



3 Distorted Claims From Trump's Rally in Duluth

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At a campaign rally in Minnesota on Wednesday, President Donald Trump misstated facts about the cost of illegal immigration, access to experimental medicine and NASA's activities.

WHAT WAS SAID

"Illegal immigration costs our country hundreds of billions of dollars."

THE FACTS

This is disputed.

Trump is most likely referring to an estimate from an anti-immigration group that has been heavily criticized by other researchers for its methodological flaws.

The group, the Federation for American Immigration Reform, estimated in 2017 that illegal immigration costs the United States \$116 billion each year in spending on education, health care and law enforcement.

The Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank, found that the \$116 billion estimate overcounted welfare benefits that unauthorized immigrants receive, and undercounted the taxes that they pay. It said the \$116 billion estimate would be more accurately accounted as ranging from \$3.3 billion to \$15.6 billion if those costs were considered.

Additionally, the American Immigration Council studied an earlier but similar estimate by the Federation for American Immigration Reform. It concluded that education and health care account for more than half of the costs, and that the benefits were afforded to many American-citizen children of unauthorized immigrants.

PolitiFact, the fact-checking service, assessed several other studies. It found that the Federation for American Immigration Reform's estimate "is largely based on broad estimates and assumptions" while others have been significantly lower or inconclusive.

WHAT WAS SAID

"If we have drugs that haven't been approved yet but are showing tremendous promise, it didn't matter. It didn't matter how sick you were, where you were, you couldn't get it."

THE FACTS

False.

Last month, Trump oversold the impact of a new law called Right to Try, which allowed patients to seek access to drugs not yet fully approved by the Food and Drug Administration. He has since falsely asserted that patients could not obtain experimental medicine before the law at all.

In fact, a program known as compassionate use, or expanded access, has been in place since the 1970s. It allows patients with a serious disease or condition to obtain experimental medicines; the FDA says it authorizes 99 percent of the requests for expanded access that it receives.

The new law allows doctors and patients to directly ask drug companies for access rather than go through the government.

WHAT WAS SAID

“We’re reopening NASA. We are going to be going to space.”

THE FACTS

This is misleading.

This week, Trump announced that he is asking the Pentagon to create a sixth branch of the armed forces to protect U.S. interests in space (a “space force,” as the rally audience in Duluth chanted enthusiastically).

But contrary to Trump’s puzzling suggestion, NASA has been operational since its creation in 1958 and is in space.

NASA is conducting dozens of missions in space, including exploring Mars, studying Jupiter and reaching the outer edges of the solar system. Three U.S. astronauts are also staffing and conducting experiments on the International Space Station.

Trump called U.S. astronaut Peggy Whitson in April 2017, while she was aboard the International Space Station. Whitson spent 665 days in space, more than any other American, before she retired this month.

During the rally, Trump also repeated several other claims that The Times has previously debunked. He said the wall along the Southwest border “has been started” (it hasn’t); boasted about deporting MS-13 members “by the thousands” (this is not possible); exaggerated the U.S. trade deficit with Mexico as \$100 billion (it is \$69 billion); said he has cut more regulations than any other president “whether it is four years, eight years or in one case 16 years” (this is hyperbolic); falsely claimed that the European countries “don’t take our cars” (they do); and falsely said wages were rising “for the first time in 20 years” (they’ve been rising for several years).