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| Metatag Type |  |
| Title | Daily Press Briefing by Press Secretary Sean Spicer - #28 |
| Source | The White House  Office of the Press Secretary |
| Author(s) | The White House  Office of the Press Secretary |
| Published/Uploaded | March 24, 2017 1:15 P.M. EDT |
| URL | https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/03/24/daily-press-briefing-press-secretary-sean-spicer-28 |
| Total Images | 0 |
| Total Videos | 0 |
| Total Ext. Links | 0 |
| Total Items Comprising the Sample | 1 |
| Total Word Count | 534 |
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MR. SPICER:  Good afternoon, everyone.  There’s a lot going on today, so I’m going to keep this on the briefer side.

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

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

Obamacare’s Washington-driven, one-size-fits-all plan had seven years to prove its case, and look what it’s left us with:  
Skyrocketing premiums -- on average, premiums for Obamacare benchmark plans increased 25 percent in 2017.  Unaffordable deductibles -- the two most popular Obamacare health plans have average deductibles equivalent to 10 percent and 6 percent of the median American household income.  With these high deductibles, many people have, technically, insurance, but nothing that they can afford to use.  Fewer choices -- one in five Americans have only one insurer offering Obamacare through exchanges.  And, of course, higher taxes.

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

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

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