them. They're all allies, right? They call them "allies." I call them "so-called allies." But a pill that would cost \$1 could be \$7, \$8 in our country. Same exact pill. We pay 80 percent more than nations like Germany, Canada, and others for some of the most expensive medicines, identical in all respects.

This means that Americans are funding the enormous cost of drug research and development for the entire planet. We're — we are bearing the entire cost of all of this; they're bearing none. They say, "This is what we're going to pay." In some cases, it's a socialist country. So we're paying to reduce drug prices in a socialist country. How does that work? How does that work? And these are things that should have been done a long time ago. And even from our

standpoint, we would have done it more quickly, but we have to go through vast amounts of waiting periods, waiting times.

And this is an incredible day. This is just a big day. This is a big day. I've been waiting for this day for a long time.

We incredibly and foolishly bear the full cost of all research and development, which is massive, in all fairness to the drug companies. It can take 15 years to get something approved. Billions and billions of dollars for a simple drug. It also means that the U.S. taxpayers are effectively subsidizing the socialist healthcare systems of foreign welfare states and many other countries. We will end that abuse and restore the principles of free enterprise, but this doesn't even have to do with free enterprise. This has to do with common sense and courage, to be honest — and courage.

Under this transformative order, Medicare will be required to purchase drugs at the same price as other countries pay. So we would pay four or five times more for a drug. We now pay — if somebody else pays \$1 and we pay \$5, we're paying \$1. Now what's going to happen is their number will go up, our number will come very substantially down, and we'll all agree at two and a half or two or whatever the final number is.

But if some country is paying — wherever it may be in the world, because they had a better negotiator, because they had smarter people than we have. And that's what it's all about. Maybe more honest people. Who knows? Could be a lot of things going. But we have — we get now the lowest price anywhere in the world. And no more will we have to suffer by saying, "Gee, why is it so much cheaper for the exact same drug in some other country?"

We will determine what other medically advanced nations pay for the most expensive drugs, and instead of paying the highest price, Medicare will pay the lowest price and so will lots of other U.S. buyers. Medicare is the largest purchaser of drugs anywhere in the world by far. Medicare — largest purchaser of drugs in the world. And we're finally going to use that incredible power to achieve a fairer and lower price for everyone. Everyone will get a fairer and much lower price. This is not talking about one half of a percent. This is big stuff.

Under our ridiculous system, which has been broken for decades, we aren't even allowed to negotiate the price of drugs. Can you believe it? I said, "What are we going to negotiate?" We're not allowed — we're restricted by Congress from negotiating the price of drugs. Can you imagine? You say, "I want to get a better price." "I'm sorry, sir. You're not allowed to do that.

That's illegal." What kind of a system is that? Do you think the world looks at us and said, "Where the hell did these people come from?" But they treat us very nicely, but it's not — it's going to end, okay?

I see you're a — you're a fan of what we're saying. You must be a doctor. Are you a doctor? Yeah? Doctors know. The doctors know. You've known that for years. We're not allowed to negotiate. Can you believe it? We just have to take whatever it is.

I'm pleased to announce that as a result of the orders I'm signing today, the heads of the major drug companies have requested a meeting to discuss how we can quickly and significantly lower drug prices and out-of-pocket expenses for Americans. They want to do what's right. Look, they're going to do what's right. Look, I think it's so important what they're doing on therapeutics and vaccines. And we're going to see them on Tuesday. We'll see if we can do something here. But this could've been done a long time ago.

The drug company executives will be at the White House on Tuesday, and they have some ideas how to significantly reduce drug prices. We've already given them to you. I don't know if they can possibly do something to substitute for what's called "favored nations." Favored nations — that means we get the lowest price anywhere in the world. Whoever gets the best price, congratulations. Thank you very much for being a good negotiator because we now get the lowest price, too. It should have been done a long time ago.

If these talks are successful, we may not need to implement the fourth executive order, which is a very tough order for them. Very tough. And I understand that. And we have a lot of respect for our great pharmaceutical companies, drug companies. We have a lot respect for them. So we'll see what they have to say on Tuesday. Maybe they have an idea that's good, but it's got to be very substantial. They're actually in favor of the rebate rule — the rollback — because they say that's people getting money that aren't even doing anything for it — and bigger money than they're getting, I believe. If they are not, the order will be implemented if we don't do a deal or agree to something.

The order — number four, "favored nations" — a big order. They're all big. All four are very big, by the way. Very big. But the fourth order, we're going to hold that until August 24th, hoping that the pharmaceutical companies will come up with something that will substantially reduce drug prices. And the clock starts right now. So it's August 24th at 12:00, after which the order on favored nations will go into effect. And, Mark, I'll hold you to it, please: 12:00 — not 12:01, right?

In the meantime, we're working very hard on therapeutics and a vaccine for the China virus, which remains our top priority and which are coming along at record speed. Thank you very much, Dr. Hahn. Been fantastic. You really have been fantastic. Two vaccine candidates are entering the final stage of clinical trials this month. Right? Two. And several more vaccines will enter final trials in the following weeks.

I did speak to one just recently; they're working on therapeutics, as opposed to vaccine. And frankly, I'm — that's the most exciting to me. We can walk into a hospital right now and get people better. I like that even more. But the vaccine, long term, will be great.

So we have them both going. They're both going rapidly, and they're both going very well. And, I guess, the early indications are beyond — we're beyond happy, right? It's beyond happy.

We're mass producing all of the most promising candidates already so that, on day one — that means that we think we have the answer, otherwise we wouldn't be making that bet. It's a big bet. So that on day one, the day we get it approved, it will be available immediately. Doctor, is that correct? So if we get it approved — now, normally this process would take — to get up to where we are now — three years, four years. I've heard numbers like that. And we did it in, literally, a matter of weeks. That's a really incredible thing.

One of the other things I was talking about — drugs in the pipeline, for getting drugs approved. And it does cost billions of dollars, and it would be 12 years, 15 years. And under Dr. Hahn and Scott, before — you worked very hard; Scott Gottlieb — we've got that down to a number that's less than half, and we're going down further. We have to make sure it's safe.

And Right to Try came out of this whole thing, where we have a drug that we think is good. Matt Gaetz helped with this, in getting it approved; and Mark, when he was a congressman. But we had great help from certain people.

But Right to Try is incredible. We have a drug that works, but it's got to go through this very long and very detailed process for purposes of safety and to make sure it's good. If somebody is terminally ill, very sick — a person not going to make it, a person very sick — we passed legislation, which they've been trying to get for 42 years. It's called Right to Try, where people sign a document, then if it doesn't work out, they're not suing the drug company, they're not suing the insurance company, and they're not suing our country. And instead of travelling — if they have money, they travel to Asia, and they travel to Europe; they travel all over the world in

the hopes of finding a cure. They're terminally ill. If they have no money, sadly, they go home with no hope and they die.

We have now a program: Right to Try. Finally happened after, I guess, as long as you've been a doctor. Long before you became a doctor — right? — they've been trying to get this. But we now have a program where they can try these really promising medicines. And you have no idea how successful this has already been. It's incredible.

And one of the things that really came out of it — it was the biggest problem for the drug companies. They didn't want it because they didn't want in their sample because people that are that sick, they want in the sample. And so we created a separate sample so it doesn't hurt them. But one of the things that's come out of it is: If it works, what is a better testing formula than that? Somebody that's terminally ill and then all of sudden makes it, and we're having examples of that. It's been incredible. It's been an incredible program. I hope somebody is going to be able to write a story about it because it's been one of the things that we're — I'm very proud of it. I love the name even: Right to Try. They have the right to try a drug that's not going to be available for two years or three years. They're terminally ill.

Before, you'd say, "Well, they're terminally ill, yeah. But we don't want to give them a drug that's going to hurt them." Well, they're going to be — they're going to die, and they didn't want to give them a drug because they thought it might be dangerous. And perhaps, in some cases, it may be dangerous. But we're having tremendous, tremendous success with that program. I'm proud of it.

Additionally, my administration has secured 90 percent of the world's supply of the drug remdesivir, which is having great impact for the United States. And research continues daily on a lot of promising treatments, as I said. As we take these historic actions, we're joined today by Americans who've already benefitted from the steps my administration has already taken to reduce the cost of healthcare and prescription drugs. We're going to have a big healthcare bill that we're going to be putting up very shortly, and it's going to be very complete.

And today, what we're doing on prescription drugs — and again, we'll have to see what happens on August 25th. We'll either do "the favored nations" or not, depending on the drug companies. But what we're putting up in a very short period of time on healthcare will be incredible. We have another one coming on immigration. A tremendous bill on immigration. And it'll be, I think, something that nobody thought we would be able to get. So that'll be great.

Paul Madden is a senior citizen who relies on insulin every day. He was paying a fortune — everything — to get it. Paul, if you could — I think Paul is in the audience. And if you could please come up and say a few words about your experience? Thank you, Paul. (Applause.)

MR. MADDEN: Thank you very much. So you can hear me.

THE PRESIDENT: That's better.

MR. MADDEN: Mr. President, thank you so very much for this time to share a few key points supporting your leadership work reducing the price of insulin and other diabetes-related medicines used by 34 [million] Americans each day to live healthier, fuller lives.

As you heard, my name is Paul Madden. I'm a Bostonian. I have lived with insulin-dependent diabetes for 59 years. Beginning Medicare last year, I quickly realized that my ability to afford prescribed insulins that worked best for my health was no longer possible because of their excessive high price. Soaring costs have impacted the quality of my life. Remember that number: 34 million people with diabetes. It has impacted so much I even started to use a 30-year-old insulin to survive, which does not do quite the same great job of balancing my diabetes.

Your work, sir, to ensure that insulin is affordable under Medicare will help guarantee that I and millions of seniors who take insulin realize healthier, more productive, independent, happier lives. Thank you for continuing your commitment to ensure affordability and access for all who use insulin, for people with diabetes, and so that our children and grandchildren will directly benefit from our improved health.

Thank you. (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Thank you, Paul. That's great.

That's actually brought it from many, many, many dollars — unaffordable by most people — to pennies — literally, pennies a month.

And I want to thank, Seema. You worked so hard on that one. Seema, could you just say something about that. It was — the price. Would you come up, just for a second, Seema Verma, and just tell them about what we've done with respect to very badly needed insulin? (Applause.)

ADMINISTRATOR VERMA: Well, the Senior Savings Model that we developed under the President's leadership is going to reduce the cost of insulin to \$35 a month for our seniors. And that represents a 66 percent savings. (Applause.)

I can tell you, the Vice President and I were traveling in Pennsylvania. We had a gentleman that came up to us, and he showed us his insulin, and he said, "You're going to save me \$5,000 a year."

So thank you, President Trump for your leadership. (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Great job. That's a great job. Thank you. That's a tremendous — that's a tremendous difference.

We're also joined by Andrea Eckles, a dental hygienist from Brunswick, Maryland. Andrea, please come up and say a few words. Thank you. Please. (Applause.)

MS. ECKLES: Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much.

MS. ECKLES: My name is Andrea Eckles, and I am a dental hygienist in Brunswick, Maryland. I was widowed when my husband died in a tragic auto accident, and my twin girls were four at the time. He held our family health insurance through his corporate job, and I suddenly found myself having to work fulltime, and put my children in fulltime daycare, and watch my budget very closely. This was a number of years ago.

And at that time, my only choice for healthcare — I work in a very small dental office, and so my only choice for healthcare at that time was what I call the "Unaffordable Care Act." And I was paying very high premiums and copays, and way too much for prescription drugs. And interestingly, I — you referenced the EpiPen, and I had to purchase EpiPens and inhalers. And it got to the point, actually, where I couldn't even afford to renew the EpiPen. I think I still have a, probably, 15-year-old EpiPen at my house, because it just — they've got to be \$700. But, in my case, this led —

THE PRESIDENT: What do they start at? So, it's \$700. What did they start at?

MS. ECKLES: The original EpiPen — I feel like it was like a \$20 copay, way back when we first got it. But then as the — each year, you know, it just kept going up, up to the — but I incidentally ended up — with all of these increases and copays and everything thing over time, I ended up with an over-15,000-dollar medical debt. And I'm just a regular person; I don't have ridiculously, you know, major illnesses or anything.

But during your presidency, President Trump, my premiums have decreased exponentially, and my coverage has increased. My copays have just about disappeared — you know, or gone way down. And prescription drugs that I used to budget for myself are — at \$150 a month — is now \$15 a month. And because of you, I'm spending hundreds of dollars less a month. And this type of savings makes it a really big difference for a single mother, such as myself.

So I just want to thank you so much from the bottom of my heart —

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Thank you.

MS. ECKLES: — for all that you do, and for all of your policies that are helping all of us Americans.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. That's very nice.

MS. ECKLES: Thank you. (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: That's really nice. I appreciate it. Some big difference. That's not a 1 percent or 2 percent; that's big. That's big dollars. And I want to thank you both very much. Thank you very much.

Today's actions continue my administration's relentless drive to deliver better healthcare at a lower cost. I signed an executive order to fight kidney disease. That was such a big thing. That was such a beautiful, important thing to do. With more transplants and better treatment — people with kidney disease go through hell. They go through hell. Their life is hell. And we've done a lot, and we're very proud of it. We've really seen some results that are incredible.

We dramatically expanded the telehealth for all American patients and families in telehealth. And this pandemic era have been — it's increased by, I would say, thousands. It was like 1,020 percent. Incredible. It's been up at a level that nobody has ever imagined. And it actually is very good. It's been something that has come out of — out of the pandemic; one of the only

good things that came out of it, frankly, is people are realizing how good that is. It really worked out well.

We strongly defended Medicare and Social Security, and we will always protect — and we have been protecting, and we always will — protect Republicans — totally protect preexisting conditions, very important. Nothing is going to happen to your preexisting protections.

We ended the gag clause that prevented pharmaceuticals and pharmacists from telling patients how to buy less expensive drugs. We had a clause that, if you went up to a pharmacist — is this a correct statement to — and this — it's not even believable — you couldn't talk about price. If the man or woman behind the counter started talking about price, what happens? You take the license away? This is not even believable.

So think of that, we prevented — it prevented pharmacists from telling patients how to buy less expensive drugs. We have a less expensive drug that's just as good, "I can't talk about it." They can't even say that. I wonder why. Can you imagine these things?

We approved a record number of affordable, low-cost generics. We've increased generics more than administration, by many times. And many of the generics — I would say, from what I'm hearing, all of the generics — sometimes people want to see a label — but they say they're just as good as the others, except you pay a lot less money. We've increased them more than any administration; it's not even close.

And we capped insulin costs — that we just discussed — for many Medicare recipients and for a lot of other people at just \$35 a month. And it was many times that, as you've just heard.

Right to Try, I talked about; so proud of it. Nothing matters more to me than the health and wellbeing of the American people. There's nothing more important to me.

With today's actions, we're ending decades of sellouts, betrayals, and broken promises from Washington. You've had a lot of broken promises. I would say "exclusively" broken. You've had it — it's been uniform broken promises.

We're putting patients over lobbyists, senior citizens before special interests, and we're putting America first. I'm putting America first. When you look at what we're doing with favored nations, on the basis that it kicks in on August 25th, we'll see — see what they have to offer. But

when you think about it, what are we doing? We're putting America first — when you hear other countries getting a much better deal on drug prices.

There are people that have told me, "This is more important than healthcare." We're doing healthcare, but this is more important than anything: the price of drugs. They were getting slaughtered — slaughtered by drug prices.

So thank you very much. I want to thank you all for being here. I'd like to ask, if I could, Alex to come up, please — Secretary Azar — to say a few words, and then I'll sign an executive order.

I'd also like to ask the governor of Florida — Ron, you're going to come up and say a few words. And we'll sign up, and you'll go out and buy those drugs, and save 50 or 60 percent for the people of Florida, and other people will be joining you. And that's great.

I want to let you — you will tell me how you do. And I'd work on it really fast, because now with all of the media back here, you're under extraordinary pressure, and you never have pressure.

One thing I'll tell you about Ron — Matt will tell you — he handles pressure well. And you're doing a great job. Thank you very much. Please, Alex.

SECRETARY AZAR: Well, Mr. — Mr. President, thank you so much for your leadership here. You charged all of us with four goals: ending foreign freeriding, improving how our federal programs pay for drugs, lowering out-of-pockets for our citizens, and getting list prices down.

And you did your Drug Pricing Blueprint in May of 2018. Before then, every single year there were massive drug price increases, massive price inflation. Since your Drug Pricing Blueprint, those — that level of inflation has stopped, and that was an incredible accomplishment.

But you said, "That's not good enough. I want more — even more change for the American people." And today, you're delivering the — the import — allowing importation. Presidents before you have promised over and over again to allow importa- — the safe importation of drugs from lower-cost countries. You're the first President to deliver on it. You're going to have Governor DeSantis's program for states and tribes to import; you're going to have a personal importation program, where individuals can get their drugs, low cost, from abroad; and you're going to have an insulin re-importation program so Americans can get their insulin reimported from Canada at lower prices.

You're taking on the federal health centers. You're taking on the issue that they are getting radical discounts on insulin and EpiPens. And you're going to make sure low-income Americans get the benefit of those discounts.

And you're taking on the middlemen. Thirty billion dollars a year of concealed kickbacks to middlemen are going to now flow to Medicare patients when they show up at the pharmacy. An average of 30 percent discounts and out-of-pockets when they show up at a pharmacy, thanks to the President's bold action.

As we're going to end foreign freeriding, taking on foreign socialist systems that have been living off of the American seniors' investments by overpaying in drug prices. And now they're going to have to bear their fair share. I got to tell you, you have been — what you've done and what you're doing, today, you've done more than any President in American history to take on drug prices. You have ta- — (applause) —

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you.

SECRETARY AZAR: You're taking on the drug companies, you're taking on the middlemen, you're taking on the European socialists — all for the forgotten men and women of America who show up at a pharmacy counter. And for that, I am so proud of what you're doing today. Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Great, Alex. Thank you. (Applause.) Thank you, Alex.

Please, Ron. Please.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Well, Mr. President, thanks for your leadership on this. When we started the legislative session in Florida in 2019, our speaker of the house, José Oliva, who is here with me — he had a big healthcare agenda. So we did some phenomenal things, like expand telehealth, repeal certificate-of-need laws. But he really wanted to do something big on prescription drugs. I did too, because it's obviously an issue.

But I told José — I said, "Listen, we got to find a way where we will actually be able to accomplish something." I don't want to just throw a flare up there, and then virtue signal that we're doing something about drugs, and then nothing works. And so there was a provision of law which required the federal government's approval.

So we had a plan in Florida. We moved forward. I went to see you. And this law has been on the books for at least almost 20 years. So other Presidents have had the ability to pull this lever, and they didn't do it. And I went up and asked you, and not everyone was in favor of you doing it. You had a lot of people saying, "Don't do it." But you were laser focused on lowering drug prices for people, particularly our seniors in the state of Florida. And that was abundantly clear.

And so when Florida then moved forward, we knew we had your support. We knew that this day would eventually come. And I think the — the fact that where we're standing here today — obviously, Florida, you know, we did some groundwork, but really, it's a result of presidential leadership.

So the people of Florida, I want to thank you for siding with us on this. This — like I said, this could've been done for almost 20 years. It hasn't been done. So you're the one that got it done.

So, Mr. President, thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Ron. Thank you. (Applause.) Thank you.

So we're going to sign four very important documents. I just want to thank Amy. And congratulations, Amy, to you. That elevation is a big one. And you're going to do fantastically. Russell, congratulations. He just got confirmed, and we appreciate it. Fantastic job. And, Pat, thank you very much for being here. We appreciate it. Thank you very much.

Okay, let's go.

(The executive orders are signed.) (Applause.)

Thank you all very much.

END

4:28 P.M. EDT