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Senate

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Tulsi Gabbard, of Hawaii, to be Director of National Intelligence.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MORENO). The Senator from Iowa.

CABINET NOMINATIONS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, sometime today, we are voting on the nomination of Tulsi Gabbard. She is going to be Director of National Intelligence after she is confirmed.

Until she was nominated, I only knew her from seeing her in media sound bites and what other people wrote about her. She came to my office, and we had a very good, very substantive conversation. I determined that she is very smart and obviously an articulate person.

In our discussion, we covered many of her past statements on various policy matters, and she was able to clarify what the media got right and what the media got wrong.

Obviously, since she served in the Congress of the United States as a Democrat, I and she may not agree on every policy. However, Representative Gabbard made clear that she does not see her position as Director of National Intelligence as a policymaking position. She understands that President Trump is the one who was elected. As Director of National Intelligence, Tulsi Gabbard's job will be simply to make sure that the intelligence community is able to provide the best unbiased information to help President Trump make the proper decisions.

She and I also spoke about some of my past oversight work regarding the intelligence community. I have had

mixed results in getting legitimate information that I have sought, depending upon who was in that particular position. For instance, when Rick Grenell became the Acting Director of National Intelligence, I suddenly and surprisingly got material that I had asked for after being totally stonewalled by previous Directors of National Intelligence.

Based on my conversation, I expect Tulsi Gabbard, along with CIA Director Ratcliffe, will ensure that the intelligence community will be forthcoming and fully responsible to Congress as we in Congress exercise our constitutional responsibility not only to pass laws and appropriate money but to be a check on the executive branch of government to see that a President—whether that President is Republican or Democrat—faithfully executes the laws as required by the Congress of the United States.

On another matter, yesterday, I took a minute or two to address the Senate to remind my other 99 Senators—which I do not have to remind the members of the Senate Agriculture Committee—that our nominee for Secretary of Agriculture, Mrs. Rollins, was voted out of committee unanimously. You would think, then, that if both Republicans and Democrats think that Mrs. Rollins is the proper person to be Secretary of Agriculture, she would be quickly approved for that position unanimously here in the U.S. Senate and maybe even be lucky enough to do it on a voice vote.

Now, I don't know what is going to happen, but I do know that we are going to be sitting around the U.S. Senate today for several hours to see whether we are going to vote on Ms. Gabbard to be Director of National Intelligence or we are going to have that disposed of very quickly and get down to work.

But the people in this country send us to the U.S. Senate to actually do work. And when you are sitting around

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Gracious God, who reveals Yourself gloriously in the rising and setting of the Sun, make us good stewards of your blessings. Lord, give us opportunities to help solve the problems in our world by using our minds to produce creative solutions. Inspire our Senators. As they abide in Your presence, make them receptive to Your guidance. Fill their minds with insights and wisdom, and give them resiliency and courage. Today, provide them with the grace to think not of what they can get but of what they can give. Empower them to practice conciliation without compromise. Lord, place your arms of protection around them and their families.

We pray in Your all-powerful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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just waiting for a decision from the minority of when they are going to allow us to vote on this particular nomination or how we are going to handle Mrs. Rollins for Secretary of Agriculture, nothing is getting done, and we are wasting a lot of the taxpayers' time with a lot of important decisions that have to be made, even after we approve all the members of the Cabinet.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

NOMINATION OF ROBERT F. KENNEDY, JR.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, this week, the Senate will consider the nomination of Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., to be Secretary of Health and Human Services. President Trump has tapped Mr. Kennedy to lead the charge in making America healthy again—something that has been a concern of Mr. Kennedy's throughout his career.

Mr. Kennedy promises to make HHS a collaborative, transparent, and science-driven Agency under his leadership. I will say that is good to hear. Many Americans' trust in health authorities has eroded in recent years, with the pandemic being a factor. A lot of Americans feel frustrated with confusing and sometimes contradictory guidance from government Agencies. And measures like requiring toddlers as young as 2 years old to wear masks indefinitely not only defy common sense, there was no scientific research to back it up.

Our public health Agencies do critical work. I am a supporter of the research, and I am proud of the contributions they make to American leadership in medicine and innovation. But if we are going to make America healthy again, the Agencies doing this important work have to rebuild some trust with Americans.

I was pleased to hear Mr. Kennedy pledge to increase transparency and accountability, including an unprecedented level of collaboration with Congress that allows for regular and robust oversight of his Agency's activities.

I was also pleased that Mr. Kennedy acknowledged the importance of vaccines and the concerning reality that vaccine uptake in this country is decreasing. Mr. Kennedy has pledged that he will maintain the best vaccine standards, and he has committed to work within existing vaccine approval and monitoring systems and maintain the FDA's review standards.

I look forward to Mr. Kennedy being a partner with Congress on some very important issues. He has brought attention to America's chronic disease epidemic. I am pleased that he wants

to put a focus on chronic diseases that affect too many Americans and cost far too much in lives lost and dollars spent.

I am also encouraged that he is committed to implementing President Trump's pro-life policies at HHS. President Trump has been one of the most pro-life Presidents we have ever had. Mr. Kennedy's Agency will be critical in protecting life and supporting mothers and babies.

Mr. Kennedy is also committed to working with farmers and ranchers on policies that affect our food supply. America's farmers and ranchers are a valuable resource, and I look forward to working with him to ensure that the voice of South Dakota's agriculture producers is heard.

I believe that Mr. Kennedy's collaborative approach to this job will help restore some of the trust in our public health Agencies that has been lost in recent years. I look forward to working with him on a number of issues as we restore that trust and work to make America healthy again.

CABINET NOMINATIONS

Mr. President, before I close, I want to highlight the nominations processes we are having here in the U.S. Senate.

Mr. Kennedy's confirmation will be the 15th since President Trump's inauguration. Democrats are obviously trying to slow down the process, but we have been moving right along. We will continue to maintain an aggressive pace until President Trump has his entire team in place.

Mr. President, it is interesting that Democrats have saved some of their fiercest opposition to two of our nominees this week—Mr. Kennedy and Tulsi Gabbard, who, interestingly enough, are both former Democrats. I wonder if Democrats are unhappy to see the elevation of two individuals who became disillusioned with the Democratic Party.

I think most Americans are pleased to see President Trump have a diversity of backgrounds in his Cabinet. In fact, it is not uncommon. President Bush's first Cabinet included a Democrat. President Obama's had two Republicans. President Trump elevated an Obama appointee to his first Cabinet. But this trend stopped with President Biden.

I am sure the American people are glad to see President Trump living up to his promises to be a President for all of America. It is up to Democrats whether they want to participate or just obstruct for the next few years. But Republicans will be working to deliver results that benefit all Americans.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, in his first 3 weeks in office, Donald Trump has waged a scorched-earth campaign against the rule of law.

We all know that Donald Trump, of course, won the election last November, and as we all know, he campaigned on a platform to cut back large parts of the government. But nothing—nothing—in the Constitution, nothing in our grand tradition of American separation of powers allows Donald Trump to break the law in order to achieve those goals.

Let me repeat that. Donald Trump campaigned on cutting back the government. That is true. But he is not allowed—not allowed—to break the law to achieve those goals.

That is not how America works. You campaign. You put your ideas forward. In this case, Donald Trump won. But he did not campaign on breaking the law, and the American people don't want him to break the law.

The reason we have a system of checks and balances is so that even when one side wins an election, there is a check, there is a balance. That is what America has been all about for over 200 years. At this point, Donald Trump is trying to break that tradition in area after area after area. So the courts have begun to speak, and their message is very simple: The law is not optional, not even for a President of the United States.

Yesterday, at least five rulings were handed down in Federal courts against the President's brazen conduct in office: court rulings against his attempt to freeze trillions in Federal funding at OMB; court decisions against his heartless, cruel decision to stop billions in medical research funding through the NIH. Courts have ruled against his unlawful attempt to hollow out the Federal workforce regardless of the job they do.

To be sure, these decisions—these five decisions and many others like it; I think there are over 50—are all temporary, preliminary, and it is one step in a long process that will play out in Federal court. But the trend is clear: Donald Trump is not free to bulldoze his way through the rule of law. Donald Trump is not free to bulldoze his way through the rule of law. He is an executive, not a monarch. He swore an oath faithfully to execute the duties of his office, and when the courts speak, Donald Trump must accept their judgments and honor the Constitution.

Now, there are some on the hard right who think Donald Trump should ignore the courts. Even the Vice President seems to suggest the courts can't "control the powers of the executive." With respect to the Vice President, the issue here isn't the courts trying to control the President; it is the President trying to control the law. He

wants to decide for himself what the laws are, which ones should be applied, which ones shouldn't, and what they mean.

Congress makes the law. Courts interpret the law. We all learned that in grade school. That is how checks and balances work in a constitutional republic. Donald Trump does not reign supreme. When the courts speak, the President must adhere to their judgments. That is what his oath demands.

The courts will be an important venue for holding Donald Trump accountable whenever he breaks the law and breaks his promise to the American people. It is one tool in the toolkit for how Democrats and all Americans who care about the rule of law will make sure that Donald Trump does not break the law and do just what he wants. Our courts will be just one resource of several, but they will be among the most important, and as we have already seen, they are a critical front in the struggle to uphold the rule of law and prevent America from sliding into utter lawlessness.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. President, on the shutdown, in 5 weeks, funding for the Federal Government will run out.

Let us remember, when there is talk about a shutdown, Trump and Republicans are already shutting down large parts of the government. Democrats do not want a government shutdown. It is the Republicans who are in charge. It is their responsibility to avoid a shutdown.

The idea that Democrats want a shutdown is laughable. Republicans who say this should look in the mirror. Let me repeat. Let me repeat: When there is talk about a shutdown, Republicans are already shutting down large parts of the government. Democrats do not want to shut the government down. It is the Republicans who are in charge; it is their responsibility to avoid a government shutdown.

Since the inauguration, unfortunately, President Trump and Republicans have been actively working to shut down parts of the government entirely on their own. They have shut down funding to CHCs. They shut down funding for research institutions; shut down exports for farmers; shut down protections for consumers; fired government watchdogs. Republicans are making plans to force Medicaid work requirements on Americans who even have disabilities and can't work. They are making plans to harm Social Security recipients. They are trying to cut any sort of oversight so that corporations can run rampant.

Nobody—nobody—unfortunately, is working harder right now to shut down the government than Donald Trump and congressional Republicans. Nobody is working harder to shut down the government than Donald Trump and congressional Republicans.

CABINET NOMINATIONS

Now, Mr. President, on two upcoming nominations this week, Senate Repub-

licans will force two nominees through the Senate that they know perfectly well do not merit confirmation. But Republicans, it seems, are going to confirm them anyway because Donald Trump is strong-arming them into submission. Last night, 52 Republicans voted to advance the nomination of Tulsi Gabbard to serve as the Director of National Intelligence.

By now, there is no question about whether or not Ms. Gabbard is qualified to lead America's intelligence Agencies. By every objective measure, she is not. How could they choose—of all the people who might be available to do this job, how could President Trump choose her? The Director of National Intelligence must be fluent in the truth, above all. Intelligence, by its own definition, is a fact-gathering Agency—it depends on facts. But instead of speaking fact and truth, Ms. Gabbard repeatedly speaks the language of falsities and conspiracy theories.

The Director of National Intelligence must be strong against America's adversaries, but Ms. Gabbard has spent her entire career sympathizing with the likes of Vladimir Putin and Bashar al-Assad. On the night that Russia invaded Ukraine and launched the first full-scale invasion of a sovereign nation in Europe since World War II, what was Ms. Gabbard doing? Spending her energy blaming NATO and the U.S. for what Putin did. Putin invades Ukraine; Gabbard blames the U.S. for Putin's invading Ukraine.

How can we put this kind of person as the head of DNI? That alone should be disqualifying for anyone seeking to become the top intelligence adviser to the President of the United States.

And when Ms. Gabbard had the opportunity to repair her image before the Senate Intelligence Committee and ease the deep worries of Senators on both sides of the aisle—we all know a load of the Republicans on the Intelligence Committee felt she doesn't belong in office—what did Ms. Gabbard do? She only exacerbated those worries. Senate Republicans know very well that she has no business advising the President on matters of classified intelligence. They know her judgment is off the mark—way off the mark. They know her troubling history of pushing conspiracies and spreading propaganda.

So, deep down, this nominee is really about one very simple question: What do Senate Republicans care more about—doing the right thing for national security, for American national security, or doing what is necessary to keep Donald Trump happy even when they know how badly he is wrong? The American people will know the answer tonight after the Senate votes on the Gabbard nomination.

After that, we will move to another equally unqualified nominee. It is a parade of unqualified nominees. Robert Kennedy, Jr. is nominated to serve as the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

To state the obvious—the very, very obvious—putting a very wealthy, vaccine skeptic, and conspiracy theorist in charge of America's public health would put every single American in danger. Mr. Kennedy is neither a doctor nor a scientist nor a public health expert nor a policy expert of any kind. In fact, he is the face of the modern anti-vaccine movement. He has spread other outrageous claims, like saying antidepressants cause mass shootings or that AIDS might not be caused by HIV or that COVID spared certain ethnic groups. RFK has not made a living by promoting public health but, rather, by actively fighting it—by actively fighting it.

Is RFK really who Republicans want running HHS? Again, it is the same question with Ms. Gabbard. Of all of the people in America, how did they end up choosing him? How did Donald Trump end up choosing him, once again, for an Agency that depends on science, evidence, and impartiality to ensure the health of over 330 million Americans?

That vote—the vote on RFK—is about one simple question—one simple question: Will Republicans do the right thing for American public health, or will they do whatever is necessary to keep Donald Trump happy no matter how misguided he is? The American people will know the answer to this very soon also.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I just heard Senator SCHUMER, the minority leader, say that Democrats don't want a government shutdown. Well, I would recommend that the minority leader actually read the newspaper. He is going to see that Democrats are threatening and actually calling for a shutdown of the U.S. Government.

So here is USA Today, today, with a picture of Senator SCHUMER right there—a big picture in color, with his fist in the air—“Democrats open to shutting down the government.” So the Senator who just was on the floor, saying, oh, no; they don't want it, is calling for it across the country in USA Today this morning.

That is what we are seeing across this country: Democrats are so much in disarray after the fact that they lost the House, lost the Senate, lost the White House, that the Democrats now want to shut down the government.

Here was the headline in The New York Times on Sunday: “Democrats Hint at Government Shutdown to Stop Trump's Axing at Federal Agencies.”

President Trump is doing what people elected him to do—to get the wasteful Washington spending to end. So that was in USA Today and The New York Times.

What about The Washington Post?

The Democrats say:

They will not help avert a shutdown.

The Democrats are calling for a shutdown—in USA Today, The New York

Times, The Washington Post. The list goes on.

What are Democrats saying on television?

Well, on “Meet the Press” this Sunday, Senator ANDY KIM of New Jersey, said that Democrats in Congress would shut down the government, he says, “if we have to” in order to obstruct President Trump—not to help the country, not to provide services for the men and women in uniform, not to provide needs around the country. No—because they want to obstruct President Trump. That is why CHUCK SCHUMER and the Democrats are calling for a government shutdown.

It didn't end there.

CORY BOOKER of New Jersey—a member of the leadership of the Democratic Party—was on CNN this weekend. What did he say? “Democrats will use every tool possible” to stop President Trump.

The Democrats want to stop the President, who was elected with 312 electoral votes and won every one of the battleground States. The Democrats just want to stop him, and the American people want the kind of action and the urgency that we are seeing right now out of President Trump.

JEFF MERKLEY, a Senator from Oregon, is open to shutting down the government. He said: “There's no [more] business as usual.” Shut it down.

President Trump is doing exactly what America voted for, but here are the headlines, and there are the pictures, and those are the Democrats in the U.S. Senate, saying: We don't care what the American people say. We are going to shut down the government.

President Trump is shrinking the size of government. We know the government is too big. We know it spends too much. President Trump is accounting for every single penny, and we are not going to make pennies anymore as a result of the fact that it costs 3 cents to make a penny. That is why Democrats want to shut down the government. They don't like the success that America is having today. They don't like the optimism that is pervasive throughout our country.

So, once again, if there is going to be a shutdown, we are talking about a “Schumer shutdown” of our country because they lost the election.

NOMINATION OF TULSI GABBARD

Additionally, Mr. President, here we are on the floor of the Senate, and the Senate will vote soon on the nomination of Tulsi Gabbard to be the Director of National Intelligence. She has the right background, she has the right experience, and she has the right perspective to keep our Nation safe and to keep it secure.

Congresswoman Gabbard has served in uniform for more than 20 years. She deployed to the Middle East several times. She serves in the military today and was recently promoted to lieutenant colonel. As a Member of Congress for 8 years, she served on the Armed Services and Foreign Affairs Committees.

Her experience handling highly classified information is extensive. As Director of National Intelligence, she will handle classified information properly and lawfully. Congresswoman Gabbard is more than qualified to serve as the Director of National Intelligence.

Now, we have heard a lot of debate about her, but not one Senator has disputed the simple fact that she took a hard line on Russia and on Iran. In 2013, Congresswoman Gabbard cosponsored the Nuclear Iran Prevention Act. She wanted severe sanctions on Iran. Well, why would the Democrats not like that? Oh, because they were part of the group, with President Obama, who wanted to appease Iran. No wonder they oppose her now. She opposed the Iran deal. She viewed it as a threat to both America and to Israel. And she was right. In 2014, Russia annexed Crimea. President Obama rejected sending tank-busting missiles to Ukraine. Remember what he sent? He sent blankets. Blankets.

The sanctions that President Obama imposed against Russia were terribly weak. Congresswoman Gabbard argued for U.S. military assistance to Ukraine back then, and she called for painful sanctions against Russia, things that the Democrats and their President—Obama—at the time were unwilling to do.

Tulsi Gabbard never sought war with Russia, yet she never kidded herself, never would look back about the aggressive nature of Russia's ambitions. She worked to stop wars even though she served and was ready to fight in them. She knows what it means when we talk about peace through strength.

Democrats attacked her patriotism. They attacked her loyalty. It is disturbing. There is no evidence to support that. The attacks on her are another case of Democrats equating political disagreement with disloyalty.

If Washington wants to trust our intelligence Agencies again, we need to take an ax to the weaponization of these very Agencies. Congresswoman Gabbard will keep politics out of intelligence gathering. She wants to return ODNI to its original size, its scope, and its mission. She wrote in Newsweek:

I promise to provide unbiased, timely, and accurate intelligence for those making decisions to protect the people of our country.

That is exactly what we need.

Tulsi Gabbard is the right choice to be the Director of National Intelligence, and I look forward to voting to confirm her later today.

GRIZZLY BEARS

Now, Mr. President, on a different matter, one critically important to my home State of Wyoming, under the Constitution, most decisions affecting our lives are meant to be made at the local or the State level. But for decades, unelected, unaccountable, heavy-handed Federal bureaucrats have taken away decisions from the States. They have centralized power and ignored the local experts. We need to put the power back into the hands of the people and

the States. That is where it belongs. That is what our Founding Fathers envisioned.

A perfect example of this is the status of grizzly bears in Yellowstone National Park. The Yellowstone population of grizzly bears has been fully recovered—it was put on the endangered species list years and years ago, but it has been fully recovered for more than 20 years.

In Wyoming, we have invested more than \$50 million in this effort to make sure that the grizzly bears did fully and safely recover. Both Democrat administrations and Republican administrations have moved—have taken action to take the grizzly bear off of the endangered species list.

Wyoming has a strong, proven track record of science-based management of the bears. Today, grizzly bears in Yellowstone are thriving. They are thriving so much that they are now doing great damage to our livestock and to our wildlife.

In 2022, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said that there was “substantial scientific or commercial information” to warrant local control—not the heavy hand of Washington but local control. Yet the grizzly bear remains under Washington's control, and that is despite the best data and our State's success.

This issue isn't science; it is politics. There are partisan, liberal judges who refuse to listen to scientific evidence. The evidence shows that the grizzlies are fully recovered. The previous administration didn't want to give up control. That is kind of how the Biden administration did it. So on its way out the door, in the final weeks, it threw sand in the gears of change. The Biden administration rejected, at the midnight hour, Wyoming's good-faith efforts and management plans. They did it just before leaving office. The decision was wrong. It was wrong for the grizzly bear population, and it was wrong for the people of Wyoming.

It is time for Wyoming—not Washington—to be in charge of managing the grizzly bears. In Congress, Senator CYNTHIA LUMMIS and Congresswoman HARRIET HAGEMAN and I introduced legislation to delist the grizzly bears. Our legislation would restore State management. It would put power back into the hands of the people who understand the situation the best.

We are also working with the Trump administration to take immediate action. Interior Secretary Doug Burgum is a supporter of delisting the grizzly bears. He agrees that local communities and States should be in control of these decisions. He said in his confirmation hearing:

There's a belief that when they come off of federal protection that they're unprotected. No, they're managed as all the other species in the state by the locals who've got the closest data.

Secretary Burgum is right, and I am glad that we finally have an administration that is ready to work with the people of Wyoming.

So I am going to continue to work closely with the Secretary of the Interior on a path forward that allows the people of Wyoming to make decisions for Wyoming.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I listened to my colleague and friend from Wyoming, and I am struggling to understand his point of view. He announced at one point that the Republicans were in the majority in the House and Senate. Well, that is a fact. I know it. The Presiding Officer does as well. So to say that you are in the majority suggests that you are in charge, and it also suggests that if there is going to be a budget for the U.S. Government, which we need next month, the majority party in both the House and the Senate has that responsibility to come forward with a budget. That is a simple fact of life. It is a fact of political life.

To blame the minority for no budget is to ignore the obvious: The majority of votes in the House and the Senate belong to the Republican Party. If there is going to be a budget, it is fair to assume that they would have to lead in that effort. I look forward to seeing that leadership. We have seen precious little of it so far.

JANUARY 6 PARDONS

Mr. President, on a completely separate note, I realize that the President made these statements during the course of his campaign, but it still came as something of a shock when, on the first day of his Presidency, Donald Trump decided to issue a blanket pardon for those who had been convicted of the January 6 riot that took place in this building.

For those of us who were physically present, it is a moment we will never forget. The Vice President of the United States was sitting in the Presiding Officer's chair, presiding over the U.S. Senate as we addressed the constitutional responsibility of counting the electoral votes.

It was roughly 10 minutes after 2 in the afternoon when someone came along in a suit, walked up to the Vice President of the United States, grabbed him by the arm, and pulled him off of the chair. Those of us who were here wondered what was going on. While we could hear the demonstrators outside, we didn't understand why the Vice President was being removed from this Chamber.

A member of the Capitol Police then walked up to where the Presiding Officer is sitting and announced that this was going to be a safe room; yes, there were demonstrators outside, even some in the building, but stay here; the Senate Chamber will be a safe room; and be prepared for others to come into this safe room to avoid any conflict with the demonstrators.

That instruction lasted for about 10 minutes, and then the same officer

came up and stood before us and said: Change of plans. Everybody evacuate this room as quickly as possible.

We all headed out that door, going to another building on Capitol Hill that we thought might be safer, away from the demonstrators.

Think about that—the Capitol of the United States of America, taken over by demonstrators; the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives stopped in the progress of doing their constitutional responsibility of counting the electoral votes.

We have seen the videotapes—oh, there are plenty of them—that show these mob demonstrators breaking the windows to get into the Capitol Building, knocking down the doors, and then beating up on the police officers.

When the Presiding Officer and I came to work this morning, there were men and women—some in uniform, others in plainclothes—standing in the corridors of this building. Their responsibility is to keep us safe and to keep those who visit this Capitol safe. They are prepared—many of them have to be prepared—to risk their lives to do it.

To think what they went through on January 6 is outrageous. They were beaten up by these mobsters, these thugs, these demonstrators, who were egged on by the President of the United States to come up and go wild in the U.S. Capitol. Oh, they went wild, spraying bear spray into the faces of individual policemen, beating up on them with poles and pieces of furniture.

Yes, it was a pretty wild occasion, and it was a criminal occasion. It led to the most extensive criminal prosecution in the history of our country. Some 1,600 people were prosecuted for their conduct on January 6. And I will tell you, as someone who witnessed that and went through that experience, they deserved it. It just strikes me as outrageous.

If you heard on the news this afternoon that the Houses of Parliament in London had been invaded by a mob that had beaten down the doors of the House of Commons and took control of it, you would have said: That is impossible. That doesn't happen in a civilized country like England.

Well, it certainly shouldn't happen in the United States, and it did. I witnessed it.

Then came the President of the United States on his first day in office, and what did he do? He decided that every single person arrested for a crime related to January 6 should be released with a full and unconditional pardon. And that is what he did.

I asked my staff: Let's keep track of these people, see what happened to them. In the 3 weeks that have passed since the President made that decision, there are some interesting stories, sad stories.

Emily Hernandez pleaded guilty to entering and remaining in a restricted building or grounds in relation to her actions in the Capitol on January 6.

Ms. Hernandez was seen holding a stolen, broken nameplate of House Speaker NANCY PELOSI. She served 30 days in Federal prison and was released. Days after being pardoned by President Trump—days after being pardoned by President Trump—she was sentenced to 10 years in prison for a 2022 deadly drunk-driving crash in Missouri during which she collided with a couple—Victoria and Ryan Wilson—who had just left dinner, celebrating their 15th wedding anniversary. Victoria died in the crash, and Ryan sustained serious injuries.

Then there is Daniel Ball. Daniel Ball was arrested for throwing “an explosive device” that detonated on at least 25 officers and forcefully shoving police at the Capitol on January 6. Daniel Ball was in possession of a gun and ammunition as he came into the Capitol, which was illegal considering his criminal background. The Department of Justice dismissed Ball's charges following President Trump's pardon.

I have a long list here, and I am not going to read them all, but there is one in particular, released with a full pardon by President Trump for the January 6 crimes he committed. Guy Reffitt, the first defendant to stand trial on charges related to the January 6 Capitol insurrection, was sentenced to 87 months in prison for bringing a firearm into the Capitol on January 6, 2021.

Reffitt's 19-year-old son Jackson turned him into law enforcement after the attack. Jackson also indicated that Reffitt had threatened to shoot him and his sister Peyton if they reported him to authorities.

After receiving a pardon from President Trump, Guy Reffitt attended Kash Patel's Senate Judiciary Committee nomination hearing. Kash Patel is President Trump's nominee to be the Director and head of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Reffitt attended that committee nomination, and here is what he posted on social media afterward.

Remember: a man who is released after he was granted a full pardon, after he was convicted of bringing a firearm into the Capitol on January 6, 2021—certainly not a casual tourist by any means.

Here is what he said on social media:

Present and in support of Kash Patel as the leftist commies continue to spew lies, misinformation, and disinformation. My man, clean house Kash.

So it certainly seems like he learned his lesson, right? He served time in jail and was released with pardon by the President. He is at it again, defying the authorities, defying anyone who disagrees with him politically—full, unconditional pardon from Donald Trump.

The reason I wanted to make a note of Mr. Reffitt's history is that it is apropos of what I want to speak to this morning.

NOMINATION OF KASHYAP PATEL

Mr. President, this Thursday, the Senate Judiciary Committee is scheduled to consider whether to recommend Kash Patel's nomination to be Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation to the full Senate for consideration. So far, my Republican committee colleagues have chosen to ignore the myriad redflags about Mr. Patel, especially his recurring instinct to threaten retribution—political retribution—against his and President Trump's perceived enemies. This is a dangerous characteristic for a person who wants to lead the Nation's most powerful domestic, investigative Agency, the FBI. I hope that what I reveal today from credible whistleblowers at the highest levels will give my Republican colleagues some pause before it is too late.

Multiple whistleblowers have disclosed to my staff highly credible information indicating that Mr. Kash Patel has been personally directing the ongoing purge of senior law enforcement officials at the FBI.

Let me remind the Presiding Officer, Mr. Patel, at this moment in time, is not on any public payroll, nor does he have any authority by our government.

Listen. On the morning of January 29, the day before Kash Patel's confirmation hearing, there was a meeting between the acting leadership of the Department of Justice and the FBI. Notes from that morning meeting read:

KP wants movement at FBI, reciprocal actions for DOJ.

Let me say that again. Notes from the meeting:

KP wants movement at FBI, reciprocal actions for DOJ.

Acting Deputy Attorney General Emil Bove told the participants in this meeting that he had received multiple calls from the White House Deputy Chief of Staff Stephen Miller the night before. Miller had pressured him because Kash Patel—"KP"—wanted the FBI to remove targeted officials faster, as DOJ had already done with prosecutors.

The list of officials identified for termination was in the possession of a group of individuals who, according to our sources, were personally interviewed by Mr. Patel to be on what was known as the Director's Advisory Team.

This advisory team at the FBI is a group of political appointees who were brought in to prepare for Mr. Patel's arrival. The FBI's leadership understanding of the Advisory Team's list was that "a lot of names were people in the crosshairs."

According to my whistleblower sources, Mr. Patel is receiving information from within the FBI from the Director's Advisory Team. Mr. Patel then provides direction to Stephen Miller, who relays it to Acting Deputy Attorney General Bove.

It is unacceptable for a nominee with no legal or current role in government to personally direct the unjustified and

potentially illegal firings of dedicated, nonpartisan professionals at the FBI.

If these allegations are true, then Mr. Patel may have committed perjury before the Senate Judiciary Committee. A day after the meeting I described, where Mr. Patel's desire for FBI officials to be fired more quickly was discussed, was Mr. Patel's confirmation hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee. So the morning after he is putting the heat on the leadership at the FBI to dismiss more people more quickly, he testifies before the Judiciary Committee under oath.

During the hearing, Senator CORY BOOKER of New Jersey asked Mr. Patel:

Are you aware of any plans or discussions to punish in any way, including termination, FBI agents or personnel associated with Trump investigations? Yes or no.

Mr. Patel answered that he was "not aware of that," and continued:

I don't know what is going on right now over there, but I'm committed to you, Senator, and your colleagues that I will honor the internal review process of the FBI.

Yet, if these whistleblower allegations are true, just 2 days before, Stephen Miller, at Mr. Patel's direction, had ordered DOJ leadership not just to terminate a specific list of officials but to speed up those terminations.

Mr. Patel seems to be unable to wait for Senate confirmation to carry out retribution against his perceived political enemies.

Patel is a private citizen today, and he was when he testified, with no current role in government, directing baseless firings of career public servants. This speaks directly to the fact that Mr. Patel is not fit to be entrusted with government authority, which is evident to anyone who has seriously reviewed his record.

And let me remind you: He is not seeking a term of 2 years or 4 years but 10 years as Director of the FBI.

The ramifications of these terminations at the FBI are dangerous. They go way beyond Mr. Patel's fitness for office, because these terminations have greatly weakened the FBI's ability to protect the country from national security threats and have made America less safe.

This hollowing out of one of the major law enforcement Agencies of the Federal Government by the new Trump administration is at the risk of making America more dangerous and people in America more vulnerable to criminal and terrorist elements.

Among those who were removed so far—so far—by the Trump administration are the top officials who oversee the FBI's work combatting international and domestic terrorism.

Think about that. The Trump administration starts off by going to the Department of Justice, the Federal Bureau of Investigations, and comes up with a political list, and among those people who were eliminated are the people in charge of combatting international and domestic terrorism, cyber security threats, human and drug traf-

ficking, and violent crime. Does that make us any safer?

Mr. Patel's need to punish his perceived enemies is apparently greater than his interest in protecting the American people. Given the serious nature of these allegations and the need to protect the identities of my sources, I have asked the Department of Justice inspector general today, in a letter, to investigate these specific claims. I believe they are true, but the inspector general can make his own conclusion.

I will urge my Republican colleagues to, please, take these allegations seriously and, at least, pause for a moment and consider whether Kash Patel is the person you want to put in charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation for 10 years—10 years.

If this man is so fast and loose with the truth before our committee now, imagine what he will do if given the protection of office.

We need to pause in this consideration and consider what we already know about Mr. Patel. He has pledged to "shut down FBI headquarters," in writing, and, "come after" the President's enemies.

He has even published the enemies' list that he will target. I know I have read it, and anybody can in the book that he has published.

He falsely claimed that the FBI "was planning January 6 for a year," and has even sold musical recordings of a song performed by January 6 rioters who violently assaulted police officers on January 6.

He has left behind a trail of grievances throughout his life, lashing out at anyone who dares to disagree with him or fails to respect him sufficiently.

You want to give power to this man, the power of the investigation of the Federal Bureau of Investigation? I think not.

Now there are these credible allegations that he has personally orchestrated a purge of senior FBI law enforcement officials.

The FBI is an Agency that plays a critical role in keeping us safe from terrorism, violent crime, narcotics, and other threats. Our Nation needs an FBI Director who understands the gravity of the mission, not someone who is focused on settling a political score.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SHEEHY). The Senator from Iowa.

NOMINATION OF ROBERT F. KENNEDY, JR.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, after the Gabbard nomination, the next issue up for consideration by the Senate is cloture on the Robert F. Kennedy nomination to be Secretary of Health and Human Services. This Cabinet position is responsible for implementing the administration's health agenda.

As Secretary, Mr. Kennedy must spend his time focused on improving the health of all Americans, ensuring HHS is transparent and accountable to congressional oversight, and respecting whistleblowers.

I think Kennedy has made it very clear, in life as a citizen, talking about improving the health of all Americans.

So I would like to outline some of the priorities that Mr. Kennedy should focus on at Health and Human Services. And, obviously, I am asking him to focus on things and issues that are very dear to my heart and take up a lot of my time as a Senator from Iowa and a person very concerned about the quality of healthcare in rural America.

Our country spends more than \$4.5 trillion annually on healthcare. Growing healthcare costs don't just strain Americans' pocketbooks. Healthcare is also a major driver of widening budget deficits and the Federal Government's unsustainable fiscal outlook.

We are not getting our money's worth for all of that spending. Major healthcare programs spending eats up 34 percent of the Federal revenue today, and that will grow to 41 percent of revenue by 2055.

Mr. Kennedy must—and I think he is committed to—ensure that the key health programs, such as Medicare and Medicaid, are protected and strengthened by rooting out waste, fraud, and abuse.

The nominee must increase transparency and accountability. These actions will help make our healthcare system more efficient for the taxpayers and the consumers.

I am the author of major and more recent updates to the Federal Government's most powerful tool in fighting fraud, and that is people that use the False Claims Act. Since the enactment of this legislation—I am talking about reforms to the False Claims Act—the Federal Government has recovered more than \$78 billion lost to fraud and saved billions more by deterring would-be fraudsters.

People in the Justice Department, both Republican and Democrat, say that the False Claims Act is their best tool to get after these fraudsters.

In the 1 year of just 2024—and Attorney General Garland reported this to me just a couple of days before he left office—in 2024, there was more than \$2.9 billion in False Claims Act settlements and judgments, with \$1.7 billion of it involving the healthcare industry.

Now, as you know, I listen to a lot of whistleblowers, and whistleblowers were responsible for helping to recover nearly all of that \$1.7 billion.

And I think I discussed the False Claims Act and the use of it by soon-to-be Secretary Kennedy. He seemed to be very enthused about listening to whistleblowers and use of the False Claims Act, and I think that he was probably being made aware of it for the first time. So I hope he will look into how he can use this act and, particularly, by listening to reports from whistleblowers of the waste of taxpayers' money.

Now, the Justice Department and HHS, in combination, need to more aggressively go after healthcare waste, fraud, and abuse and empower and encourage whistleblowers.

My top healthcare priority is lowering the cost of prescription drugs. We

can start by putting more sunshine on pharmacy benefit managers' practices and holding these PBMs accountable.

We should also establish price transparency on prescription drug TV ads. Knowing what something costs before buying it is just common sense and very helpful to the consumer. Transparency will bring more accountability and lower costs to consumers.

Mr. Kennedy must also protect and improve access to rural healthcare. The previous administration dragged its feet in opening up spots for what is termed the Rural Community Hospital Demonstration programs. HHS must also listen to the concerns from rural pharmacies and ensure rural hospitals benefit from additional physician slots that Congress has authorized.

I look forward to strengthening the new and voluntary rural emergency program to ensure that it is working for rural communities, extending telehealth access, and supporting physicians getting a fair reimbursement under Medicare.

I also expect HHS to support healthy moms and babies by improving care, coordination, and using telehealth in rural areas.

HHS should work with me to support kids with complex medical needs so these kids and their families are getting the right care at the right time and at the right place. Our programs helping support kids with complex medical needs covers probably six or—well, depending on how many problems these kids have—but they have to navigate across several different programs, and what we are trying to do through legislation we pass is to have help so that when you have to see five or six different specialists, you have somebody saying what is available and what can we do to help you make access to all this.

I also expect HHS to protect the most vulnerable and older Americans.

I have spoken at length with Mr. Kennedy about some comments that he made in regard to agriculture, and I have heard from farmers in Iowa and agricultural organizations and commodity groups in the State, fearful that Mr. Kennedy has some radical ideas on agriculture.

At the end of the hour meeting I had in his office, prior to his hearing before the Finance Committee, I was calmed quite a bit by what he told me about his views on agriculture. I hope that that calm can be maintained. But if it is not, Mr. Kennedy is sure to hear from me. So when we talked about this in my office, Mr. Kennedy prefaced our initial conversation by saying that he, as HHS Secretary, will not have jurisdiction over agricultural issues. So you can expect that I will expect him to leave agriculture practices regulations to the proper Agencies and, for the most part, that is the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Environmental Protection Agency.

I have also sent letters to Secretaries of Agriculture and HHS requiring—re-

questing they provide information regarding conflicts of interest on the Dietary Guideline Advisory Committee to increase transparencies. The problem there is that there is a feeling among a lot of members of the Advisory Committee that they may have an unjustified conflict of interest in what they are suggesting we eat and the type of diet we have.

So I expect Mr. Kennedy to provide Congress with a confidential financial disclosure from the Advisory Committee before finalizing dietary guidelines so that we know that nobody has a vested interest in however those guidelines are written.

On issues of healthcare and agriculture, Mr. Kennedy said in his nomination hearing:

I agree with all of those provisions—

I am quoting him now.

I agree with all of those provisions, Senator.

Meaning this Senator.

My approach to [the] administration [of] HHS will be radical transparency. If members of this committee or other members of [the committee] want information, the doors are open. . . . [I]f Congress asks me for information, you will get it immediately.

That is the end of the quote. I don't know whether people, even in the Senate here but particularly outside, know how refreshing it is to have a member of the Cabinet say: If Congress asks me for information, you would get it immediately. Because over the years that I have been in the U.S. Senate, it doesn't matter whether it is a Republican or Democrat administration, carrying out our constitutional responsibilities to see that—checks and balances to see that the executive branch and the President faithfully executes the laws is not an easy process, and we have difficulty getting answers to our questions.

Now, I don't know how much of this—I have had trouble with HHS in the past, but I know when Pam Bondi came to my office, I showed her a file of 158 letters that I had written to the Justice Department in the last 4 years to get information and documents in regard to my investigations of wrongdoing, and most of them weren't answered. Or if we got answers, it was merely words on a sheet of paper. Not very helpful.

So thank you, Mr. Kennedy, for your promise. And I am going to quote again: If Congress asks me for information, you will get it immediately.

Because that is what our job is. Every high school student learns in government about checks and balances of government, that we not only pass laws and we not only appropriate money, but we have a responsibility to the taxpayers and the citizens of this country to make sure that a President does what the Constitution says he should do: faithfully execute the laws.

And Cabinet people are bound by that same thing. Every Cabinet member that comes to my office, I tell them

about the importance of our constitutional responsibility of oversight, answering our letters, and listening to whistleblowers. And in regard to answering letters, everybody that comes before a committee is asked by the chairman of that committee: Will you answer our letters? And everybody says yes. And I advise them to say “maybe” so that they aren’t turned out to be liars.

So I expect Mr. Kennedy’s Agency to provide timely and complete responses to congressional oversight. Oversight allows us to hold bureaucrats accountable to the rule of law and helps keep faith with the taxpayers.

So I look forward to working with Mr. Kennedy to improve the health of all Americans, make our healthcare system more efficient, and ensure HHS’s adherence to Kennedy’s radical transparency commitment.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, the Governor of the great State of Texas, Greg Abbott, has made a request to the U.S. Congress to reimburse our State for the expenses we have incurred in attempting to combat the Texas-Mexico border security crisis during the 4 years of the Biden administration. I am proud to support this request, along with my colleague Senator CRUZ and Members of the Texas delegation in the House of Representatives.

Securing the Nation’s borders is the responsibility of the Federal Government, plain and simple. Given the division of responsibilities between the States and the Federal Government, there is no doubt that this is a Federal responsibility. For 4 years, though, President Biden and Vice President Harris and Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas intentionally and willfully refused to enforce the laws on the books to keep the border secure and to keep our Nation safe.

Even before his first day in the Office, President Biden rolled out the welcome mat to illegal immigrants in speeches during his campaign, inviting—inviting—what ensued.

Early in his Presidency, President Biden ended President Trump’s very effective policy known as “Remain in Mexico.” This, very simply, provided that those who sought asylum needed to remain outside of the borders of the United States while their asylum claim was litigated and ultimately decided, knowing that only about 15 percent of people who claim asylum ultimately are awarded that by an immigration court.

The Biden administration ended construction of President Trump’s border wall, and, instead, spent Federal funds to store those materials that had already been paid for, squandering taxpayer dollars in the process.

And as this crisis was evolving and worsening, President Biden ended title 42 authority, the COVID-era policy that was the last string in place helping to keep the lid on the illegal immigration crisis. So not only did the Biden administration turn a blind eye to what was an international responsibility and thus a Federal Government responsibility, they went a step further and actually actively enacted policies to make it worse.

The Department of Homeland Security invited more illegal immigration when it created an app for your phone called the CBP One app, Customs and Border Protection app, which allowed immigrants to literally schedule an appointment at a port of entry in order to illegally enter the United States. Of course, even those who did not claim asylum were simply paroled or released into the interior, along with a work permit.

Here, again, there was no manner of deterrence saying: Well, if you want to enter the United States, you need to do so according to the rules in an orderly basis.

Essentially, all the rules were set aside, and a big green light and a welcome mat were laid out for anybody and everybody who wanted to come—and come they did. Tens of millions of people—we really don’t know exactly how many—took advantage of this open border policy by the Biden administration. Let’s say 10 million in round numbers. We know that about 1.7 million people were “got-aways,” which is what the Border Patrol calls those who were evading law enforcement who presumably are up to no good because they know they can’t enter otherwise because they have either a criminal record or they are transporting drugs or engaged in some other illicit activity.

At the same time that the Biden administration laid out the welcome mat to anybody and everybody who wanted to come to the United States across our border, they issued hundreds of millions of dollars in reimbursements to nonprofits and nongovernmental organizations that helped facilitate this illegal immigration through FEMA’s Emergency Food and Shelter Program. Instead of meeting their responsibilities to secure the border, they essentially funded those organizations that facilitated it.

Vice President Harris was assigned the task, as we know, of being the border czar that helped manage this crisis, but she failed to even understand the assignment and failed utterly at completing that assignment.

She visited the Texas-Mexico border once in sort of what I would call a driveby during the 4 years that President Biden and Vice President Harris were in office.

It is safe to say she had no concept or clue about what conditions were like on the border and how dangerous this open border policy was. Clearly she didn’t care and was unwilling to do anything about it.

On her one and only visit to the Texas border, she steered clear of the hotspots, like the Rio Grande Valley, which was the very epicenter of the border crisis at the time. Instead, she went to El Paso for a sanitized, made-for-TV visit. Different parts of the border are very different, and instead of going to the place where she knew the action would be, she went to a place that was relatively calm and sedate. But she did it for a TV hit and no other reason.

In 2024, when the Democratic Party deposed President Biden as their nominee and coronated Vice President Harris as their Presidential candidate, she suddenly found herself campaigning to be President of the United States, but she actually shirked from the responsibilities President Biden had given her as the border czar and claimed that she was never actually tasked to oversee the migration crisis.

Suffice it to say that the Biden administration’s handling of border security was an unmitigated disaster. As a consequence, the State of Texas, which has 1,200 miles of common border with Mexico, was basically left up to its own devices. We had no choice but to pick up the slack and try to secure some semblance of basic safety for Texans and the rest of the country. Everything the State of Texas did to fill the gap inured not just to the benefit of the 31 million people who live in Texas but to the entire Nation.

Governor Abbott initiated something called Operation Lone Star, which resulted in the apprehension of more than half a million illegal immigrants by Texas law enforcement. Thanks to Operation Lone Star, law enforcement arrested more than 50,000 criminals trying to make their way across the border. Texas also built 240 miles of border barriers when the Federal Government refused to do its job. And officers across the State have seized more than half a billion deadly doses of fentanyl, which is the No. 1 cause of death for young people between the age of 18 and 45 in this country. As a result of Operation Lone Star, without any help at all from the Federal Government, Texas was able to reduce illegal immigration into the State by 87 percent.

Unfortunately, the State had to spend nearly \$4.8 billion—money that should have been provided by the Federal Government—Texas taxpayers had to foot the bill for \$4.8 billion on walls and barriers, local grants to counties and cities, processing criminal arrests, and moving migrants out of small Texas towns. The State also spent \$3.6 billion to deploy the National Guard for building border barriers, guarding and constructing those barriers, and assisting Border Patrol and Customs

and Border Protection. Another \$2.25 billion has gone toward personnel cost for Texas State troopers, law enforcement who were responsible for repelling additional illegal immigrants, arresting those who were committing crimes, as well as transnational gang members, cartel members, human smugglers, and human traffickers.

But this was just the start. There were costs associated with the prosecution of border crimes. At Operation Lone Star's criminal processing centers, State game wardens had to pitch in to help control the Rio Grande River on the border to help prevent illegal entries, and criminal processing centers required health and safety services.

We are all familiar with the saying "There is no such thing as a free lunch," but President Biden and Vice President Harris failed to pony up for 4 years and then asked Texans to pick up the tab for their bill. All told, Governor Abbott and the State legislature had to spend more than \$11 billion to make up for the Biden administration's blunders and malfeasance and nonfeasance when it came to border security and immigration.

So it is not particularly complicated. Securing the country's borders is a function of the Federal Government. And \$11 billion is no small amount of money for a State—particularly one that doesn't have an income tax—to provide that benefits the rest of the country. But this is no different than when the Federal Government steps in to help States that have to deal with extraordinary expenses during the wake of a natural disaster, as they did for Texas in the case of Hurricane Harvey. But instead of a natural disaster, what we had during the 4 years of the Biden administration was a manmade disaster.

While every State became a border State during the last administration, there are costs that Texas had to shoulder that our neighbors had not. It is just fair and right and just for Texas taxpayers to be made whole for the border security responsibilities it took on as a result of President Biden's dereliction of duty.

I am proud to support Governor Abbott's request for the State to be reimbursed. My colleagues on the House and Senate Appropriations Committees should expect me and Senator CRUZ and the entire Texas delegation to be strongly advocating for reimbursement for Texas in the coming weeks. I look forward to working with them in order to make this a reality.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

TARIFFS

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to talk to you about President Trump's tariffs. The media is in full meltdown. They are in a full meltdown mode after President Trump imposed duties and retaliatory tariffs this week on countries that

have basically been ripping the United States of America off, and they have been doing it for decades.

Apparently, globalists and Democrats are just fine with other countries imposing tariffs on the United States, but when it comes to President Trump trying to equalize it up, establish a level playing field for domestic producers, well, that is a bridge too far.

No one has been paying attention to President Trump. If they have been paying attention to President Trump, they should not remotely be surprised. He campaigned on this platform three times and has been crystal clear on his intentions. Now he is following through on his campaign promises. But in the corporate media—it seems to still be confused about all these tariffs. So let me spell it out.

President Trump's view on tariffs is as both a negotiating tool to get other countries to do a few things that we asked them to do and a way to boost American manufacturing and put American workers and businesses first, not last. President Trump has his work cut out for him after a disastrous 4 years for our small businesses and our corporations under the Biden administration.

The Biden administration made it clear to our friends and foes alike that globalists—the globalist agenda would take precedence over the safety and well-being of the American people. It is mind-boggling. Thankfully, those days are over.

The American people gave President Donald J. Trump a clear mandate to restore our country's superpower status and put all Americans first, all businesses first, everybody that does something in this country, and that starts, No. 1, with securing our borders.

Like I said many times, if you don't have a border, you don't have a country. And we have really struggled in the last four years. That is changing. That is why the master negotiator in chief, President Donald Trump, threatened to impose 25 percent tariffs on Mexico and Canada in just the last couple of weeks.

Over the last 4 years, the Mexican Government basically turned a blind eye while caravans of illegal aliens overran our borders, coming from Mexico, coming from Central America, all over the world, just overrunning our country. Thousands of women and children were trafficked, raped along the way. Drug cartels made an absolute fortune—absolute fortune—not just with drugs, by the way, but from payments of these illegals coming all the way through either Central America or South America to the United States—with a big basically tariff of their own, charging these people to come to the United States.

Lawlessness had become the status quo under President Biden. Nobody cared. The Democrats in this room—they didn't care. They didn't care what was going on. Let's just let them all come in. Let's let the drugs come in.

We lose 300 people pretty much every few days to illegal drugs in this country with overdoses, but let's not worry about that. Let's just worry about controlling our country the way they wanted to. Well, it has been a disaster.

Mexico showed zero signs of willingness to negotiate when President Trump took office. When he did take office, on January 20, they woke up real quick. President Trump correctly understands that Mexico's economy is heavily dependent on the United States of America and the citizens of this country. In fact, more than 80 percent of Mexico's exports come to the United States—80 percent come here—and American citizens buy those products that are made in Mexico. Mexico's economy would almost instantly—instantly—feel the effects of a 25-percent tariff, leaving Mexico's President, Claudia Sheinbaum, no choice—no choice—but to come to the negotiating table under the master negotiator, Donald Trump. So that is why he uses his tariffs—to get his point across—because people across the world take us for granted.

As a result, within hours—hours—of President Trump's announcement of the tariffs, Mexico caved. They saw real quick. Obviously, they are not stupid. They agreed to help the United States secure the border and crack down on the cartels and the illegal drugs coming in almost immediately. We could have done the same thing with the past administration, but it just shows you they couldn't have cared less what happened at our border.

Our neighbor to the north also caved to President Trump after a 25-percent tariff was threatened on Canada. Not only are illicit drugs, like fentanyl, coming into our country from Mexico, but there was also about a 2,000-percent increase in drugs that came across the border in 2023 and 2024 from Canada—a 2,000-percent increase. In the last fiscal year alone, enough fentanyl was seized at the northern border to kill 9.8 million Americans.

To me, that would be a very serious problem, but do you think the Democrats cared? No. There was no action at all by the Biden administration on Canada and no action on Mexico. But thanks to President Trump's leadership, our North American neighbors to the north and south are making changes now daily that will protect American citizens from deadly drugs, criminals, and human traffickers.

The No. 1 job of the President of the United States is to protect the people in this country first, and that is what President Trump is doing.

In addition to using tariffs as a negotiating tool, President Trump also views tariffs as a way to right the wrongs of past ineffective trade deals. That is why, this week, he is imposing a 25-percent tariff on all steel and aluminum imports, including those of Canada and Mexico.

Contrary to what the media is telling you, this isn't unprecedented. It is not

unusual. In fact, President Trump has helped shine a light on the fact that U.S. exporters face higher tariffs more than two-thirds of the time. We pay more tariffs than anybody. For example, among our major trading partners, China applies higher tariffs on 85 percent of U.S. products, and 90 percent on U.S. products from India.

Just think about that. We are paying tariffs on things coming into this country, but when we send things out, we get the heck tarified out of us from other countries. It is not fair trade.

These export imbalances don't just impact bottom lines; they also discourage domestic production. We have got to produce more in this country, and we have got to build more things in this country. That is what President Trump is trying to do. If we don't cut back on spending and start producing more in this country, this will not be the United States of America much longer because we will be bankrupt, and we will be reporting to somebody like China, which is buying our Treasury bills right and left—or they were.

One report conducted by the Department of Commerce in the first Trump administration found that excess production and capacity, particularly in China, have been major factors in the decline of domestic aluminum production. Basically, we are getting overwhelmed by aluminum from China that is not near as good as what we make in this country.

President Trump built one of the strongest economies in modern history in his first term—in modern history—but the Democrats failed to know that. They wanted to change it, and did they ever. They almost destroyed our economy. Jobs and wages were up when President Trump was in, and inflation was down. Americans had more money in their pockets. Thanks to President Trump's strategic tariffs, along with the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, companies were reshoring businesses back in the United States, right and left. They were coming back because they could make a profit.

That is what it is all about when you have a corporation—you have got to make a profit. President Trump was able to, because of tariffs, make more money for manufacturing in this country than going out of this country. You had companies like Ford canceling plans to build in Mexico—back in President Trump's first term—and, instead, opening one in Michigan. This turned out to be extremely important when COVID hit, and we were forced to rely on goods that were manufactured right here in the United States. We also found out pretty quick, just in drugs alone, that we make very few drugs in the United States. Where are they made? They are made in India and China. They have got to come back here. We have to be self-sustaining. Whether it is our healthcare technologies, agricultural products, or steel and aluminum, there is no reason for us to depend on other countries.

We are the No. 1 country in this world—we have been and will be in the future—in manufacturing and production. America has some of the best and brightest manufacturers and the best and brightest producers, farmers, and businesses. We take second to none. And from a national security perspective, it is dangerous to be reliant on other countries, which may not have the best interests of the United States' in mind. You can't blame them. They are looking out for themselves first. Well, we need to do the same thing.

That is not to mention the fact that the United States produces the cleanest steel in the world. You would think the Democrats and the climate cult would at least be happy about that. Think about that.

You know, President Trump just put tariffs on steel and aluminum. A lot of the steel and aluminum come in, and because of how they make it, it is some of the dirtiest steel in the world. We make the cleanest. Why in the world would we want to import something that is going to be detrimental to our country alone with this environment?

The tariffs being imposed this week are an important step in President Trump's plan to restore fairness to trade, to boost domestic manufacturing, and to put consumers and producers first. It is about time.

Three weeks into his Presidency, President Trump is keeping his promises. President Trump's strategic tariffs will strengthen and revitalize our Nation's economy, stop the flow of illicit drugs and illegal immigration, and make sure our trade deals are fair to both taxpayers and American manufacturers—America first. President Trump is utilizing every tool at his disposal, as we speak, including tariffs, to usher in the golden age of the American economy. We have to make that change. If we don't, we will not survive as the No. 1 country in the world. We will not regain that status, and we will be losing our national security.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CURTIS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:30 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mrs. BRITT).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

NOMINATION OF TULSI GABBARD

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, today I will be speaking about the nomination of Tulsi Gabbard to be Director of National Intelligence and my reasons for opposing her confirmation.

First, I believe the Senate must consider with this nomination the examples of blatant lawlessness of the administration. At every turn, Donald Trump is attacking the rule of law, disregarding the constitutional role of Congress, and trying to purge civil servants who defend our country every day. Meanwhile, Elon Musk's minions are gaining access to some of the government's most sensitive systems and records. American democracy and national security are at stake. If the Senate is going to confirm nominees, we need to know whether they will stand up for democratic principles, no matter what.

At our hearing, I asked Ms. Gabbard what she would do if Donald Trump tried to illegally withhold funds from the intelligence community inspector general. This was hardly a hypothetical question. Donald Trump has, in fact, sought to unilaterally cut off funding for a broad range of organizations despite the money having been appropriated by Congress. It is not just me saying this is illegal, the courts have ordered the administration to cut it out and resume the funding.

But when I asked Ms. Gabbard the question, she said:

I don't believe for a second President Trump would ask me to do something that would break the law.

Well, he is breaking the law and the country needs leaders who acknowledge that fact and stand up to him.

My concerns about Ms. Gabbard are also based on her recent turn toward extreme partisanship. Other partisans have been confirmed to leadership positions and intelligence Agencies. George Herbert Walker Bush was the head of the Republican National Committee, and he was successful enough as Director of Central Intelligence that they literally named the headquarters after him. Party affiliation is not the issue.

The problem is when partisanship distorts one's views of intelligence matters. Ms. Gabbard has written about a coup being perpetrated by the so-called deep state that includes, among others, the DNC and also the FBI, the CIA, and "a whole network of rogue intelligence and law enforcement agents."

Madam President, I have spent almost a quarter century as a member of the Intelligence Committee seeking to bring to light and stop government abuses across a range of programs and activities. These conspiracy theories do not help the bipartisan reform movement. They only serve to encourage a President who wants to tear down the entire intelligence community and replace it with loyalists.

So what happens next? If Ms. Gabbard is confirmed, my first order of

business will be to hold her to the commitments she made during her confirmation process.

With regard to surveillance policy, she expressed her support for a warrant requirement for U.S. person searches of communications collected under section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. With section 702 reauthorization up next year, DNI support for reforms like these will be critical to protecting the privacy rights of Americans.

Ms. Gabbard also confirmed that she has significant concerns about the constitutionality of several provisions of the PATRIOT Act. Importantly, she opposed mandated backdoors into encrypted communications, which threaten both Americans' privacy and national security. As she stated during her hearing:

These backdoors lead down a dangerous path that can undermine Americans' 4th amendment rights and civil liberties.

We are living in a time of increasingly devastating cyber breaches, including the Salt Typhoon compromise of our telecommunications infrastructure. The lesson from that hack was that surveillance capabilities designed for law enforcement will be targeted by foreign intelligence services. In other words, there is simply no way for the government to mandate access to Americans' encrypted communications and not also expose those communications to the government of China or other adversaries.

Let me mention something particularly alarming last week. The press reported that UK officials insisted that Apple provide them a back door into files backed up to Apple's iCloud service. This is a development that threatens America's national security and Americans' privacy. That is even before U.S. Government officials come around once again asking for the very same dangerous and irresponsible accesses. That is why Ms. Gabbard's statement was so important and why, if she is confirmed, the Congress needs to hold her and the rest of America's intelligence Agencies to it.

During her confirmation process, Ms. Gabbard supported restrictions on the collection of communications records of America's journalists. She endorsed the Biden administration Justice Department policy prohibiting this collection except in very narrow circumstances. That was a policy she said was "essential to protecting press freedoms and maintaining the critical balance between national security and upholding the First Amendment." She also called for making sure that policy was actually codified.

I asked Ms. Gabbard about the collections of communications records of congressional Members and staff, as was detailed in a Department of Justice Inspector General report released late last year. She agreed that this spying on Congress was a "significant breach of the Constitution and separation of powers" and, most importantly,

she endorsed reforms to keep it from happening again.

During this confirmation process, she also confirmed that the Government Accountability Office should audit the intelligence community to ensure that it is not targeting Americans outside of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. She also expressed support for the Public Interest Declassification Board, which has the task of promoting transparency.

Finally, I asked Ms. Gabbard whether intelligence Agency whistleblowers must have a clear path to the Senate Intelligence Committee and don't need permission from Agencies to talk to the members. She responded that the answer was "clearly yes." Given Donald Trump's ongoing attacks on public servants defending the rule of law, that protection of whistleblowers that we discussed may be one of the most important principles of all.

Let me wrap up this way, Madam President. In just 3 short weeks since his inauguration, here is the checks and balances scoreboard on President Trump: He has illegally fired inspectors general; he has purged the three Democratic members of the independent Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board, not only removing the most pro-privacy members, but leaving the board without enough members to function; he has appointed or nominated people to carry out political retribution, including a nominee to be FBI Director who comes with his own published enemies list. At the same time, Donald Trump has demonstrated thorough contempt for the security of Americans' private information by granting Elon Musk's people unsupervised access to the country's most sensitive security systems and databases.

So what will happen when he attempts to steamroll oversight and the rule of law and put the privacy and constitutional rights of all Americans at risk and on the line? If she is confirmed, it will be up to Ms. Gabbard to stand up to him and stick to the principles and commitments that she has expressed and answered in response to my questions. It will be our responsibility to ensure that she does just that.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

RUSSIA

Mr. WICKER. Madam President, I come to the floor to direct Members' attention to a very important article on the front page of yesterday's Wall Street Journal, February 10, 2025, by Thomas Grove. The headline states "Be Cruel," how Russia tortured Ukrainians. This is a most disturbing bit of news, and it demonstrates who we are dealing with in hoping somehow that there will be a negotiated settlement of Vladimir Putin's illegal invasion of a smaller neighbor that he thought was weaker, in violation of every international law dealing with this.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to have the article by Mr. Grove printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[Feb. 10, 2025]

EXCLUSIVE—"BE CRUEL": INSIDE RUSSIA'S TORTURE SYSTEM FOR UKRANIAN POWS

(By Thomas Grove)

In the weeks after Russia invaded Ukraine, the head of St. Petersburg's prisons delivered a direct message to an elite unit of guards tasked with overseeing the influx of prisoners from the war: "Be cruel, don't pity them."

Maj. Gen. Igor Potapenko had gathered his service's special forces at the regional headquarters to tell them about a new system that had been designed for captured Ukrainians.

Normal rules wouldn't apply, he told them. There would be no restrictions against violence. The body cameras that were mandatory elsewhere in Russia's prison system would be gone.

The guards would rotate through Russia's prison system, serving a month at a time in prisons before other teams took their place. Across the country, other units—from Buryatia, Moscow, Pskov and elsewhere—received similar instructions.

Those meetings set in motion nearly three years of relentless and brutal torture of Ukrainian prisoners of war. Guards applied electric shocks to prisoners' genitals until batteries ran out. They beat the prisoners to inflict maximum damage, experimenting to see what type of material would be most painful. They withheld medical treatment to allow gangrene to set in, forcing amputations.

Three former prison officials told The Wall Street Journal how Russia planned and executed what United Nations investigators have described as widespread and systematic torture. Their accounts were supported by official documents, interviews with Ukrainian prisoners and a person who has helped the Russian prison officials defect.

The officials—two from the special forces and one member of a medical team—have entered a witness-protection program after giving testimony to the International Criminal Court's investigators. The two special-forces officers said they quit the prison service before they were forced to engage in torture but kept in touch with their colleagues who stayed.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Russian and Ukrainian ombudsmen overseeing the treatment of prisoners were in contact and that exchanges were continuing. He said broad generalizations about Russian prison conditions are unfounded. "You have to look at individual cases," he said.

Neither the office of Russia's commissioner for human rights nor its presidential human-rights commission responded to requests for comment.

The ICC has accused Russia of attacking civilians and unlawfully transporting Ukrainian children to Russia, issuing at least six arrest warrants for Russian officials, including for President Vladimir Putin. Other investigations are continuing, the ICC said, but it declined to comment further.

Russia has a long history of cruelty in its prison system, reaching back to the earliest decades of the Soviet Union, when Joseph Stalin created labor camps for those deemed dangerous to Soviet rule. In recent decades, Russia has taken some steps to improve conditions, such as separating first-time offenders from the rest of the prison population,

and some regions have introduced body cameras for guards after years of campaigning by human-rights groups.

But Russia's prison system remains a separate world inside the country, with its own rules, slang and even tattoos meant to denote authority within prison walls. Many prisons are in remote locations where the guards act with impunity, said the prisoners and rights advocates.

The special forces in the Russian prison services aren't regular guards who are based in individual prisons full time. Instead, they act as a praetorian guard that is called in to deal with particularly dangerous situations, such as conducting searches or controlling uprisings.

While dealing with Ukrainian prisoners of war, they were tasked with working with local prison guards to direct the POWs' activities. They interpreted Potapenko's instructions at that March 2022 meeting as a *carte blanche* for violence, said the two former guards. They pushed their mistreatment of Ukrainians to a new level with the belief that they had the permission of their leadership, said one of the former guards.

While on duty, the guards wore balaclavas at all times. Prisoners were beaten if they looked a guard in the eye. Those measures, along with the monthlong rotations, were taken to make sure individual guards and their superiors couldn't be recognized later, said one of the former officers.

In March 2022—the same month that Potapenko held the meeting with guards in St. Petersburg—Russia began preparing its penitentiary system for the arrival of prisoners from the war. Letters went out to prison authorities across Russia ordering them to clear out floors, wings and even entire prisons, according to documents and one of the former prison officials.

On the battlefield, Russia was encountering fiercer resistance from Ukrainians than Moscow had expected. Prison authorities were similarly unprepared for the number of POWs they would have to hold.

Pavel Afisov, who was taken prisoner in the city of Mariupol in the initial months of the war, was among the first Ukrainian prisoners detained in Russia. For 2½ years, the 25-year-old was moved from prison to prison in Russia before being released in October of last year.

He said beatings were the worst when he was transferred into new prisons. After arriving at a penitentiary in Russia's Tver region, north of Moscow, he was led by guards into a medical examination room and ordered to strip naked. They shocked him repeatedly with a stun gun while shaving his head and beard.

When it was over, he was told to yell "glory to Russia, glory to the special forces" and then ordered to walk to the front of the room—still naked—to sing the Russian and Soviet national anthems. When he said he didn't know the words, the guards beat him again with their fists and batons.

The violence served a purpose for the Russian authorities, according to the former guards and human-rights advocates: making them more malleable for interrogations and breaking their will to fight. Prison interrogations were sometimes aimed at extracting confessions of war crimes or gaining operational intelligence from prisoners who had little will to resist after they suffered extreme brutality.

The cruelty made them more willing to submit to Russian interrogators and drained "any will or ability to fight again if they are ever swapped," said Vladimir Osechkin, who heads human-rights organization Gulagu.net and has helped Russian officers from the penitentiary system leave the country and offer testimony to the ICC.

The former guards described a staggering level of violence directed at Ukrainian prisoners. Electric shockers were used so often, especially in showers, that officers complained about them running out of battery life too fast.

One former penitentiary system employee, who worked with a team of medics in Voronezh region in southwestern Russia, said prison guards beat Ukrainians until their police batons broke. He said a boiler room was littered with broken batons and the officers tested other materials, including insulated hot-water pipes, for their ability to cause pain and damage.

The guards, he said, intentionally beat prisoners on the same spot day after day, preventing bruises from healing and causing infection inside the accumulated hematoma. The treatment led to blood poisoning and muscle tissue would rot. At least one person died from sepsis, the officer said.

Many of the guards enjoyed the brutality and often bragged about how much pain they had caused prisoners, he said.

Ukrainian former POW Andriy Yegorov, 25, recalled how guards at a prison in Russia's western Bryansk region would force prisoners to run 100 yards through the hallway, holding mattresses above their heads. The guards stood to the side and beat them in the ribs as they ran by.

When they got to the end of the hall, they would be forced to do sit-ups and push-ups. Each time they came up, the guards would punch them or hit them with a baton.

"They loved it, you could hear them laughing between themselves while we cried out in pain," he said. "There I understood fear exists only for the future, you can be afraid of what happens in 10 or 15 minutes, you can be afraid of what might happen. But when it's happening, you're no longer afraid."

Two of the longest-held prisoners of war, both Afisov and Yegorov spent around 30 months in the Russian prison system before they were finally released in a swap that brought them home on Oct. 18.

Yegorov found out during his medical checkup following the exchange that he had five broken vertebrae. He is undergoing medical treatment for his injuries and has met with a hospital-appointed psychologist. But he is skeptical that the psychologist can help.

"If you haven't gone through what I've gone through, you can't help me," said Yegorov.

After returning home, Afisov resisted sleep for days, fearing it could turn out to be a dream and he would wake up back in prison. "Then whenever I finally trusted myself enough to fall asleep all I had was nightmares," he said.

The former prison officials were preparing to start new lives when they spoke with the *Journal*. They are now living in undisclosed locations and have had to cut off contact with people they had known all their lives.

One of them said he had always been a Russian patriot and never wanted to live anywhere else but Russia. But after the war began, he said, he couldn't stay in the country or remain silent. He said giving testimony to the ICC was one way to work toward justice.

Mr. WICKER. Madam President, it starts out by saying that in the beginning of this war, which now has lasted almost 3 years, word came down from the leadership of Vladimir Putin's dictatorship in Russia to prisoners of war captured by the Russian soldiers, from Major General Igor Potapenko: "Be cruel, don't pity them," the Ukrainian prisoners.

We all know that war is hell. There is no question about it. We also are finding out that Russia has learned this. They thought that it would be a 1- or 2-day excursion and that they would be welcomed by pro-Russian Ukrainians as they rolled their tanks in. They found out very differently soon, and 3 years later, we have seen how the Ukrainians have fought and died for their own homeland.

Also, once a combatant has been captured, there are very important international rules and regulations and a matter of international law—which can be punished by life imprisonment, which can be punished by the death penalty—about treatment of prisoners of war.

This is what we are learning about what Major General Igor Potapenko told the Russian prison officials that they could do: "There would be no restrictions against violence" against these prisoners of war. "The body cameras mandatory elsewhere in Russia's . . . system would be gone. The guards would rotate . . . serving a month at a time in prisons before other teams took their place. Across the country, other units . . . received similar instructions."

We are not finding this out, by the way, from some international reporter that somehow got into the system and saw this.

This is information given by former Russian prison guards who were so disturbed by these orders that they defected to the West. Three Russian prison guards are telling *The Wall Street Journal* and Americans and anyone who would listen about the horrors. This resulted in nearly 3 years of relentless torture.

Guards applied electric shocks to prisoners' genitals until the batteries ran out.

I am almost reluctant to speak these words in public.

They beat prisoners to inflict maximum damage, experimenting to see what kind of material would be most painful. Then, when there were medical problems, as there would surely be, medical treatment was withheld to allow gangrene to fester, forcing amputations.

Three former prison officials told this reporter how Russia planned and executed what United Nations' investigators have described as widespread and systematic torture. Their accounts were supported by official documents, interviews with Ukrainian prisoners, and a person who helped the prison officials defect.

Thank God they were able to defect.

This is also borne out by a former prisoner of war, Pavel Afisov, taken prisoner in Mariupol early in the war. He was among the first Ukrainian prisoners detained in Russia. For 2½ years, this 25-year-old combatant, who was entitled to the protections afforded by the Geneva Conventions, was, instead, moved from prison to prison before being released just last October.

He said beatings were the worst when he was transferred. After arriving at a penitentiary in Russia's Tver region north of Moscow, he was led into a medical examination room and ordered to strip. Guards shocked him repeatedly with a stun gun while shaving his head and beard. When it was over, he was told to yell "Glory to Russia! Glory to the Special Forces!" and then, still naked, he was ordered to sing the Russian and Soviet—and Soviet—national anthems. When he said he didn't know the words, the guards beat him with fists and batons.

This is hard to read, but what did the former guards say—Russian citizens—who thankfully have been willing to defect and come forward and tell the truth about the vicious, brutal, illegal regime of Vladimir Putin?

The former guards described a staggering level of violence directed at Ukrainian prisoners. Electric shockers were used often, especially in showers; that officers complained they were running out of batteries too fast. Can't do this anymore because the batteries have gone dead. The guards used police batons until they broke. Officers tested other materials, including insulated hot water pipes, for their ability to cause pain and damage.

This is Putin's Russia. This is the regime that some people are hoping we can somehow negotiate with in good faith and depend on them to keep up their end of the bargain.

The guards intentionally beat the prisoners at the same spot on their bodies every day, preventing bruises from healing and causing infection, and at least one person died of sepsis because of this type of brutality.

The guards enjoyed their brutality. According to these Russians who were guards at the facility and who defected rather than countenance what their own government was doing, Ukrainian former POW Andriy Yegorov recalled how guards at a prison in Russia would force prisoners to run 100 yards through the hallway, holding mattresses above their heads. The guards stood to the side and beat them on the ribs as they ran by. When they got to the end of the hall, they would be forced to do sit-ups and push-ups, and each time they came up, the guards would punch them or hit them with a baton.

I would say to my colleagues that this is not a bunch of prison guards gone rogue; this is a bunch of prison guards in Vladimir Putin's dictatorship and Vladimir Putin's illegal regime that were following orders from a high-ranking major general.

There are differences about the United States' interest in Ukraine, but I will tell you that the countries around Ukraine—in the neighborhood—know what they are facing, and they know, if Vladimir Putin succeeds in his illegal war to take over a neighbor, that it will not be the end of it. One can only listen to what we are hearing out of neighboring countries—out of

the Republic of Georgia, out of neighboring Armenia, and Azerbaijan. Russia intends and the war criminal Vladimir Putin intends to return to as much of the old Soviet Union dictatorship as he possibly can.

I hope this war ends. Frankly, I have hoped for 3 years under the Biden administration that that administration would provide the freedom fighters inside their own country to have the necessary equipment, the necessary ammunition, the necessary permission to defeat this illegal invasion. But I simply, at this point, want to alert anyone who is listening—my colleagues, anyone who is listening to the sound of my voice in any way—to the reality of the utter cruelty, of the unspeakable conditions that Russia uses in violation of every international law.

If Vladimir Putin comes to the negotiating table and agrees to a cease-fire, we need to bear in mind that he is the gentleman who has countenanced this outrage that I have barely been able to speak about today. Any negotiations we have with the Russians and with the current leadership need to be done in light of the facts as outlined in this independent report.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

NOMINATION OF TULSI GABBARD

Mr. REED. Madam President, I rise to oppose the nomination of Tulsi Gabbard to be Director of National Intelligence.

In its first few days in office, the Trump administration has been remarkably cavalier and incompetent in its handling of our national security affairs—shutting off foreign aid; threatening Panama, Greenland, and Canada; calling for the mass deportation of Palestinians from Gaza. And just last week, it was reported that the CIA sent an unclassified email, listing all employees it had hired over the last 2 years, in order to comply with an Executive order from President Trump. One former Agency officer called this a "counterintelligence disaster."

The President's choices to lead our national security Agencies have also not inspired confidence.

The Director of National Intelligence, or DNI, serves a critical role in leading the intelligence community and in collecting analysis so that the President, Congress, and decision-makers across the U.S. Government have the best and most timely information for our national security. Indeed, the office was created after 9/11 to better coordinate analysis across the intelligence community. The position of DNI requires someone of great experience, character, judgment, and the confidence to speak truth to power, especially when the findings of the intelligence community differ from the policy objectives of the administration.

While I respect Ms. Gabbard's military service, including overseas deployments, she does not have a demonstrated record of experience to qual-

ify her to lead the intelligence community. As DNI, she would oversee 18 different organizations, tens of thousands of military and civilian personnel, and an annual budget of more than \$100 billion. She has never even served in an intelligence role, much less led a global intelligence enterprise.

More concerning than Ms. Gabbard's lack of experience is her record of erratic statements and actions, many of which have run counter to the interests and findings of the intelligence community.

In 2020, Ms. Gabbard and Congressman Matt Gaetz cosponsored a resolution calling on the Federal Government to drop all charges against Edward Snowden. Snowden was a contractor who was indicted for espionage and for publicly releasing the details of some of our most sensitive intelligence efforts, including those that were conducted jointly with foreign allies and partners, before Snowden fled to Russia.

Former Deputy DNI Sue Gordon responded to Ms. Gabbard's defense of Snowden by saying:

It reflects a lack of understanding of who we are, and it reflects a lack of respect for what we do. Unauthorized disclosures of intelligence are always bad. Don't go with the good or bad, any good outcome or whether he was right or wrong. . . . He not only harmed intelligence, he harmed our allies and partners, and he harmed our businesses by what it allowed China to assume about that. There is nothing justifiable about what he's done. None.

Let me be clear: Edward Snowden's betrayal has cost American lives. He is a traitor by every definition of the word.

As the chairman of the Intelligence Committee, Senator COTTON, has said in the past, Mr. Snowden is an "egotistical, serial liar and traitor whose unauthorized disclosures of classified information have jeopardized the safety of Americans and allies around the world. Snowden's close and continual contact with Russian intelligence services speak volumes. He deserves to rot in jail for the rest of his life."

Yet, during her confirmation hearing, Ms. Gabbard was repeatedly asked whether or not she believed that Snowden was a traitor. I think colleagues on both sides of the aisle were stunned that she not only refused to do so but that she continued to defend him.

Our national security leaders consistently emphasize that the greatest advantage we have over our adversaries is our network of allies and partners, including those who share intelligence with us. If Ms. Gabbard is confirmed as DNI, I have serious concerns about whether or not our allies and partners will trust her with their nations' most sensitive intelligence given her past actions.

I am also concerned about the pattern of statements over the years by Ms. Gabbard peddling what the intelligence community has found to be Russian propaganda.

For example, at the outset of Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, as eloquently described by the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, Ms. Gabbard stated:

This war and suffering could have easily been avoided if [the] Biden administration [and] NATO had simply acknowledged Russia's legitimate security concerns regarding Ukraine's becoming a member of NATO, which would mean U.S. [and] NATO forces right on Russia's border.

After Ukraine bravely withstood Russia's initial assault, the Kremlin began a campaign of misinformation designed to legitimize its illegal war. These themes were repeatedly amplified by Gabbard in her public comments, including with respect to the widely disputed Russian allegation of a U.S.-funded covert biological weapons program in Ukraine.

As our former colleague Mitt Romney tweeted at the time she made these bogus claims, "Tulsi Gabbard is parroting false Russian propaganda. Her treasonous lies may well cost lives."

In reviewing Ms. Gabbard's statements, the New York Times found:

Ms. Gabbard honed her pro-Russia views on [Tucker] Carlson's show on FOX News before his program was canceled. She became a regular guest and occasionally filled in as host when Mr. Carlson was away.

Clips from her appearances on Mr. Carlson's show that repeated Kremlin talking points were quickly picked up by Russian state media.

In some cases, she echoed story lines that Russia's propagandists created, which the Russians then recycled on their own media as evidence that the conspiracy theories they had manufactured were true. For the Kremlin, it was a virtuous cycle.

Ms. Gabbard has been roundly and appropriately criticized for her unannounced 2017 trip to Syria, where she met with Syria's then-President Bashar al-Assad. She justified that trip by saying:

We've got to be able to meet with anyone that we need to if there's a possibility that we could achieve peace.

Ms. Gabbard's decision to carry out an unofficial trip to Syria in the midst of a civil war—a conflict in which Bashar al-Assad was using chemical weapons against his own people—showed incredibly poor judgment. Her visit did nothing to advance the cause of peace but, rather, helped to legitimize Assad's brutal dictatorship.

Just months later, Ms. Gabbard criticized President Trump's decision to use military force to deter further chemical weapons use by Assad and even expressed skepticism about whether Assad had actually used chemical weapons.

Madam President, it would be the height of charity to say that Ms. Gabbard has consistently demonstrated poor judgment on critical national security matters, but it is more than just that. Ms. Gabbard clings to her misjudgments even when she is shown to be wrong. That is a disturbing character flaw for this critical role.

Above all else, the DNI must be unquestionably loyal to our national interests and trustworthy with our national secrets. The intelligence they control has life-or-death consequences.

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle—some of whom have indicated great discomfort with Ms. Gabbard and her troubling disregard for America's security interests—appear willing to vote for her confirmation despite their misgivings.

At this critical moment, all Senators must honestly answer these questions: Given everything you know about Tulsi Gabbard, do you trust her with life-or-death national secrets? Can you look members of our intelligence community in the eye and say that you believe Tulsi Gabbard will serve and protect them and this Nation?

I have seen enough to know my answer, and I urge my colleagues to vote against this nominee.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BANKS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Mr. President, I rise today as a very new Senator, a freshman Senator, to talk about the confirmation prospects for the nominee for the Director of National Intelligence, Tulsi Gabbard.

I think context matters here. I am the first CIA officer to ever be elected to the U.S. Senate. Before I ran for office in Michigan, I had a career in national security. I am what is called a 9/11 baby. I happened to be in New York City on my second day of graduate school when 9/11 happened. It changed my life. I decided to go into national security.

I got recruited by the CIA right out of grad school and then was quickly sent on my first of three tours in Iraq alongside the military, providing intelligence to the U.S. military to deal with the groups that were shooting at U.S. forces and plotting against the U.S. homeland.

I worked in national security roles very proudly in both administrations, Democratic and Republican. I worked in the White House for George W. Bush, and I was there the Friday that he left office and the Monday that Barack Obama walked in. I did the same job for two very different Presidents, one for each party. I went on to be a Pentagon Assistant Secretary of Defense. But in between all of that time, one of the things I got to do was help stand up the Office of the Director of National Intelligence.

I was the intelligence briefer in Baghdad for Ambassador John Negroponte, who was the first Ambassador to Iraq under the Bush adminis-

tration. I would provide him intelligence briefings early, early in the morning.

One day, he came back from a trip to Washington and said: I am going to be nominated to be the first Director of National Intelligence. It is this completely new position. It is a position that has been created because of the failures of 9/11, our failures to anticipate the attacks of 9/11, to put the pieces together between the FBI, the CIA, the military, all those who had a piece of the story but didn't have a place and a venue to combine it all together to anticipate the most devastating attacks on the U.S. soil since Pearl Harbor.

I came home and happened to be one of those first employees to set up the Director of National Intelligence. I think I was employee No. 5. I was John Negroponte's first special assistant. So I was his, you know, body person, helping him set up that office.

So when I talk about the nomination of Tulsi Gabbard, I don't do it willy-nilly. I don't do it without a background on these topics. And I believe that the people who should be taking the positions that are critical for national security should be people of competence and character.

What does the Director of National Intelligence do? The Office was created, as I said, to combine all of the different threads of information at the 17 different intelligence community Agencies that we have to prevent intelligence failures like we had on 9/11.

This is a serious position. This is a position that in the past has been in the Oval Office every morning with the intelligence briefings provided by the Agencies. This is the position that in the dead of night makes consequential decisions on the security and safety of people here.

Most Americans have no idea the number of threats we still thwart every single month against our homeland. We sleep well at night because the intelligence community is working together to prevent those threats, along with our partners and our allies and our military.

So, for me, I want to know that the person who is going to be woken up in the middle of the night to make those last-minute decisions—do we move on that intelligence? do we act based on that threat?—that they are someone, again, of competence and character, and what I have seen from Ms. Gabbard does not meet that threshold.

She has, first of all, repeatedly questioned the integrity of the intelligence community. She has gone after the intelligence community that she hopes to lead.

She has labeled tens of thousands of intelligence personnel as deep state without even a semblance of understanding of what they do every day to keep her safe.

She has questioned the findings of the intelligence community.

I think more egregious than anything, she has shown a repeated preference for our adversaries over the intelligence community and the United States of America. Most notably, a surprise trip to visit the now-ousted President of Syria, Bashar al-Assad.

Imagine the decision making that goes into planning a secret trip to visit a man who has killed thousands of his countrymen, thousands of relatives of Michiganders that I represent; a man who we know has used chemical weapons, violating international law, devastating communities; a man who has seemingly sat aside as insurgent groups, terrorist groups took territory in his area and allowed them to project attacks into neighboring states and to plot against the U.S. homeland.

She makes the decision to go and visit this man, throw flowers at his feet, do public TV with him, go publicly and show her support. Now, I don't know if she is just deeply naive. I don't know if in some twisted way, she thought that this was her way of being helpful. But whether she did it out of naivete or she did it knowing what this man has done and the implications of her actions, either way shows a complete lack of judgment.

The same goes for her seeming glorification of Vladimir Putin. It is hard to understand, coming from the country that defeated the Soviet Union in the Cold War, that we would put a woman in charge of our entire intelligence community who has shown over and over repeated interest in Vladimir Putin, taking his side of the argument, wondering what he has done right and our intelligence community has done wrong.

Can you imagine what it feels like to be a member of the intelligence community right now, with everything going on, with all of the discrediting of what they have done and what they do every single day, and now this woman is going to be in charge of this Agency? It is an insult to people who have dedicated their lives and put themselves in harm's way, to have her confirmed into this position.

Now, we have watched her flip-flop on a bunch of issues, right? Issues that Democrats and Republicans have concerns with. You know, she used to have a lot of concern about what is called section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. She fought against it. Now she is somehow for it. I am not saying people can't change, but I am just saying someone who doesn't have the backbone to stand up and be clear with their principles—I am having a hard time imagining them lead in the heat of the moment, when you are in the Situation Room and consequential decisions are being made.

I think the feeling that I have about where we are in this country right now is that we are sort of in this fever dream. There is this race to discredit, to attack, to cut. And, look, I will be the first person to say that there is fat on the bone in the Federal Govern-

ment. I worked in the Federal Government. There are plenty of things that can be reformed in the Federal Government. But the double whammy of attacking the people who keep us safe every day, of trying to push them out—I just had a Republican Member on my way here say: Hey, I just heard about what is going on at CIA. Are they trying to get everyone to leave? What about people who are in sensitive positions?

Great question. But the other punch is to put someone in charge of the intelligence community that has such disdain for our allies, for our intelligence officers, and such love for our adversaries.

So I urge all of my Republican colleagues to search their soul. Play the long game. Don't live in fear of the Trump administration and Donald Trump specifically. You know in your heart that these people aren't qualified and that the life and limb of American citizens is in their hands.

So I urge all of my colleagues to vote against Tulsi Gabbard. I will be voting against her here later today.

I hope that we as American citizens can come up for air from this fever dream and remember that reform of the Federal Government does not mean slashing the people that keep us safe every day.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

KIDS OFF SOCIAL MEDIA ACT

Mrs. BRITT. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss an epidemic that is affecting our Nation's youth, a crisis each and every parent should be concerned about and one that so many parents I know already are.

Our kids' worsening mental health is an emergency, and it is an emergency clearly and undeniably linked to social media. Emergency room visits among adolescents for anxiety, mood disorders, and self-harm have all risen dramatically in the years since social media apps exploded onto the scene.

Over that same time period and during the second decade of this century, rates of depression amongst teenagers more than doubled. By 2019, 20 percent of teenagers agreed with the notion that "life often feels meaningless"—almost a 100-percent increase from a decade earlier.

According to the CDC, in 2021, and buckle up for this, one in three high school—young women said she actually considered death by suicide; 25 percent of teenage girls made a plan to do so; 9 percent of high schoolers and 13 percent of teenage girls actually attempted death by suicide.

As a mom, that is beyond horrifying. I worry for my own kids. I worry for their friends. And as a Senator, I worry about the future of the next generation of Americans.

To make matters worse, social media companies know the harm their platforms create. Instagram's parent company, Meta, conducted internal re-

search that showed that one-third of teenage girls who use the app report: It makes them feel worse, but they cannot stop.

And while social media companies have taken some steps, it is clear that there is work for Congress to do. The last time a U.S. President signed a major piece of legislation addressing children and the internet was—wait for it—1998.

So you look. Almost 30 years ago, the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act was signed into law. For reference, at the time that the law was signed, MySpace didn't even exist.

It is time for an update, and there is a clear place to start. Studies have shown the most damaging time for an adolescent to use social media is during their preteen years. And the 1998 law tried to address that. The law says that websites and other online services cannot collect personal information from children under 13 years old without parental consent. Now, the catch is that those websites have to know that the child is under 13.

The standard minimum age for social media platforms is 13. But current law creates an obvious incentive for companies not to verify whether their users are old enough to be on the app. And because social media companies have to know that a child is under 13 for the law to apply, they simply choose not to verify this information.

Look, anti-child-sex-abuse organization Thorn actually conducted a study in 2021 that showed that 49 percent of respondents between the age of 9 and 12 years old said that they had used Instagram; 52 percent said that they had used Facebook; 58 percent said that they had used Snapchat.

And it was just last week, in a Senate Judiciary Hearing, where I heard not one but two parents tell about their painful story where their children had died of fentanyl poisoning from a pill that they had bought on Snapchat, thinking it was something else. They thought they bought a Percocet; they thought they bought an oxycodone. It was laced with fentanyl, and now they are dead.

Sixty-nine percent of these people in this survey, between 9 and 12 years old, said that they had used TikTok.

The age limits social media companies claim they have mean absolutely nothing. That is why I introduced the Kids Off Social Media Act, alongside Senators TED CRUZ, CHRIS MURPHY, and BRIAN SCHATZ. The four of us approached this not as Democrats or Republicans, not as someone who sits on the right or the left, but as four concerned parents that are raising teenagers right now and dealing with this issue.

Our bill would set a minimum age of 13 years old for social media platforms, but that is not the only thing that it would do. The Kids Off Social Media Act would also prevent platforms from feeding targeted content picked by an algorithm to users under the age of 17.

For anyone who is curious about why that is in the bill, all you have to do is ask a teenager, especially a teenage girl. Former U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy wrote that nearly half of all adolescents say that social media makes them feel worse about their bodies. That doesn't seem like an accident.

If you read—and many people have—Jonathan Haidt's book "The Anxious Generation," you will learn that these apps use algorithms that "home in on and amplify girls' desires to be beautiful in socially prescribed ways, which include being thin."

Once that starts, once the algorithm starts feeding teenage girls images of increasingly thin and unhealthy women, the vicious cycle begins, and those girls end up finding images or videos promoting anorexia and/or, as Haidt says:

Emaciated young women urging their followers to try extreme diets like the "corpse bride" diet or the water-only diet.

These algorithms on social media platforms are not just leading our daughters to starve themselves; they are leading them to torture themselves as well.

By turning the Kids Off Social Media Act into law, we can put a stop to this. I am so grateful that Senator TED CRUZ, from the great State of Texas, prioritized our bill in the Commerce Committee, and I am sure that parents everywhere are grateful too. After all, parents overwhelmingly support our mission.

A survey conducted by the Count on Mothers group showed that over 90 percent of mothers agree that there should be a minimum age of 13 on social media platforms, and 87 percent of mothers agreed that social media companies should not be allowed to use personalized algorithms to deliver content to our children.

If there has ever been a theme of the legislation that my colleagues and I have pursued so far this Congress, it is keeping American families and children safe. The Laken Riley Act will help keep kids safe from criminal illegal aliens. The Halt Fentanyl Act, which I spoke about on this very floor just last week, will help kids be safe from deadly fentanyl and fentanyl poisons. And the Kids Off Social Media Act will help keep kids safe from mental health effects that these platforms and their algorithms produce.

There is nothing more important we can do as a body than protect the people we serve. So let's do it. Let's get the Kids Off Social Media Act through Congress and to the President's desk. There are parents across this country that are counting on us to step up to put the proper guardrails in place so their children can be safe and their children have an opportunity to both explore and to succeed.

All of our country's children are free to pursue their own American dream, just as our generations were, and this will enable them to do that.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, we are living in an extremely dangerous time. Future generations will look back at this moment—what we do right now—and remember whether we had the courage to defend our democracy against the growing threats of oligarchy and authoritarianism. They will remember whether we stood with President Abraham Lincoln at Gettysburg who, in 1863, looking out over a battlefield where thousands of people had died—thousands of soldiers died in the fight against slavery—and he stated that "this Nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that a government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth."

Do we stand with Lincoln's vision of America, or do we sit idly by and allow this country to move into a new vision, and that is a government of the billionaire class, by the billionaire class, for the billionaire class?

But it is not just oligarchy that we should be concerned about, not just the reality that today three people own more wealth than the bottom half of American society, 170 million—three people, more wealth than the bottom 17 million Americans. It is not just that the gap between the very, very rich and everyone else is growing wider. And it is not just that we have more income and wealth inequality today than we have ever had.

On top of all of that, the reality is that today we are moving rapidly under President Trump toward authoritarianism, more and more power resting in fewer and fewer hands.

Mr. President, as we speak, right now, Elon Musk, the wealthiest man on the planet, is attempting to dismantle major Agencies of the Federal Government which are designed to protect the needs of working families and the disadvantaged. These Agencies were created by the U.S. Congress, and it is Congress's responsibility to maintain them, to reform them, or to end them. It is not Mr. Musk's responsibility. What Mr. Musk is doing is patently illegal and unconstitutional and must be ended.

Mr. President, 2 weeks ago, President Trump attempted to suspend all Federal grants and loans, an outrageous and clearly unconstitutional act. As I hope every sixth grader—every kid in the sixth grade—in this country knows, under the Constitution and our form of government, the President can recommend legislation, he can support legislation, he can veto legislation, but he does not have the power to unilaterally terminate funding passed by the Congress. It is Congress—the House and the Senate—that controls the purse strings.

But in this move toward authoritarianism, it is not just the Congress that is being attacked; it is our judiciary.

This weekend, the Vice President of the United States—a graduate of Yale Law School who clerked for a Supreme Court Justice—said:

Judges aren't allowed to control the executive's legitimate power.

Really? I thought that one of the major functions of the Federal courts was to interpret our Constitution and, when appropriate, serve as a check on the unconstitutional power of the Executive. That is not just what I believe; that is what I suspect every legal scholar and lawyer in America understands to be the case.

Further, Mr. Musk, meanwhile, has proposed that the "worst 1 percent of appointed judges be fired every year," and he demanded the impeachment of judges who have blocked him from accessing sensitive Treasury Department files. No doubt, under Mr. Musk's rule, it will be him and his billionaire friends who determine who the worst judges are.

And no, Mr. Musk, I must tell you: You don't impeach judges who rule against you here in the United States. You may or may not know this, Mr. Musk, but under the U.S. Constitution, we have a separation of powers, brilliantly crafted by the Founding Fathers of this country in the 1770s, and it has worked pretty well throughout our country's history. We have an executive branch, we have a legislative branch, and we have a judiciary.

What we are seeing now is not just an organized attack on the power of the Congress and the responsibility of the judiciary; Mr. Trump and his friends are not just trying to undermine two of the three pillars of our constitutional government—the Congress and the courts; they are also going after the media in a way that we have never seen in the modern history of this country.

Trust me that every Member of Congress will tell you that the people working in the media and media organizations are not perfect. We have all had our experiences with the media. Media, like everything else, makes mistakes every day. But I do hope that every Member of Congress understands that you cannot have a functioning democracy, that you cannot have a free-flow of information, that you cannot have the pursuit of truth without an independent press—a press not intimidated by Presidents of the United States but a press who writes it and sees it the way they understand it to be.

In that regard, I want to mention to my colleagues what President Trump has done just in recent months.

Mr. Trump has sued ABC and received a \$15 million settlement. He has sued Meta, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram, and received a \$25 million settlement. He has sued CBS and its parent company, Paramount, and is right now in negotiations over a settlement. He has sued the Des Moines Register for poll results that he didn't like, and his FCC is now threatening to investigate PBS and

NPR—major news outlets in our country.

In other words, we have a President of the United States who is using his incredible power and the power of his Agencies to go after media in this country that are saying and doing things he does not like. How are we going to have an independent media if journalists are looking over their shoulders, fearful that their reporting will trigger a lawsuit from the most powerful Executive in the world?

In the midst of all of this, I think that now is the time to ask a very, very simple question, something, I think, that is on the minds of millions of Americans: What do Mr. Musk, Mr. Trump, and their fellow billionaires really want? It is not really taking over Greenland or the Panama Canal and all of that stuff. The real question is, What is their endgame? What is their goal? What are they striving for?

In my view, the answer really is not complicated. It is not novel. It is not new. It is, in fact, exactly what ruling classes throughout history have always wanted and have always believed to be their right—their right—and that is more power for themselves, more control for themselves, and more wealth for themselves, and in their pursuit of more power, more control, and more wealth, they are determined to not allow democracy and the rule of law to get in their way.

For Mr. Musk and his fellow oligarchs, the needs, the concerns, the pain, the ideas, the dreams of ordinary people are simply an impediment to what they, the oligarchs, are entitled to, and that is really what they believe. They are entitled to all of the wealth and the power they have, and they are determined to stop anyone who gets in their way.

This process—this phenomenon—that is going on right now is not the first time that we have seen this in our country's history. As I think many Americans understand, in pre-revolutionary America—before the 1770s, before the creation of the United States and the writing of our Constitution—the ruling class of that time governed through a doctrine called the divine right of Kings—the belief that the King of England was an agent of God, that God appointed him, and that he was not to be questioned by mere mortal human beings. He was appointed by God.

In modern times, we no longer have the divine right of Kings. What we now have is an ideology being pushed by the oligarchs which says that, as a very, very wealthy group of people—often self-made, often the masters of revolutionary new technology—and as high IQ individuals, it is their absolute right to rule. In other words, the oligarchs of today are our modern-day Kings.

It is not just power that they want. Despite the incredible wealth they currently have, they want more and more and more. Their greed has no end. Today, Mr. Musk is worth \$402 billion,

Mr. Zuckerberg is worth \$252 billion, and Mr. Bezos is worth \$249 billion. With a combined wealth of \$903 billion, these three people own more wealth than the bottom half of American society—170 million Americans—and, not surprisingly, since Trump was elected, their wealth has soared. Musk has become \$138 billion richer, Zuckerberg has become \$49 billion richer, and Bezos has become \$28 billion richer since election day in November.

Meanwhile, while the very rich become much richer, 60 percent of Americans live paycheck to paycheck, 85 million Americans are uninsured or underinsured in terms of healthcare, 25 percent of our seniors in this country are trying to survive on \$15,000 a year or less, 800,000 Americans are homeless, we have the highest rate of childhood poverty of almost any major country on Earth, and real inflation-adjusted wages for the average American worker has not gone up in 50 years.

Does anyone really think that the oligarchs give a damn about ordinary Americans? Trust me, they don't. Musk's decision to dismember USAID means that tens of thousands of the poorest people in this world will either go hungry or die of preventable diseases—tens of thousands of people. But it is not just USAID and what is happening abroad. Here in the United States—mark my words—if we do not stop them, they will soon be going after the healthcare, nutrition, housing, and educational programs that protect the most vulnerable people in our country—all so that they can raise the money they need to provide huge tax breaks for themselves and for other billionaires.

As modern-day Kings who believe they have the absolute right to rule, they will sacrifice without hesitation the well-being of working people in order to protect their power and their privileges.

Further, they will use the enormous media operations they own to deflect attention away from the impact of their policies while they entertain us to death. Mr. Musk owns Twitter. Mr. Zuckerberg owns Meta, which includes Facebook and Instagram. Mr. Bezos owns the Washington Post and Twitch.

Further, they and their fellow oligarchs will continue within our corrupt campaign finance system to spend huge amounts of money to buy politicians in both major political parties.

The bottom line: The oligarchs, with their unlimited amounts of money, are waging a war on the working class of our country, and it is a war they are intent on winning.

Now, I am not going to kid anybody. The problems that our country faces right now are enormously serious, and they are not easy to solve. Our economy is rigged—the rich get richer, the poor get poorer, and the middle class struggles. Our campaign finance system is totally corrupt. Billionaires can now pour as much money as they want into both political parties. And climate

change is ravaging our country and the world with unprecedented levels of extreme weather disturbances, among many other crises our country faces.

In the midst of all of these crises, this is what I do know, and this is what I do believe, and that is that the worst fear of the ruling class of our country is that the American people, whether they are Black or White or Latino, whether they are urban or rural, whether they are young or old, gay or straight—whatever—the fear of the ruling class is that the American people will come together to demand a government that represents all of us, not just the people on top.

Their oligarchs' nightmare is that we will not allow ourselves to be divided up by race, religion, sexual orientation, or country of origin and will come together and have the courage to take them on.

Will this struggle be easy? No, it will not, and one of the reasons that it will not be easy is that the ruling class of this country will constantly remind us that they have the power. They control the government. They own the media.

But our job right now, in these difficult times, is to go back and remember the great struggles and sacrifices that millions of Americans have waged over the centuries in difficult times to create a more democratic, just, and humane society. Think about all of the sacrifices and the struggles that Americans went through to create a more democratic, just, humane society, and think about trying to put yourselves where they were in those times of crisis.

Think about what was being said at those times. Think about the 1770s. Overthrowing the King of England—the most powerful person on Earth—the British Empire, to create a new nation and have self-rule here in the Colonies—impossible. So many people thought it could not be done.

Establishing universal suffrage, the right of all people, whether they were wealthy or not, to vote—imagine that. What a radical idea: extending the right to vote to poor people—impossible. It couldn't be done. But it was done.

Ending slavery and segregation, taking on all of the power of the slaveholders—impossible. But it was done.

Granting workers the right to form unions and ending child labor, taking on the power of big business—impossible. But it was done.

Giving women control over their own bodies, taking on sexism, taking on the powers that be—it couldn't be done—impossible. But it was done.

Passing legislation to establish Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, a minimum wage, clean air and water standards—impossible. It couldn't be done. But it was done.

In other words, I think back to what Nelson Mandela told us, and he said: Everything is impossible until it is done.

So in these difficult days, when we find ourselves arrayed against the wealthiest people in the world, the most powerful people in the world, people who want to expand the power of the oligarchy, people who want to move us toward authoritarianism—I know. I know that people get discouraged that we can't take them on; that we cannot create a government that works for all and not just the few; that we cannot do what every other major country on Earth does—guarantee healthcare to all people as a human right—that we cannot raise the minimum wage to a living wage so that tens of millions of people do not earn starvation wages; that we cannot make sure that all of our kids get the quality education that they deserve; that we can't expand Social Security or lower the poverty rate among seniors. I know that, in this moment, people say: Well, that is an impossible dream; it can't be done.

But I think, if you look back on American history, you will find that, in very difficult and dark days, when people came together, they did the impossible.

This ain't going to be easy. We are taking on enormously powerful people who really do not believe in democracy or the rule of law. But if we stand together, we are going to win this fight. And not only will we save American democracy; we are going to create the kind of Nation that I think most of us know we should become.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

NOMINATION OF TULSI GABBARD

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, trust—trust is at the very center of our national security: the trust that we share with allies and partners around the world; the trust that the American people have in us and in our armed services and in our intelligence services; the trust that vital allies have that causes them to share with us information about threats, challenges, opportunities. That is the very foundation of our national security.

And today, I rise to warn my colleagues about the risks to our national security posed by the nomination of Tulsi Gabbard to be the Director of National Intelligence.

As ranking member of the Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, I have a significant involvement in our Nation's intelligence apparatus. And over the course of the confirmation hearings and the debate here on the floor about former Congresswoman Gabbard, I have concluded that she has an alarming record, revealed more fully in her confirmation hearings but also in a review of her speeches, her travels, her positions.

As a Democrat, as a Congresswoman, as a candidate for President, as a supporter of President Trump, she has gone quite a distance. She has defended Edward Snowden. Snowden is widely viewed by folks in our intelligence

community, our national security apparatus, our Armed Forces, and many here as a traitor who betrayed some of the most important secrets that are critical to keeping the United States secure.

She would not, in her confirmation hearings, answer the question: Is Edward Snowden a traitor?

Ms. Gabbard bemoaned the rise of HTS in Syria, which recently overthrew the brutal dictator Bashar al-Assad, without mentioning the fall of Assad. She talked about how tragic it was that HTS overran Damascus, without mentioning the side benefit of the fall of a brutal dictator. And in her confirmation hearings, she repeatedly dodged pointed and relevant questions about FISA and section 702, key tools for our intelligence community.

All of this is in keeping with a long-standing record as an apologist for authoritarians and even enemies of the United States. She has repeatedly blamed the United States and NATO for Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

And I will tell you, as someone who is about to go to the Munich Security Conference this weekend with a broad and bipartisan delegation from this body and from the House: I will never forget being at the Munich Security Conference just before Russia invaded Ukraine broad spectrum. They had been in eastern Ukraine at that point for years. They had occupied Crimea and then launched a war into the Donetsk, the Donbas, the eastern part of Ukraine.

But it was just days after the Munich Security Conference, in February 2022, that tens of thousands of Russian troops—whole divisions—poured over the line in a broad-spectrum invasion that included brutality against civilians, bombardment of the entire nation—ultimately, cruel acts of violence against women and children, fully documented in the press and courts around the world.

And yet Ms. Gabbard blamed the United States and NATO for provoking this invasion by Russia of a sovereign nation—a nation where the United States, in writing, guaranteed its territorial sovereignty in the 1994 agreement that led to them giving up their nuclear weapons.

Ms. Gabbard visited Syria and met with Bashar al-Assad for several days, in 2017, and relied on pro-Assad sources to cast doubt on accounts of his use of chemical weapons against his own people.

She has a long history of repeating pro-Kremlin talking points and has become a favorite on Russian state media. She appears frequently because she frequently is attacking the United States in Russian state media.

Mr. President, this body will all too soon take up the confirmation of Tulsi Gabbard. We should not proceed. We should not vote for her. Our Nation faces massive threats that are growing day by day. Our Nation is facing

threats around the world—from North Korea and Iran, from China and from Russia—and we need an intelligence service equipped to respond to these challenges.

Can we trust Tulsi Gabbard to lead our intelligence services and to respond to these threats? I cannot. We cannot, and we should not. This body should not vote to confirm Tulsi Gabbard as the next Director of National Intelligence.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, do you remember where you were on September 11? Most Americans do. I do. I was right outside that door. I was in a meeting at 9 in the morning. And as we had the meeting, we looked down the Mall. We were watching a little television set, and we saw these planes flying into skyscrapers in New York.

Nobody could quite understand what was going on. First, we thought it was an accident, as most people probably felt the same way. Then, when the second plane hit, we knew there was more.

Then, there came a moment when somebody said: Look down the Mall.

We looked down the Mall and saw black smoke billowing across the Mall here in Washington from the Pentagon, because a plane had crashed into the Pentagon.

And there was this moment where people didn't know which way to turn, where to get answers, what was going on. Someone came racing into the room and said: Evacuate the Capitol Building. Another plane is coming directed toward this building.

We all raced out down the steps and stood on the lawn outside, didn't know which way to turn, had no idea what was going on.

Tourists were coming up to me because I had a suit and tie on and saying: Where are we supposed to go?

I told them where the Metro stations were and pointed in several directions.

That is a day you won't forget.

Most of us, I am sure, felt at that point that we had to figure out what happened first and to stop it from ever happening again.

So where did we turn? First, we turned to law enforcement, for obvious reasons. That is who you call—9-1-1—to see if they can give you any information, give you any advice, keep you safe.

But also in this town, you think: We hope our intelligence Agencies, the ones that collect information, know who those people were so we can stop them from ever doing this again.

Those intelligence Agencies are critical, not just for the security of this country but the survival of this country.

In the wake of September 11, the most historic terrorist attack in our Nation's history, we learned the hard way that Agencies within the intelligence community need to be good, effective, and coordinate what they are doing. So we embarked on several

projects—and one that I was a small part of—in rewriting the laws creating intelligence Agencies and making sure that each of our intelligence Agencies, as good as they are, speak to one another.

It seems so obvious. They need to coordinate. But they had what they called smokestacks where they kept their information to themselves and didn't share it with other Agencies. Well, that changed. It changed the whole attitude towards intelligence and coordinating information.

We created the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. It oversees 18 different intelligence Agencies that span the CIA, Defense Department, State Department, Energy Department, and others. It is now essential to modern safety in America. Yet the President, Donald Trump, has selected a person to run this critical Agency, coordinating 18 different intelligence Agencies, who has little or no experience leading this critical American security apparatus. Her name is Tulsi Gabbard.

During President Trump's first term, he made clear of his fondness for certain leaders in the world that were controversial, such as Viktor Orban of Hungary, Vladimir Putin of Russia, and Kim Jong Un of North Korea. So he ends up picking a person to run his intelligence network who shares a similarly terrible judgment on critical leaders.

Tulsi Gabbard, a former Congresswoman, is infamous for spending time with despots and autocratic leaders of the world, including Vladimir Putin of Russia and Bashar al-Assad of Syria, and traitors to the United States like Edward Snowden.

Her fondness for these oppressive, anti-democratic regimes does not go unreciprocated. They know her, they like her, and they say quite a few things about her. Let me show you one of these posters.

Hosts of Russian state media have cheered her nomination. Russia is cheering her nomination as Director of National Intelligence because it will "dismantle America." Some on Russian state channels have even referred to her affectionately as their "girlfriend." Russian state TV also called her a Russian "comrade" in Trump's emerging Cabinet. A pro-Putin propagandist, Vladimir Solovyov, once called Gabbard "our friend." Later, when asked if she was "some sort of Russian agent?" he replied, of course, "yes."

What is going on here? This woman wants to head up the intelligence Agencies, and she is being cheered on by the Russians?

In a glowing profile in a Russian state newspaper, it said of Tulsi Gabbard, "The C.I.A. and F.B.I. are trembling," noting that Ukrainians consider her "an agent of the Russian state."

Imagine that—the person tapped to head America's intelligence commu-

nity being called a puppet of an adversary's country by that very same country. It seems too ridiculous to be true, but I am sorry to say that it is.

To merely join America's intelligence community, never mind lead it, candidates have to go through a vigorous background check and earn a security clearance. I will just tell you that based on what she has done since serving in Congress, she could not pass a routine security clearance. If Tulsi Gabbard were applying for an entry-level position, her relationship with Russia alone would disqualify her for the job. Why, then, would we trust our entire intelligence network to the No. 1 friend of our No. 1 enemy? Why, then, would we want to put that sort of person in charge?

Given the examples that abound of Tulsi Gabbard proving publicly, shamelessly, and carelessly her sympathies for nations that undermine U.S. interests and security, that is unexplainable and irresponsible.

Perhaps this is summed up best by one of her people who worked with her for years. Here is what he had to say, according to *The Atlantic* magazine:

She was willing to do or say whatever. It was [like] she had [absolutely] no moral compass.

And to head up all of our intelligence Agencies? It is as controversial as choosing Kash Patel to head up our Federal Bureau of Investigation—no experience which qualifies him, nor does she have any experience either.

You see, our allies depend on us as much as we depend on them for security and to share critical intelligence. Now they are looking at us in disbelief that we would let someone like Tulsi Gabbard, with such an appalling record, anywhere near the leadership of the intelligence community.

Intelligence professionals from Canada and the United Kingdom—members of the critical Five Eyes intelligence alliance along with the United States, Australia, and New Zealand—have expressed concern about even working with her if she is in charge. In order to keep Americans safe throughout the world, we need to have the trust of our allies and their cooperation.

This position she is aspiring to at DNI does not just impact the collection of intelligence; it also impacts the action taken on it. Because of this, I have great concern about the impact Tulsi Gabbard's confirmation would have on our support of Ukraine in defending itself against Russia.

Since Russia's full-scale invasion, Gabbard has taken Russia's side many times, claiming, in reference to Ukraine and Russia, "Russia had legitimate security concerns." The words of Tulsi Gabbard. And then she blames NATO, our alliance—one of the most significant security alliances in the world.

Let me be clear. Supporting democracies has not historically been a partisan matter. For example, contrast Tulsi Gabbard's nonsense with former

President Ronald Reagan's clear-eyed understanding of the danger of the communist Russia empire.

Nearly 40 years ago, Ronald Reagan stood at the Brandenburg Gate in West Berlin and famously challenged the Soviet Union to "tear down this wall." Reagan understood the true nature and threat of the Russians.

We have all seen the horrific costs of Russia's war in Ukraine and increasing attacks on NATO allies. Is there a deal to be made to end this war? Perhaps. Doing so must be with the best intelligence available, a clear eye about who we are negotiating with and for, and long-term guarantees of the security of Ukraine, of Europe, and the transatlantic alliance.

One would think any American President navigating such difficult waters would want a top official to serve as the head of National Intelligence. Tulsi Gabbard fails that test. She would not be qualified for an entry-level position within the intelligence community and is certainly not qualified to lead it, period.

Some of the President's Cabinet nominees are hard to imagine because they are so unqualified, but for the position of Director of National Intelligence, putting someone unqualified in charge is not funny at all; it is life-or-death dangerous.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Vermont.

UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, I want to speak about what Elon Musk is doing to destroy the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Here is what is happening. Mr. Musk—of course an unelected billionaire who knows really nothing and cares less about how the Federal Government works—is demolishing one of the most important Agencies we have for countering Russia, China authoritarianism, and anti-American extremism around the world, all being done in the name of "efficiency."

One former State Department official said:

Disbanding U.S. aid is the strategic equivalent of scuttling the Navy.

Mr. Musk bragged about feeding USAID into a wood chipper. What he is really doing, after locking USAID's staff out of their offices and blocking their access to email, is destroying the careers of thousands of professionals who administer programs that are critical to U.S. national security, not to mention the well-being of their families.

I want to acknowledge something. Many Americans ask me and they ask

the Presiding Officer, why should we send aid to other countries when we have so many problems here at home? And we do have problems at home, so that is a legitimate question. In my view, we haven't done enough in Congress to solve our own problems—the cost of food, housing, healthcare, or dealing with drug addiction, gun violence, homelessness, the challenges facing our farmers and small businesses, and the devastation to communities from wildfires, flooding, droughts, and other national disasters.

Both parties have an obligation to address these issues, and our citizens do come first, but we also have a role in the world that is absolutely vital to our own national security.

There is a sense—magnified by a lot of the misinformation Mr. Musk and others put out—that foreign aid is this huge component of our budget really compromising our ability to meet those needs that affect all of our citizens here in the country. People think it is like 25 or 30 percent of the budget. Foreign aid is less than 1 percent of our budget. So as a percentage, it is really quite modest. Incidentally, not that we necessarily want to compare, but as a per capita spending portion of our budget, what we spend in the United States on foreign aid is a lot less than our European allies and Japan. So it is modest but significant.

But even at this less than 1 percent, the foreign aid budget is very important to America, and it serves our national interest. Why is that? Our USAID program started 64 years ago under then-President John F. Kennedy.

He asked the question:

Is a foreign aid program really necessary?

His answer:

The answer is that there is no escaping our obligations: our moral obligations as a wise leader and good neighbor in the interdependent community of free nations . . . and our political obligations as the single largest counter to the adversaries of freedom.

There were adversaries then, and there are adversaries today.

President Kennedy went on to say:

To fail to meet those obligations now would be disastrous and, in the long run, more expensive. For widespread poverty and chaos lead to a collapse of existing political and social structures which would inevitably invite the advance of totalitarianism into every weak and unstable area. Thus our own security would be endangered and our own prosperity imperiled. A program of assistance to the underdeveloped nations must continue because the nation's interest—

That is, our Nation's interest—

and the cause of political freedom require it.

The words of John F. Kennedy.

But fast-forward. Only 5 months ago, George Bush's Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice said about the need for continued U.S. engagement in the world:

[T]he United States has got to make both a statement and a reality of America's willingness to remain engaged in the world, because great powers don't mind their own business. And if we don't shape the inter-

national environment, then others will. And they are others that we do not want to cede the territory for our values and our interests, powers like China and powers like Russia.

The words of former Secretary Condoleezza Rice.

So the question that we need to answer today is not why we spend money on foreign aid. I don't believe we need to answer that because I think President Kennedy and Secretary Rice explained that very well. The question is, How can we make the best use of the 1 percent of the Federal budget to protect our interests in an increasingly unstable and dangerous world?

As Secretary Rice said, "if we don't shape the international environment, then others will"—because no matter how many times President Trump and Elon Musk say "America first, isolationism," this is a decision that each one of us in the U.S. Senate must make. Isolationism is not an option. What does happen in Central America, in Africa, in the Middle East, in Asia does threaten our own security, far more so today than in President Kennedy's time.

Our Secretary of State, Marco Rubio—a valued former colleague, someone we are all quite proud of—has said this administration is not going to eliminate foreign aid and that many of USAID's programs will continue. He and others in the administration have called what the administration is doing a "review."

Let's talk about that a minute. If this were a review, I would be all for it. We should always be looking at the best way and the best use of taxpayer dollars to get the best outcomes from the programs we fund. I have been calling for a review of FEMA, an organization that was very helpful to Vermont to recover from the floods of 2023 and 2024. In my view, we should be doing a review of every Agency—from food stamps to the Pentagon. So if it were a review, I would be all in favor of it. But it is not a review. It is a frontal assault to destroy USAID.

Just consider: Emails go out telling people not to go to work. Emails go out telling people in foreign lands they have got to come home. Websites are closed down. Work is stopped in its tracks. That is not a review. That is a decision. It is an action to dismantle and destroy an organization. By the end of the so-called 90-day review, people in Africa working for USAID will be in the United States. There won't be anything left.

And the administration really makes no secret about it. It acknowledged that it has decided to reduce the number of USAID staff from 14,000 to a few hundred. That is not a review; it is a decision.

Many of us know a lot about USAID. Bring on reform, yes. But this organization has helped our country by doing good work in other countries. Many of us have met USAID staff at posts overseas, often in some of the world's most

dangerous places. The folks in that organization are serious, purposeful, and patriots. They put their lives at risk every day, and they don't have body armor.

If the goal really is reform of USAID, then I say to Secretary of State Rubio and I say to my Republican colleagues: I want to work with you. Anything we can do to make any program that we are responsible for better, I am absolutely all in. And we know there are ways we could make USAID better.

But what Elon Musk is doing is dangerous. It is cruel, and it is illegal. It is illegal because this Congress has appropriated money for these programs, and Elon Musk is making a unilateral decision, without any congressional oversight or authority, to discontinue those authorized programs.

Also, you know, what does it really say to the millions of people and governments around the world, when we have made a commitment, whether it is one that you agreed with or I did—but as a body, as a country, we made a commitment. And then, suddenly, there is an email out saying: We are just kidding. We are not going to follow through.

And what does it mean, when you think about it—that because of, in effect, this stop-work order, we have food for hungry people that is not being delivered? We have vaccines, medicines that can save lives, avert injury, and they are not being delivered. Why are we doing that? Why would anyone do that? It would be like your neighbor's house is on fire, you have a hose, and you won't let them use it. That is not the way we operate—at least, I hope so.

And, you know, the USAID work is invisible to most people. It shouldn't be invisible to us. We are supporting civil society leaders who are inspired by our own Declaration of Independence. These folks fight for human rights and democracy, and they do that in the face of corrupt and abusive governments that imprison their political opponents. These programs have been stopped. There are programs that have strong bipartisan support and have had it for decades. And I want to acknowledge many of my Republican colleagues who have done so much—in particular, Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM, who knows this does protect our national security, and they present the best face of America that the rest of the world sees.

You know, the administration talks about waste, fraud, and abuse. And when they talk about that, I ask myself the question: Is there a single American any of us can identify that is in favor of waste, fraud, and abuse?

So they raise the question without proof of where that waste, fraud, and abuse is found. And instead of looking to identify it specifically so they can actually take action to eliminate it, they just leave it out there as an explanation to justify shutting down a valuable program and not doing the hard work of reform.

That is applying not just as an approach, not just to USAID, but to many other programs, like farm programs, where I am getting calls from farmers: What happened to the agreement I had with the Federal Government, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, about doing a new type of crop rotation in exchange for getting a contract price?

What has happened to folks running domestic violence shelters who can't get on the portal to get money paid to them that they are owed?

This is happening throughout our non-profit systems, including at our community health centers. We had a woman who had an appointment with a dentist at a community health center and got a notice that it was closed because of the order that went out from the administration.

So I believe in USAID. I believe it is wrong for the administration to essentially make the decision to feed it to the wood chipper. I believe in reform, but I do not believe that this is a serious effort at reform. It is a serious effort to destroy the program started by President Kennedy that has been embraced by Republican and Democratic Presidents since President Kennedy started it 64 years ago.

And while there is a perception that it is 25 to 30 percent of our budget, it is 1 percent. And it is at a time when the reputation of the United States as a country that is going to stand behind the commitment it has made is being jeopardized.

So my hope is that all of us, whether we agree or disagree about the ultimate value of USAID, will stand up for protecting what we have already committed ourselves to, and that to the extent there is reform to be made, we work together on that so that the American taxpayer and American national security interests can continue to be served by the men and women of the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Mr. President, I conclude my remarks on USAID.

NOMINATION OF TULSI GABBARD

Mr. President, as you know, the Director of National Intelligence is a very critical position. The Director is the primary intelligence officer serving the President. She or he is tasked with managing America's 18 intelligence community Agencies and more than \$100 billion—\$100 billion—in the national and military intelligence program budgets. It is an awesome responsibility.

The DNI also has access to information about literally the most sensitive programs within the U.S. Government. These programs are so sensitive that most Members of Congress and Senators are not briefed about them, including even rank-and-file members of the Intelligence Committees. That alone indicates the magnitude of this responsibility.

And my view, on the basis of everything I have seen, is that the nominee

will put loyalty to Donald Trump first. And my apprehension is that, if there is information that he does not want or wants it interpreted a certain way, there will be excessive deference to the pressures that the President has shown he has the capacity and the inclination to exert.

Also, in the hearings, Ms. Gabbard did not reflect independent thoughts about the security of issues like Taiwan, the territorial integrity of Ukraine, nor the endless ongoing theft of U.S. data by the Chinese Government. She was asked, quite rightly: Where are you on this? What should we be doing?

She indicated she would leave that up to Donald Trump.

Now, I get it that, as someone who is serving the President, it is ultimately his decision. But a person who is in the highest level of national security, I would expect, would have opinions from prior experience, and Ms. Gabbard did not disclose what those opinions were at all.

My concern, as well, is that Ms. Gabbard does not have the sober experience where it is needed most. We are a few weeks into the second term of President Trump, and there is an immense amount of disruption. And depending on the point of view, disruption is a good thing. I actually see the argument for it. But what I am seeing is that it is done in such a meat-cleaver way that it is much more about destruction.

And I want to make certain that whoever is the Director of National Intelligence has the experience and the credibility within the intelligence community to defend the legitimate role that that intelligence community plays in our national security.

Ms. Gabbard has maintained a security clearance for many years. However, this job is much more than about having had a security clearance. It is about judgment and character and integrity that must go along with that. You are required to form a clear-eyed policy position free of politics and not just give the seal of approval to absolute poor judgment. That is a very, very challenging task for a person who serves in the Trump administration.

I have also been concerned about some of the judgment calls that Ms. Gabbard has made, refusing to acknowledge what we all know: Edward Snowden broke his oath to protect classified information. He betrayed the trust given to him and every other American who holds a security clearance. By the way, Mr. Snowden had a whistleblower protocol he could have followed but chose not to. People's lives were put in jeopardy.

Mr. Snowden, as you know, intentionally gathered and deliberately walked out the door with more than 1.5 million classified files. He went to China and eventually found safe harbor in Russia.

Also, I have some concern about where Ms. Gabbard is getting her news.

I have grave concerns that giving access to our Nation's most tightly held secrets to an individual who has amplified Russian talking points—and that is the spread of misinformation; that is what Russia does—and who watches Russia state-owned TV, which is a propaganda organization—I have concerns about that, as well as the trip to Syria to see Bashar al-Assad who was in the process of murdering his own people.

Of course, Ms. Gabbard said she was skeptical that his government was responsible for the 2017 chemical weapons attack that killed dozens of Syrians. Our intelligence community was not skeptical about that. Both sides of the aisle hold our national security in high regard, as you do, Mr. President, and I do, as well.

On the basis of the lack of experience, the questionable judgment, lack of confidence that I think many of us have in the capacity of this person to be the Director of National Intelligence, I urge that we vote no on her nomination.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I come to the floor this afternoon to join a number of my colleagues because of my concern for the national security of the United States.

Whether it is a terror attack, a cyber attack from a nonstate actor, whether it is a threat from Russia or China or Iran, we in the United States are the targets of foreign adversaries every single day.

But thanks to our intelligence community and the thousands of Americans who dedicate their lives to our security, we are safe. These brave men and women are counting on us to have their backs, which is why the nomination of Tulsi Gabbard is so concerning. Our adversaries will be thrilled if we confirm Tulsi Gabbard as Director of National Intelligence—none more so than Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Ms. Gabbard has not hidden her positive views of Russia and President Putin. While Ukrainians fight valiantly to protect their homeland and defend freedom and democracy, Tulsi Gabbard cozies up to Putin and publicly defends Russia's brutal invasion. The former Congresswoman has parroted Russian propaganda, saying that the war could have been avoided if NATO and the Biden administration had "simply acknowledged Russia's legitimate security concerns."

We know that the nominee is problematic when the Kremlin has such nice things to say about her. On November 17, 2024, a major Russian state-controlled news agency called Tulsi Gabbard "superwoman" and noted her past appearances on Russian TV. I don't relish the idea of America's Director of National Intelligence, a role that includes such sensitive responsibilities as producing the President's

daily brief and setting U.S. policy for intelligence-sharing with foreign entities—I don't appreciate the fact that she is called "superwoman" by a mouthpiece for the Kremlin.

Not only does Putin have kind words for Ms. Gabbard, but they also share mutual friends, namely ousted Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad. Since her clandestine meeting with Mr. Assad in 2017, a visit that took place while she was serving in Congress, former Congresswoman Gabbard has faced numerous questions about why she went to Syria and arranged this meeting in the first place.

She has answered none of those questions, nor has she provided any substantive details on her conversation with Assad. In fact, Ms. Gabbard has repeatedly refused to call Assad what he is, and that is an enemy of the United States, a brutal dictator who is responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Syrians—Assad, who is Putin's best buddy in the Middle East, Assad who is backed by Iran, whose regime openly seeks to undermine and destroy American interests and values worldwide—this is the person who co-Presidents Musk and Trump want to lead our intelligence Agency, to spearhead our national security operations?

Well, that doesn't make me comfortable sleeping at night. To talk amiably about a brutal dictator who is openly opposed to American interests and human rights, a dictator like Assad—and like Putin, for that matter—shows, at best, a lack of judgment and, at worst, allegiance to our adversaries.

And even in cases of proven espionage against the American intelligence community, the very organization she seeks to lead, Tulsi Gabbard instead has sided with criminals. Of course, I am speaking about her support for Edward Snowden. In 2020, while she was a Member of the U.S. House of Representatives, she introduced a resolution suggesting that the Federal Government should drop all charges against Edward Snowden. There was only one other Member who cosponsored this resolution, and that was former Congressman Matt Gaetz.

In 2025, Ms. Gabbard still refuses to call Snowden what he is: a traitor to the United States. When she was asked about that at her hearing, she was given several opportunities to indicate that she understood that Edward Snowden is a traitor who put at risk the lives of thousands of Americans in the intelligence community. She refused to acknowledge that he is a traitor.

With such a track record, how are we supposed to expect that she will properly classify our enemies? How are we to expect that she would label Xi Jinping or Kim Jong Un enemies of the United States or simply as foreign leaders or as friends? Who knows what Ms. Gabbard will do?

I think there is a stark difference between our adversaries who want to un-

dermine the United States and those who are our allies. It doesn't appear that Tulsi Gabbard understands the difference.

How can the men and women of the intelligence community trust that Ms. Gabbard will protect their secrets; that she will protect our secrets, the secrets of the United States? How many Russians are going to risk their lives to pass along information to our intelligence officers if they are worried that Ms. Gabbard will sell them out? How much will our allies in NATO and the Indo-Pacific share with Ms. Gabbard in charge?

The work of American covert operations and intelligence-gathering is based on one central principle, and that is trust. I wouldn't trust Tulsi Gabbard any further than I can throw her.

I think this Chamber faces a choice. We can choose to defend America's national security and keep our promise to our constituents to protect their lives and safety and their interests, or we can choose to give a gift to Vladimir Putin and our adversaries, to usher them into the inner halls of the American intelligence system.

I know which choice I intend to make. I intend to vote no on Tulsi Gabbard, and I hope that my colleagues, particularly those across the aisle—at least some of them—will have the courage to do the same.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CURTIS). The Senator from Nevada.

Ms. ROSEN. Mr. President, every Member of this body is sworn to protect our national security and safety and the well-being of the American people. There is no more important responsibility for Congress to fulfill than this.

Senators take an oath to defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic. And when the American people go to sleep at night, they rest assured that our homeland will be kept safe.

As Senators, we play a key role in making sure that the men and women in charge of our Nation's security—well, that they are up to the task, that they are experienced, that they are qualified, that they are prepared. These are jobs with enormous responsibility. There is zero—zero—room for failure here. When unqualified or inexperienced candidates make mistakes in these jobs, often the result is that innocent people get hurt and in some cases die.

That is why the Senate's confirmation process is just so important—because the stakes are so high, because there is no room for error when it comes to those who are placed in national security roles.

I take this aspect of my job incredibly seriously. Our intelligence community is made up of courageous men and women who collect and analyze information on our threats from around the globe. They are an integral part of our Nation's defense.

The Director of National Intelligence oversees and compiles intelligence from domestic, from military, from foreign sources for the President, who then uses it to make life-or-death decisions. The Director is a direct line from our intelligence community to the President. That is why this position needs to be filled by an experienced and trustworthy candidate—key qualities that Tulsi Gabbard does not have.

At a time of rising global threats, having Tulsi Gabbard serving in this role would make America less safe. I want to say that again. It would make us less safe—full stop. Our allies are dumbfounded. And our adversaries? Well, in Moscow, Beijing, Tehran, and all over the world, they are laughing at us. They are laughing at the idea that the United States of America would weaken its national security by placing someone so deeply unqualified in such a critical role for our safety, for our security. Our adversaries? Well, they are overjoyed that they are going to have an ally leading the American intelligence community.

My concerns are not political. After all, Ms. Gabbard and I used to serve in Congress together, in the same caucus, when she represented a district from Hawaii as a Democrat. My concerns are that she not only lacks the qualifications needed but that she has also peddled talking points straight from the Kremlin.

Think about it. Tulsi Gabbard has never worked in intelligence before. As a Member of the House of Representatives, she didn't even serve on the House Select Committee on Intelligence. During her time in the House, Ms. Gabbard actually voted against—she voted against—critical national security-related legislation, like increased funding for preventing terrorism in high-density, high-threat level urban areas like my city of Las Vegas. She voted against all of that security for Nevada.

This funding was actually pursued by former Nevada Congressman Joe Heck, who is a Republican, and it is something I have continued working to secure here in the Senate. Yet Tulsi Gabbard voted against this bipartisan proposal to protect our cities from terrorism.

She was the only member of the House Armed Services Committee to vote against the National Defense Authorization Act every year during markup.

As concerning as her lack of experience and tendency to vote against our security are, Ms. Gabbard's history of cozying up to America's adversaries is far, far more troubling. Her actions and words suggest that she has been directly influenced by foreign propaganda, whether that comes from Russia, from Syria, or other brutal dictatorships.

This isn't just me saying this; it is the view of many of Ms. Gabbard's former staff members during her time

here on Capitol Hill. We have public reporting that states that “[f]ormer advisers to Gabbard suggested that her views on Russia and its polarizing leader, Vladimir Putin, have been shaped . . . by her unorthodox media consumption habits. . . . Three former aides said Gabbard . . . regularly read and shared articles from the Russian news site RT—formerly known as Russia Today—which the U.S. intelligence community characterized in 2017 as ‘Kremlin’s principal international propaganda outlet.’”

Is this who Donald Trump wants to lead America’s intelligence community? Is this who he wants in a prominent national security role—someone who is so easily swayed by foreign propaganda?

It is clear that she has taken this propaganda and disinformation to heart. Just look at her justification of Russia’s brutal invasion of Ukraine, for which she did not blame Vladimir Putin, who—let’s be clear—is entirely responsible for the invasion. Instead, Ms. Gabbard has parroted Putin’s talking points and placed blame on the United States and on NATO for Russia’s vile assault upon the Ukrainian people.

We can also look at her attempts to give cover to Syria’s former dictator, Bashar al-Assad, who used chemical weapons on his own people—killing kids, killing babies—killing babies in his own attempt to hold on to power. Ms. Gabbard even went to Syria to buddy up with Assad. She then came back to the United States to defend his killing of innocent men, women, and children—those babies he killed—to hang on to power. It is sickening, actually. It is a betrayal of our country’s values.

Time and time again, Ms. Gabbard has rejected the findings and conclusions of our own intelligence officials and has instead chosen to, well, cozy up to dictators and our adversaries. She did so again in her defense of Edward Snowden, a man who committed treason against the United States of America by leaking highly classified information that jeopardized our national security, the safety of our troops, our men and women in uniform, who take an oath to serve and protect us every day. She jeopardized the clandestine intelligence operatives who are out there, working behind the scenes, again, to keep us safe and secure every day.

After committing these serious crimes against the United States, Mr. Snowden fled to Russia in his continued attempt to escape justice. Those weren’t the actions of a whistleblower; they were the actions of a traitor to the United States of America—a traitor whom Tulsi Gabbard has repeatedly defended.

Because of these incidents and so many more, America’s allies are rightfully concerned about what Tulsi Gabbard would do if confirmed to lead our intelligence community. In fact,

there have been reports that if Ms. Gabbard is confirmed, our allies might stop sharing crucial information with us in order to protect themselves, to protect their own country, to protect the people they love.

So think about that. If our allies no longer share intelligence with us, think about the damage that does to our national security, to our safety, to our men and women in uniform, to our operatives around the world, and to each and every one of us here in the United States of America. It doesn’t make us safer, I can tell you that. Our allies do not trust her, and neither should we.

I urge my colleagues to review Ms. Gabbard’s recent hearing before the Select Committee on Intelligence. In response to almost every question, Tulsi Gabbard avoided providing any real answer, whether it came from a Democrat or a Republican. She simply dodged the questions over and over and over. That is not leadership. This is not an example of someone who is qualified, and this is not a candidate who will keep America safe.

I urge my Republican colleagues to join me in listening to common sense, in thinking about our men and women who serve, in thinking about folks around the globe, and in thinking about everyone here in America and to reject this clearly unqualified and dangerous nominee.

It doesn’t have to be this way. Let’s have President Trump nominate someone else we can agree is qualified for this critical and consequential role and who has our Nation’s best interests in their heart. Tulsi Gabbard is not that person. The safety and well-being of our country depend on having a qualified nominee.

Again, I urge Republicans to join us—to reject Tulsi Gabbard—and to put someone up who has the heart and experience to do this important job.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, with me this afternoon are three of my colleagues from my office: Ms. Jess Andrews, my communications director; Mr. Henson Webre; and Mr. John Lowery. As I said, they are three of my colleagues in my office. I depend on their counsel and their advice and their good judgment every day.

I want to talk for a few minutes about public broadcasting in America, but first I want to make a brief comment about the continuing saga that our new President is doing, in my judgment, a good job of prosecuting here in Washington. I am talking about his audits of Federal Government spending and all of the wasteful spending—I call it spending porn—that he is finding.

I want to make two quick points.

No. 1, it strikes me as breathtakingly ironic—the Senate might say cynical—that the people who are screaming so loudly about President Trump’s deci-

sion to audit Federal spending are the very same people who, under President Biden, wanted to hire 80,000 new IRS agents—with guns—to audit the American people. As I have said before, if it weren’t for double standards, there wouldn’t be any standards at all in this town.

The battle lines are drawn. The battle lines are drawn. Some of my colleagues have decided to support the bureaucracy and the spending porn over the American taxpayer. That is what they have done. And some of the same people—it is not just my Democratic colleagues. There are many people in Washington, DC, who have grouped together. They have circled the wagons, and they have decided to support the spending porn and the bureaucrats over the American taxpayer. That is their right. It is not against the law or unconstitutional to be foolish in America. But these are the same people—these are the same people—who chose to support illegal immigration over the rule of law. These are the same people who have chosen to support teachers unions over parents and kids. These are the same people who have chosen to support criminals over cops and victims. These are the same people who have chosen to support transgender athletes over women’s sports. These are the same people who have chosen to support Hamas over Israel.

They think they are winning. Maybe in this town—in this town—they are if you listen to a lot of the pundits up here, if you listen to a lot of the members of the “wokerati” in Washington, but they are not winning in America. The justice stick is coming, and I am very proud to be a part of that effort.

PUBLIC BROADCASTING

Mr. President, now, let me say a word about public broadcasting.

There was a time—I don’t know if the Presiding Officer remembers it, but I do—when families, in the evening, would gather around a single radio—they just had one radio in the house—or a single TV, often a black-and-white TV, to hear the evening news. For many Americans, particularly in rural areas, public broadcasting was the only option for them. That was true in some parts of our country. They could only access public broadcasting to get up-to-date news and information.

Those days are gone. Things are much different today. Today, Americans get their news everywhere—everywhere: websites, podcasts, social media posts, radio shows, cable TV, streaming, broadcast television. The world has changed, particularly the world of mass communications.

I think back 10, 15 years ago in my State, Louisiana. Newspapers were king, followed closely by local television stations. Newspapers led with the news, and everybody else followed in terms of what was newsworthy.

Boy, have those days changed. I polled recently in Louisiana to find out where my people in Louisiana get their news. And 4 percent—4 percent of the

people in Louisiana get their news from the newspapers. That is just a fact. No. 1, as you might imagine, is the internet.

The world has changed. This trend is not partisan. It is not a Republican thing; it is not a Democratic thing. President Trump and former Vice President Harris, they both did popular podcasts in their election, and many of my fellow Senators and many of my friends in the House running for election also did podcasts as well. A lot of the pundits have even called the 2024 race the podcast election.

No American today—not one that I know of—is dependent on a single source of news to remain informed, and that is a good thing.

It might have made sense many, many, many years ago for the Federal Government to subsidize and fund public broadcasting. So 50 years ago, that might have made sense, but the ability of the American people today to access whatever news they would like to hear from whatever form of media they choose is no longer limited. It is virtually unlimited—only by the imagination.

So here is my question, Mr. President. It is something we need to think about. If all this is true, if media has changed and it is accessible to everyone, why is the U.S. Congress—why is the U.S. Congress still spending half a billion dollars a year—not half a million a year—half a billion dollars a year to fund the Corporation for Public Broadcasting? It makes no sense.

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting—we call it CPB—as the Presiding Officer knows, is a nonprofit entity that takes taxpayer money that it gets from Congress and distributes it to local TV and radio stations.

Now, you might not have heard of CPB, but you probably heard of two of its—I won't call them subsidiaries but two of its closely affiliated entities. I will call them the public broadcasting station—we call it PBS—and National Public Radio, NPR.

Now, here is how it works. Every year, Congress gives the Corporation for Public Broadcasting \$500 million, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting takes that money and gives it to a lot of the local TV and radio stations. And a lot of those local TV and radio stations are encouraged to and, indeed, do buy programming, if they are radio stations, from NPR; or, if they are television stations, they buy prerecorded, predeveloped programming from PBS.

Congress established this system and established the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in 1967—what—over 50 years ago. At the time, Congress tasked CPB—and I am not saying it didn't make sense then. It probably did make sense then. But Congress tasked the CPB with a mission to ensure that the American people had—and I want to quote here to be precise—“universal access to non-commercial, high-quality content and telecommunications services.”

And, indeed, CPB boasts on its website that 99 percent of Americans have access to public media. Hell, they ought to; we are spending half a billion dollars of your taxpayer money to make sure they do.

That is not the question, because Americans have access to all different types and forms of media today. They don't need to get their news from public broadcasting. This isn't the old days when people had one television set or one radio and lived in a rural area and that was the only source of news. The world has changed.

The issue today is whether the American people need taxpayer-funded public broadcasting to access high-quality content anymore. And they don't, and we all know they don't. You don't have to be Walter Cronkite's cousin to figure that out. Everybody has got a cell phone. Everybody is on the internet. Everybody has heard of podcasts. Everybody has heard of cable. Many people have streaming services.

Today, 97 percent of Americans have access to the internet. Why do we need public broadcasting? That is more than double the number of Americans who could access the internet two decades ago. Things have quickly changed. People now have a bottomless supply of news sources right at their fingertips, whenever they need them. Why do we have to give a half a billion dollars a year to subsidize a certain small, favored section of the media?

Parents can also, very easily, find free educational programming if they want to. They don't have to go to public broadcasting. All they have to do is go to YouTube. All they have to do is go to other streaming services. The popular YouTube series “Crash Course,” for example, has more than 16 million subscribers. “PragerU” is another educational content provider. It has 3.3 million subscribers.

For comparison, PBS only has 1.4 million subscribers. You know what the difference is? You give them half a billion dollars of your hard-earned money. That is the difference.

Now, some may argue: Well, we still need public broadcasting because it offers noncommercial programming. They argue it is really cool because you don't get interrupted by commercials. Well, the new Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, Mr. Brendan Carr, has just called that into question. He has called into question whether NPR and PBS are really noncommercial broadcasts. Mr. Carr has noted that NPR and PBS regularly run commercial advertisements during their shows and broadcasts, in contravention of Federal law.

No advertising? All you have to do is turn on the stations. Give me a break. And, in fact, the FCC has launched an investigation into NPR and PBS to determine whether they have been violating Federal law. There seems to be no distinction between the advertiser-funded content on PBS or NPR and the content Americans can access for free anywhere else.

But there is a key difference. I am going to keep coming back to it. PBS and NPR receive a truckload—a bucketload—of cash from the American people. In total, Congress will send the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and, indirectly, NPR and PBS, \$535 million in 2025. That is an increase of 20.2 percent since 2020. Has your income gone up 20.2 percent since 2020? I know your expenses have. By 2027, CPB wants Congress to send it nearly \$600 million. For what? For what?

PBS alone received roughly \$130 million last year in taxpayer-funded grants from the Federal Government through the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. That is 35 percent of its total budget. NPR, similarly, receives \$96 million through taxpayer-funded grants from CPB. That is also roughly 32 percent of NPR's total budget. Why? Why? Why CPB? Why NPR? Why any of these alphabet-soup entities? Why not the New York Times? Why not the Washington Post? Why not FOX News? Why these three particular entities? That is a question we have to ask. And we are not talking chump change here. We are giving them half a billion dollars a year.

NPR is one of the few—as far as I know, they are the only newsroom in the country that gets taxpayer funding. And you would think that after receiving nearly \$100 million—I want to single out NPR for a second. You would think that after receiving nearly \$100 million from taxpayers, that would motivate NPR to play it right down the middle, to only publish fair reporting. You would think that, with the American taxpayer giving NPR 100 million bucks every year like clockwork, you should be able to go to NPR and look at the news and say: I don't know what party these folks are in. I don't know whether they are liberals. I don't know whether they are conservatives. I don't know whether they are left of center or right of center. I just know that they fairly report the news.

But that is not the case, Mr. President. That is not the case. I want to give you a few examples of stories that NPR has published using taxpayer money. I will just read the headlines. The first headline, NPR News Service:

Michael Avenatti: A Profile of the Media-Savvy Attorney.

They love Michael Avenatti. You know where Michael Avenatti is today? He is in jail. You know why? He is a crook. But for a while, he was a media darling on NPR.

Here is another headline from NPR: How racism became a marketing tool for country music.

I kid you not. The American taxpayers are spending half a billion dollars a year to pay a local station to buy content that says country music is racist.

Here is another headline from NPR: Donald Trump's Long Embrace of Vladimir Putin.

Remember the Russiagate, the Steele dossier? NPR was right in there promoting it.

A couple more headlines that NPR is putting out there using your tax dollars. This headline:

Monuments and Teams Have Changed Names—

Let me say it again.

Monuments and Teams—

Presumably sports teams—

have Changed Names as America Reckons With Racism. Birds Are Next.

I don't know any birds that are racist.

Here is another headline:

Eating less beef is a climate solution.

I don't have anything against vegetarians. I am a semivegetarian myself: I eat beef, and cows eat grass. So that makes me a semivegetarian, but that is my choice.

Not on NPR.

Eating less beef is a climate solution. Here is why that is hard for some American men.

Here is a final headline. I could go on the rest of the evening.

How the Taliban adds to Afghanistan's woes when it comes to climate-fueled disasters.

Boy, I can tell you that is on the mind of every person in Afghanistan today, is climate change—and the Taliban, I can guarantee you.

I don't have a problem with these headlines. This is America. If you want to publish articles like this—which no person with a brain above a single-cell organism would call fair and balanced—if you are a news outlet and you want to publish this kind of stuff, that is your right as an American. We have freedom of the press. We have the First Amendment. You are not free in our country if you can't say what you think. You are not free in our country if you can't express yourself.

I am all for this if that is what these outlets want to do, but I am not for taking \$500 million every single year and giving it to these stations to the exclusion of everybody else so they can do it. That is immoral. That is illegal, as far as I am concerned—or should be.

Now, I am sure that there is an audience in some campus coffee shop that wants to learn about racist birds or the different ways in which cheeseburgers and the Taliban are contributing to climate change. But most American taxpayers would probably prefer that Congress spend their money on something other than these controversial points of view that appeal to only a small segment of America's population while the rest of us foot the bill.

Now, that is not just my opinion; a former editor at NPR, someone by the name of Uri Berliner, Mr. Berliner—he used to be an editor at NPR. He published a column last year, and in the column, he outlined the extreme bias at NPR. He detailed how NPR decided to censor the Hunter Biden laptop story. They wouldn't run stories about it; they said it wasn't real.

Mr. Berliner, the former editor at NPR, said that NPR told its readers:

We don't want to waste our time on stories that are not really stories, and we don't

want to waste the listeners' and readers' time on stories that are just pure distractions.

The Hunter Biden laptop is real. The FBI has it. It is there at the FBI Headquarters bigger than Dallas. Of course, we now know that the laptop was not just a distraction. Every bit of it was real. But NPR censored it using American taxpayer money.

NPR also similarly covered the COVID-19 lab leak theory as though it was a conspiracy. That is how the news coverage reads, in my opinion, that if you believe that COVID-19 originated from a lab leak, you are a conspiracy theorist.

I would point out that we are going to have to get some new conspiracy theories in America because all the old ones turned out to be true. The conspiracy theorists are up something like 37 to nothing—but not if you read NPR. They say or said that the COVID-19 lab leak theory—you had to be some kind of cone head, some kind of meathead, some kind of whack job to believe in that stuff. Now the Federal Government, the CIA, the FBI—they have stated publicly that the pandemic likely originated from—what?—a lab leak. I can't make this stuff up.

Now, other independent analysts have shown that NPR's content also leans left, and that is fine. As I say, that is fine. Many Americans lean left. I have got a lot of friends who lean left. I lean left on some issues. I think it is great. But I will tell you what isn't great: having American taxpayers spend half a billion dollars a year to fund a news service that, in turn, we all have to pay for. That is not right.

Since 1970, the U.S. Congress has given NPR more than \$14.5 billion. With all those taxpayer dollars, the NPR bought a \$201 million office space just up the road from the Capitol. It is swell office space, 200 million bucks' worth. NPR pays its hosts as much as \$532,000 a year. It pays its chief diversity officer \$320,000 a year. Pretty good work if you can get it. Not NPR's money. It came from you. You paid those salaries. Despite all the spending, NPR's audience continues to decline because they are obsolete.

Now, Congress does not send taxpayer money to the most popular podcast host in America. We don't. The anchors on FOX News, the anchors on CNN, the anchors on MSNBC, nor their stations—they don't get any taxpayer dollars, nor do any of the journalists that ask me questions every day in the hallway in this building—unless they work for NPR or PBS or their affiliates or the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Congress should not be picking winners and losers in the news media, but that is what we are doing.

The United States of America is \$36 trillion in debt. We can't afford anymore to blow half a billion dollars for public broadcasting when Americans can find the same content—and in many cases better content—online for free.

Now, if you want to support NPR and PBS or any other public media outlet, that is great. God bless you. This is America. You are free to do it. You are free to donate to those nonprofits as you see fit. Donate to them. But Congress should not compel taxpayers to fund a service that the American people don't need, especially when the content—well, you can read what the content is, and maybe you agree with it, but a whole bunch of Americans don't. A whole bunch of Americans don't think that birds are racist.

President Trump's Department of Government Efficiency is looking for fat to trim. As far as I am concerned, this gravy train, this gravy train with biscuit wheels called the Corporation for Public Broadcasting is the perfect example of a project the American people no longer need and should not fund.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. President, I have been given instructions to read this.

I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII—oh, I love this. This is great. I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII—this makes me so happy—the confirmation vote with respect to the Gabbard nomination occur at 11 a.m. on Wednesday, February 12; further, I ask that the cloture motions filed on Thursday, February 6, ripen following disposition of the Gabbard nomination; and finally, that if cloture is invoked on the Kennedy nomination—that is Mr. Robert Kennedy—the postcloture time count as if invoked at 1 a.m., Wednesday, February 12.

Thank you, Jesus.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. KENNEDY. I yield to Senator PETERS, my good friend.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

NOMINATION OF TULSI GABBARD

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I rise in opposition to the nomination of former Representative Tulsi Gabbard to serve as our Nation's Director of National Intelligence.

Intelligence is absolutely fundamental to our national security. Our intelligence community, spread out all across the Federal Government, has built the world's greatest network of information gathering and analysis. This information keeps us and our community safe by providing the people who make policy decisions with a full picture to understand the current as well as potential threats to our national security, from terrorism risks to our homeland to emerging conflicts across the globe.

Spearheaded by the Director of National Intelligence, the U.S. intelligence community is responsible for monitoring terrorist activities, tracking foreign military capabilities, and even intercepting nefarious cyber attacks.

The courageous men and women in this community, stationed both here as

well as abroad, put their lives on the line to identify and neutralize espionage efforts against Americans by our foreign adversaries.

Their work is absolutely critical, particularly in today's modern digital era where information is power. But the foundation of intelligence is trust.

We must trust that our intelligence experts are providing completely unbiased, fact-driven analysis of the intelligence that our Agencies are collecting. Our experts must trust their ability to pursue intelligence that keeps Americans safe, wherever it may lead, without fear that discovery of the wrong issue might result in the end of their career. Our intelligence Agencies must trust that government officials will protect their sources and their methods to ensure that critical missions and safety of Americans all across the globe are not placed into jeopardy.

Unfortunately, I do not believe that Tulsi Gabbard has the qualifications—nor has she earned our trust—to serve as Director of National Intelligence. She has spread conspiracy theories peddled by our adversaries. She claimed that those who were investigating domestic terrorism and the deadly January 6 insurrection were “domestic enemies”—more dangerous than the individuals who violently stormed the U.S. Capitol, attacked law enforcement officers, and tried to overturn a free and fair election.

She cannot differentiate between our adversaries and our allies, between those who seek to harm our country and those who seek to defend it. Time and time again, Ms. Gabbard has proven that she does not hold the judgment to serve as the leader of our intelligence community.

Let's start with Russia. Start with Russia. As we know, Russia engaged in a widespread disinformation campaign before its deadly invasion of Ukraine in an attempt to justify its actions and manipulate public opinion. Russia actually claimed that the United States was to blame for the war for failing to recognize Russia's “legitimate” security concerns about Ukraine's accession to NATO. Tulsi Gabbard agrees with Putin and Russia. She said that the United States was entirely to blame for the war in Ukraine. Russian propaganda efforts also push lies that the United States was supporting bio-weapons labs in Ukraine—a claim, by the way, that has been debunked by Ukraine's Government, the U.S. Government, news organizations, and independent researchers around the world. But Ms. Gabbard posted on her social media, in 2022, supporting this conspiracy and accusing the Biden-Harris administration of a coverup.

Former Republican U.S. Senator Mitt Romney called Ms. Gabbard's post treasonous, saying she was “parroting fake Russian propaganda.”

So now let's talk about Syria.

Tulsi Gabbard has a long history defending former Syrian ruler Bashar al-

Assad. In 2015, she even introduced a bill to end U.S. support to the opposition to the Assad regime. She didn't think the opposition to Assad, who is responsible for crimes against humanity and the deaths of hundreds of thousands of his own people, should be supported.

Not only did she oppose the support, Gabbard then traveled to Syria and met with Assad in 2017. Gabbard tried to justify her meeting, going as far as to say that Assad is not the enemy of the United States.

And despite U.S. intelligence, Tulsi Gabbard continued to turn a blind eye to Assad's horrific use of chemical weapons on civilians, claiming there was no real evidence linking this regime to those attacks, even though the intelligence community under the first Trump administration attributed these chemical attacks to the Assad regime.

Ms. Gabbard has promised to “end the politicization of the intelligence community,” but what we have seen in just the last few weeks from the administration—in the name of freeing our government from politicization and weaponization—should certainly give us pause.

This administration has fired dozens of prosecutors in a matter of days for doing their duty to provide justice on criminal cases stemming from the January 6 attack on our Nation's Capitol. The administration has also fired most of the senior leaders of the FBI and is trying to go after every single FBI agent who was involved investigating January 6, even if they were just doing their job as ordered by their superiors.

Let's be clear. January 6 was an attack on our Nation, our Constitution, and our democracy.

But to be a part of the Trump administration, you have to show absolute loyalty to him over anything else. Don't worry about facts; just show loyalty. And don't worry about the law; just show loyalty.

So this pattern certainly begs the question: With Ms. Gabbard at the helm, will the intelligence analysts and operatives who worked on investigations into January 6 or any other domestic terrorism plot—are they now going to be fired as well? Will Ms. Gabbard follow the lead of Trump's newly confirmed Attorney General and shut down U.S. efforts to collect intelligence on malicious foreign influences from our adversaries, like China and Russia? Will she penalize anyone who has been responsible for tracking our adversaries' misinformation and disinformation campaigns that target our elections? Will she stand up to President Trump if he seeks to use the powers of the U.S. intelligence community against the American people? Will individuals in the intelligence community who disagree with her views on Russia, Syria, or the threats of chemical and biological weapons be in danger of censorship or, worse, even retribution?

We have no reason—no reason—to trust that Ms. Gabbard will not simply

follow the lead of others in this administration and oust those who do their jobs to serve all the American people and not just Donald Trump.

But in addition to this questionable lack of judgment on who our Nation's enemies are, Tulsi Gabbard is simply, simply, unqualified. Tulsi Gabbard does not have the extensive experience needed to oversee this highly complex network of intelligence operatives and analysts—experience that Directors of National Intelligence, until this point, have all possessed because it is understood how essential this position is and why these qualifications are critical.

There is broad, bipartisan consensus that we are facing one of the most dangerous times in American history. Threats from our adversaries, like the Chinese and Russian Governments, continue to grow and evolve with every passing minute. We need the person leading our intelligence community to be the most qualified candidate available. This is the person briefing our senior leaders, all the way up to the Commander in Chief, on the real threats that face our Nation each and every day. This is the person tasked with protecting our vast network of sources and highly classified methods of collecting information.

We need someone we can trust to safeguard the tools that our intelligence Agencies need to access the darkest corners of the world, but also someone with the knowledge and understanding of this community to protect the brave Americans who are risking their lives gathering this information and intelligence firsthand, on the frontlines.

We need someone who our allies will trust to share their own intelligence, to help protect our people and our interest, because without America's utmost confidence in Ms. Gabbard's ability to do this job, where will that leave us as a country? It will leave us in the dark, vulnerable against our adversaries. It will make our allies question whether or not they should share their intelligence with us because they do not know whether the head of our intelligence community will actually share that information with our adversaries instead of our allies. It will leave us with an intelligence community that is afraid to speak truth to power, or even just do their jobs for fear of offending the Trump administration and then getting fired.

We are in unprecedented times with an administration that has shown that it is willing to break the law in order to break our government. We are in uncharted times, with an administration that would rather target our institutions than protect our people.

We are in perilous times, with foreign adversaries waiting to pounce, as the administration strips away the tools that we have used to protect ourselves.

Our national security is on the line. We cannot destroy our intelligence community and the progress that generations of Americans have built to

keep our country safe by confirming someone whom we cannot trust to act in the United States' best interest or who simply lacks the necessary experience to lead this critical organization. That is why I am voting no on Ms. Gabbard's nomination, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, almost 3 years ago, President Vladimir Putin launched a massive, illegal ground invasion of Ukraine, which has become the largest and deadliest conflict in Europe since World War II.

Now, I have stood up, again and again, with my fellow Senators—leaders of both parties—and our allies across the world to condemn Putin's war, which has killed thousands of civilians, including hundreds of children, and left millions of Ukrainians displaced. It is not a hard position to take.

But Tulsi Gabbard has repeatedly justified Putin's expansionist war. She chose to blame the United States, our NATO allies, and even Ukraine itself for Putin's war.

Now, Mr. Trump—excuse me; President Trump—wants Ms. Gabbard to be the Director of National Intelligence. The day the war started, she echoed Russian state media and said: The war could have been avoided if the U.S. and NATO had acknowledged Russia's "legitimate" security concerns.

She made baseless claims that Russia was justified in invading Ukraine because the United States had secret biolabs there. Where did she find that claim? It came directly from a Kremlin propaganda website.

The Director of National Intelligence position was created after the September 11 terrorist attacks to act as the principal adviser to the President, the National Security Council, and the Homeland Security Council on intelligence matters related to our national security.

It seems obvious to anyone who holds this position that they should have extensive national security experience, something Ms. Gabbard doesn't have. And somebody who holds this position should not be parroting Russian talking points.

Now, I have worked with colleagues on both sides of the aisle to make sure that Putin is held accountable for the atrocities that have been committed in Ukraine. It is shocking to me that we are on the cusp of confirming a Director of National Intelligence who was so quick to defend one of the United States' biggest adversaries.

Now, cozying up to Putin would be bad enough, but, unfortunately, he is not the only autocrat that Ms. Gabbard has ties to. She also has an alarming connection to the ousted Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Assad was a ruthless dictator who engaged in human right abuses, and that is a documented fact. But, inexplicably, Ms. Gabbard disputed credible accusations

that Assad used chemical weapons against his citizens, and, worst of all, she actually chose to travel in her personal capacity to Syria to meet with this dictator in person. All the while, she repeatedly cast doubts on our intelligence community's assessment of the extent of the horrors of Assad's regime.

Now, I understand the desire to seek out multiple points of view. But, again and again, Ms. Gabbard has taken healthy skepticism too far, suggesting to the American people that they can't trust our intelligence while, instead, echoing Russian and Syrian disinformation. That is just unacceptable.

President Trump claims that he wants to make America safe. He says he wants to maintain American's standing in the world. He says he wants to forge stronger ties with our allies.

Well, confirming Ms. Gabbard to be Director of National of Intelligence is in opposition to those goals. The Director of National Intelligence oversees 18 Agencies in the U.S. intelligence community, including the CIA and the NSA. The Director has the legal authority to direct intelligence gathering and choose which intelligence to share with foreign Agencies.

As Director of National Intelligence, Ms. Gabbard would have access to our most closely guarded secrets. She would know the identities of the brave men and women who gather intelligence from our foreign adversaries. There should be absolutely no question about the trustworthiness or the judgment of our Director of National Intelligence.

The Director of National Intelligence should not sympathize with autocrats, blame our allies for wars of aggression, or parrot Kremlin talking points. This is a low bar to clear.

I am here in the Senate to represent the people of Nevada. They are relying on me to work to keep them and our community safe. And I tell you what: I pledge to help keep Nevada safe by opposing Ms. Gabbard's confirmation, and I hope my colleagues follow suit.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. HEINRICH. Mr. President, every one of us remembers where we were when the first plane struck the World Trade Center the morning of September 11, 2001. On that day, we watched in horror as the North and South Towers fell, terrifying debris clouds flooding the ground beneath them. We witnessed the Pentagon, the heart of our national defense, engulfed in flames as a hijacked plane crashed into it head-on, taking the lives of all the people aboard that flight and over 125 employees in the building itself. Our hearts broke as we saw yet another plane go down in an open field in Pennsylvania, after brave Americans decided to fight back and regain control of the aircraft before it reached its intended target here in this very Capitol building.

From that day forward, we pledged to never forget the nearly 3,000 Americans who lost their lives that day and the thousands more who were first responders that have died since. That pledge led us to immediately establish a bipartisan commission devoted to understanding how our Nation's intelligence Agencies could have left us vulnerable to this attack.

And the 9/11 Commission discovered that our intelligence community had received warnings about the dangers posed by al-Qaida but that a systemic lack of communication and coordination between intelligence Agencies that were effectively stovepiped off from one another had left glaring blindspots at the highest levels of our government. And to fix this, the Commission recommended that our government establish a new Cabinet-level position called the Director of National Intelligence, the DNI.

The DNI is specifically dedicated to coordinating all of our intelligence-gathering operations that protect the safety and security of the American people. For the last two decades, the Director of National Intelligence has played a vital role in every administration as the leader of our intelligence community overseen in coordinating 18 of our intelligence Agencies.

The Director of National Intelligence is also one of the main voices that any President hears from, literally, each and every day. That is because the DNI serves not only as the coordinator of our intelligence community but as the compiler and presenter of the President's daily brief. This is the daily high-level, highly classified briefing on the most pressing and sensitive national security matters. This is where all of our Presidents have gathered critical information needed to make incredibly difficult military or foreign policy decisions. And it is where our Presidents learn about potential threats from our adversaries, from nonstate terrorist organizations, and to think through how to combat those.

Put simply: Our national security depends on the person that we entrust in that role.

In fact, we need to implicitly trust that this person is relying on and providing incredible and accurate information so that our country's Commander in Chief can make the decisions that will determine our security as a nation. As a member of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence for the last 12 years, I do not say this lightly: I do not believe that Ms. Gabbard has demonstrated the judgment to merit our trust as Director of National Intelligence.

Ms. Gabbard's statements and actions leading up to and during the confirmation process should make all of us question her qualifications for this essential national security role, and they should make us seriously question her basic judgment.

Time and again, Ms. Gabbard has elevated conspiracy theories, parroted

dictator's talking points, and repeatedly undermined our country's national security.

Let me give you some specific examples of her statements and her legislative track record. In 2017, while she was still serving in the House of Representatives, Ms. Gabbard exercised seriously questionable judgment in scheduling a foreign trip into Bashar al-Assad's pariah state of Syria. This was after Assad had committed well-documented crimes against his own people, including the use of chemical weapons, and plummeted his country into a bloody civil war and devastating humanitarian crisis.

Both before and after this trip, Ms. Gabbard undermined U.S. intelligence and echoed Russian and Syrian disinformation regarding Assad's use of chemical weapons on his own people. She has made statements that appear to defend Assad.

For example, on February 6, 2019, Ms. Gabbard claimed in an interview that: Assad is not the enemy of the United States because Syria does not pose a direct threat to the United States.

This is a shockingly narrow view of threats to U.S. national security. During the course of Syria's civil war, Assad used chemical weapons more than 300 times against his own people, killing and wounding thousands. To this day, Syria has still not accounted for this.

The U.S. has also described Syria as being in "flagrant noncompliance" with the Chemical Weapons Convention. And there is no question that Assad's regime posed a serious threat to international peace and security.

It is mystifying to me how Ms. Gabbard could not understand this then and still, apparently, doesn't understand it today.

Ms. Gabbard's 2020 Presidential campaign website stated that she remains "skeptical" about two particular chemical weapons attacks in Syria in 2017 and 2018. Her website wrongly stated that:

Both attacks occurred in towns under the control of al-Qaeda-linked opposition forces. Both attacks resulted in multiple civilian casualties, and both were immediately blamed on the Assad government. However, there is evidence to suggest that the attacks may have been staged by opposition forces for the purpose of drawing the United States and the West deeper into the war.

Of course, there never was such evidence.

Disturbingly, Ms. Gabbard decided to take the views of a discredited professor, who was himself taken in by a Syrian Australian YouTube influencer, that somehow the opposition forces had staged these chemical weapons attacks.

As a Member of Congress, she could have taken the time to read the summary of a declassified U.S. intelligence report released the week after the 2017 attack, warning that claims shifting blame to rebel groups reflected the "false narratives" spread by Syria and its patron state, Russia.

Instead of looking to the intelligence community for answers, Gabbard sought out fake intelligence, demonstrating her distrust in the very intelligence Agencies that she could soon coordinate and oversee.

Her trip to Syria and her visit with Assad himself should be alarming to all of us. Normally, if any Member of Congress goes on a foreign fact-finding trip like this, we take precautions to not jeopardize our vital national security interests. We coordinate with the State Department. We coordinate with the Pentagon. We carefully account for our schedules. And we sure as hell make sure we are not giving a platform to state-sponsors of terrorism or terrorist leaders.

Ms. Gabbard did none of these things on this rogue trip into Assad's Syria. In fact, she sat down for an unscheduled meeting with Assad himself, not once but twice. She also met with the Grand Mufti of Syria. The Grand Mufti was appointed in 2005 to be Syria's most senior Sunni Muslim cleric. In 2011, he threatened Western countries, including the United States, against taking military actions in Syria. And he said in his speech:

I say to all of Europe, I say to America, we will set up suicide bombers who are now in your countries.

During her confirmation hearing last month, I asked Ms. Gabbard directly about this meeting with the Grand Mufti, Mr. Hassoun. She claimed that this was the first she had ever heard about Mr. Hassoun's threats to set up some suicide bombers to target America and our European allies. However, records from her congressional office suggest that almost immediately after returning from her controversial trip, she was fully aware that she had met with a leader with direct ties to terrorism.

According to recent reporting in the Washington Post that helped to unearth these records right after she returned from Syria, Ms. Gabbard and her congressional staff worked feverishly to account for her meetings and official paperwork and to contain the political fallout. In the documents that the Post reviewed, Ms. Gabbard's staff asked her:

Did you know you were meeting with people with direct ties to terrorist organizations?

And her response in those documents:

Is this question re the Mufti?

I want to be clear, I am not suggesting that Ms. Gabbard endorsed or endorses the despicable views or actions of this particular Syrian terrorist leader. What I am suggesting is that Ms. Gabbard's false denial to me in her confirmation hearing of any prior knowledge of this terrorist leader whom she personally met with should be evidence enough that we cannot trust her. And in the position that we are being asked to confirm her for, telling the whole truth accurately is the whole point.

On top of this, Ms. Gabbard has repeatedly made public statements that echo Russian justification for Putin's unjustified, unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. She has blamed our NATO allies for failing to recognize Russia's "legitimate security concerns."

Those are literally her words. And she has amplified Russia and Putin's disinformation campaigns alleging Ukraine's development of bioweapons.

On February 23, 2022, Ms. Gabbard echoed Russian talking points blaming Putin's invasion of Ukraine on the Biden administration. Specifically, she tweeted:

This war and suffering could have easily been avoided if Biden Admin/NATO had simply acknowledged Russia's legitimate security concerns regarding Ukraine's becoming a member of NATO, which would mean U.S./NATO forces right on Russia's border.

As my colleague Senator BENNET said so powerfully as he pointed out at Ms. Gabbard's confirmation hearing, she sent this tweet at the very moment that Russian tanks were rolling over Ukraine's border, essentially saying that Vladimir Putin was justified invading the free nation of Ukraine.

Then-Senate Intelligence Committee Vice Chair and now Secretary of State Marco Rubio tweeted in response saying, this is "simply not true," noting that the week before the invasion, Putin once again demanded NATO leave every country that joined after 1997, including Bulgaria, Romania, and 12 others.

Ms. Gabbard chose not to listen to the vice chair of the Intelligence Committee or the intelligence community itself, which had issued a declassified threat assessment two weeks prior. Ms. Gabbard decided, instead, to give the benefit of the doubt to Vladimir Putin. How can we trust that she won't do that again?

Ms. Gabbard has also repeatedly praised Edward Snowden, a former National Security Agency contractor who fled to China and then to Russia after he was charged in 2013 with illegally exposing government surveillance methods and classified information.

Ms. Gabbard has called him a "brave whistleblower" and even went so far as to introduce legislation in the House of Representatives to pardon Edward Snowden.

In 2016, the House Intelligence Committee issued a declassified, scathing report that found Snowden leaked secrets that caused tremendous damage to U.S. national security. This included leaking secrets that protect American troops and American personnel overseas. As that report made clear, Snowden was not a whistleblower; he was and is a traitor to this Nation.

Ms. Gabbard and anyone who is interested in understanding the impact of the leaked secrets has access to the declassified House Intelligence Committee report and many other public sources of information explaining the damage that Snowden caused to our national security. Yet she continues to

believe her own sources of information instead and to this day will not say that Snowden betrayed this country.

Let me be clear. Edward Snowden is not a whistleblower; he is a traitor. Ms. Gabbard should know this full well.

If we confirm her as our next Director of National Intelligence, Ms. Gabbard will be responsible for transmitting lawful whistleblower complaints to Congress. Her past statements on Snowden reveal a deficient understanding of our Nation's whistleblower laws that should be patently disqualifying for any Director of National Intelligence, much less any national security appointee.

When my colleagues on the Intelligence Committee pressed Ms. Gabbard during her confirmation hearing about whether her views had changed and if she would acknowledge that Mr. Snowden were a traitor, she refused. This is who we want to lead our intelligence community—someone who outright refuses to condemn the actions of someone who jeopardized our national security and put the lives of many members of our intelligence community and national security community at risk? It is hard to believe that we could be so reckless.

Finally, Ms. Gabbard has also advocated for a full repeal of section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, or FISA. Section 702 is one of our intelligence community's most important tools to effectively fight terrorism, disrupt foreign cyber attacks, impede drug trafficking, and protect U.S. troops serving abroad. Ms. Gabbard introduced a bill in the House that would have completely repealed section 702.

I will be the first to say that there are reforms to section 702 that we should make to ensure that this law always focuses on the communications of foreign targets abroad and is never inadvertently used in a way that threatens the privacy of innocent Americans. In the past, including just last year, I worked closely with my colleagues to advance some of these reforms. A wholesale repeal of section 702, however, is a wildly out-of-step and dangerous proposal.

Do we really want to confirm a Director of National Intelligence who has advocated for the dismantling of such a foundational source of foreign intelligence to protect our national security?

Any number of Ms. Gabbard's statements or actions would be disqualifying for a nominee to lead our intelligence community and keep our President accurately informed on pressing national security matters. But I am not alone in raising concerns about this nomination. As with many of President Trump's unqualified nominees, I have heard from many New Mexicans—from many constituents in my own State—in opposition to Ms. Gabbard's nomination, and I want to take a moment to read to you from some of these letters that I have received.

Addie from Mountainair wrote to me to share her concern about Ms. Gabbard's lack of experience to safeguard our Nation.

Addie said:

Running the DNI requires an unwavering commitment to evidence-based decision-making, national security, and independence from political or foreign influence. Tulsi Gabbard has none of that. She is completely unfit for this position.

A constituent and former intelligence officer from Santa Fe who wished to remain anonymous is concerned how Ms. Gabbard's background will impact operations critical to defending the United States from foreign threats.

This individual told me:

As a retired intelligence officer, I urge you to do everything you can to keep Tulsi Gabbard from becoming the next [DNI]. Our allies will be reluctant to share intelligence with her, as will our own intelligence professionals, given her past support for Putin and for other dictators. This is a job that needs to be filled by a serious expert in intelligence and national security policy.

Katy from Tularosa is troubled by Ms. Gabbard's past association with dictators and tyrants.

Katy wrote to me:

Tulsi Gabbard is known to have had sympathies for Russia and has met with Bashar al-Assad, the unrepentant dictator and war criminal. Her appointment threatens U.S. national security.

Gary, also from Tularosa, is a retired intelligence officer. Gary is worried about Ms. Gabbard's lack of national security experience and how it will affect efforts to safeguard the United States.

Gary wrote:

As a retired U.S. Air Force intelligence officer, I urge you to use all [of] your influence to block Tulsi Gabbard as the next Director of National Intelligence. She is absolutely unqualified to assume this key position in the Intelligence Community. To serve our nation, the DNI must have a deep understanding of the strengths and limitations of the broad array of civilian and military intelligence agencies. Only then can the DNI lead effectively and offer unbiased counsel to the President. Tulsi Gabbard has none of these qualifications or experience.

Walter from Santa Fe is a veteran who served as an intelligence officer as well. He wrote to me to convey his disgust with President Trump in putting individual loyalty over national security with his nomination.

Walter said:

I am appalled at President Trump putting individual loyalty above competency in his appointments. While Ms. Gabbard is a veteran, she lacks experience in the field of national security, and her playing with conspiracy theories lacking valid documentation raises serious questions about her judgment.

I agree with my constituents in New Mexico.

Ms. Gabbard's poor judgment and lack of national security experience make her wholly unqualified to serve as our next Director of National Intelligence. Confirming her to this role will make our Nation less safe. For all

of these reasons, I will not be supporting Ms. Gabbard's confirmation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I am here to speak in opposition to the nomination of Tulsi Gabbard to serve as the Director of National Intelligence of the United States of America.

Setting aside her lack of qualifications and setting aside her rotten judgment, her nomination strikes me as being part of a pattern of unilateral disarmament by the Trump administration against Russia. One can hazard as to why this is happening, but the fact that it is happening seems hard to deny.

In November 2024, the Washington Post wrote this:

Gabbard's planned appointment as the head of national intelligence elicited the most excitement in Russia because she has been long regarded as a darling of the propagandist Russian RT network, which amplified her sympathetic takes on Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad and Putin.

Russian state TV has called Ms. Gabbard "our friend Tulsi."

The Russian newspaper Komsomolskaya Pravda published an op-ed, and it was titled "The CIA and FBI are trembling: Why Trump protégé Tulsi Gabbard will support Russia as head of National Intelligence."

So the Russians are telling us pretty plain and simple: She is with us.

If you look at some of her behavior particularly relevant to the DNI position, she has constantly opposed section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, which is a key source of foreign intelligence for our national security and which—I guess I would have to say in this location—presumably is useful at getting intelligence on Russia.

She is not alone. Over at the FBI, Trump's nominee for FBI Director, Kash Patel, we just found out was paid \$25,000 by a Russian filmmaker with Kremlin ties to participate in a documentary attacking the FBI, which is an adversary of Russia's, which spends a great deal of time and effort keeping an eye on Russia's adverse intelligence activity in the United States.

To make it worse, Kash Patel has said he wants to shut down what he calls the intel shops—the part of the FBI that would go after Russian intelligence operations and Russian criminal networks in the United States. He has even said he wants to shut down the FBI building and run everybody out into the field offices around the country. Well, guess what takes place at FBI Headquarters? Our intelligence and counterterrorism operations. If you empty that place out and you move everything out to the field where people are doing regular criminal work, it is another way of saying: We are going to shut down our intelligence operations.

Just in the past week, since she has been in, Attorney General Bondi has pulled down the DOJ Kleptocracy Asset

Recovery Initiative, which has recovered billions of dollars in ill-gotten gains from foreign kleptocrats—many Russian, many close to Vladimir Putin. She shut down DOJ's Task Force KleptoCapture, which is the entity that has been working to target the Russian oligarchs around Putin, seize their assets that have been used to support Putin in his illegal, brutal invasion of Ukraine, and take those assets and provide them to the Ukrainians for their rebuilding and defense.

So a common theme here: Tulsi Gabbard wants to come in as "our friend Tulsi," according to Russian state TV, to have the CIA and FBI trembling because she will support Russia. Kash Patel is coming into the FBI, who takes money from a Kremlin-associated filmmaker and promises to shut down or at least degrade our intelligence capabilities within the FBI. And Attorney General Bondi is busy over at the DOJ taking down the anti-kleptocracy initiatives that focus on Putin's little gang of oligarchs who prop him up. It is three for three in unilateral disarmament by the United States against Russia.

There is a little history here that is worth going back to in evaluating all of this, and it includes that Russia interfered in the 2016 election through a Kremlin-linked internet research agency. There has been a good deal of reporting on that, but since that reporting, there has been a persistent, rightwing Trump narrative to pretend that never existed, that there was no Trump-Russia thing, that Trump-Russia was a hoax.

In fact, it was not a hoax. Trump-Russia was a thing, as a bipartisan report from the Senate Intelligence Committee pointed out. That bipartisan Senate Intelligence Committee report found that Russian President Putin had ordered the Russian effort to hack computer networks and accounts that were affiliated with the Democratic Party and that were affiliated with the Democratic National Committee and that the purpose was to find and to leak information that would be damaging to Hillary Clinton in that election.

Here is what the committee found. I quote the report, the bipartisan report:

Moscow's intent was to harm the Clinton Campaign, tarnish an expected Clinton presidential administration, help the Trump Campaign after Trump became the presumptive Republican nominee, and undermine the US democratic process.

That was the finding of the U.S. intelligence community as well as the finding of the Senate Intelligence Committee.

It went on. You remember that famous meeting where Trump took the Russian Ambassador and the Russian Foreign Minister right into the Oval Office and divulged to them highly classified information—highly-classified information—which caused U.S. officials to warn that Trump's revelations jeopardized a key source of intel-

ligence in the Islamic State. They had to ping out to other intelligence Agencies and to our officers in the field: Look out. Classified information has just been given to these Putin officials to try to shore up and defend our sources and methods.

The Mueller report went to exhaustive effort, with all of the support of grand jury and senior FBI and Department of Justice officials, and they concluded that the Trump campaign both knew of and welcomed the Russian interference and expected to benefit from it.

It even talked about obstruction of justice by President Trump. But what they concluded in talking about obstruction of justice by President Trump is that he could not be indicted as a sitting President and therefore it would not be fair to lay out the conclusion that he had committed this crime because he wouldn't have a process by which to acquit himself and to clear the accusation. But they certainly laid out plenty of evidence that was suggestive that had he been an ordinary individual, he would have been indicted, charged, and convicted for obstruction of justice relating to this whole Trump-Russia saga.

Later, when he was asked about all this in a conversation about Vladimir Putin, he said in November of 2017 about Putin—he said: Putin "said he didn't meddle" in the election. "I asked him. . . . He said he absolutely did not meddle in our election. He did not do what they are saying he did."

Everybody in the intelligence community knew that he did, in fact, do what they are saying he did, but Trump, for some reason, some connection, some Trump-Russia connection, went with Putin rather than the U.S. law enforcement and intelligence services.

The next year in Helsinki, Trump met privately with Putin for 2 hours. We don't know what happened because they just met with their interpreters. Then they went out for a news conference, and there again, standing right next to Putin, he sided with him over our own intelligence Agencies. But the meddling was real, the meddling was documented, and the Mueller report helped document the meddling.

If you go into the details, you see the subplots. Paul Manafort was Trump's 2016 campaign chairman. He was meeting regularly, communicating regularly with a Russian intelligence officer named Konstantin Kilimnik and with a Russian oligarch named Oleg Deripaska through the campaign.

The Senate Intelligence Committee's bipartisan report found that on numerous occasions, Manafort sought to secretly share internal campaign information with Kilimnik. This did not end well for Paul Manafort; he was indicted by a Federal grand jury for the crime of conspiracy against the United States, convicted, and sentenced to more than 7 years in prison—oh, except that Trump pardoned Manafort in late 2020.

There was the infamous Trump Tower meeting in which Donald Trump, Jr., the same Paul Manafort, and son-in-law Jared Kushner met with Russian billionaire Emin Agalarov and a Russian lawyer connected to the Kremlin right in Trump Tower. The meeting came about because Donald Trump, Jr., had been told by a contact that the Russian Government wanted to offer—and I am quoting here—"official documents and information that would incriminate Hillary." Official documents and information from the Russian Government that would incriminate Hillary.

The response:

If it's what you say I love it.

They went ahead to the meeting. Clearly, the Trump campaign's purpose for that meeting was to obtain from Russia incriminating information on Clinton to influence the election.

The special counsel decided not to prosecute the attendees in part because it couldn't determine that that information would actually have been determinative because it related to orphans, and what didn't connect with the Trump attendees at that meeting was that the interruption of the orphans being delivered to the United States for parents who wanted to adopt them was the response to sanctions against oligarchs and people around Putin, and this was an effort to get the sanctions lifted.

If you could crack the code, you would know that that is what the orphans conversation was about, because that is why the orphans blockade had been set up.

Ultimately, Russia did, in fact, hack emails—both from the DNC and from the Clinton campaign chair. Russian intelligence got their hands on those documents.

Here is what the Intelligence Committee wrote about that:

Trump and senior Campaign officials sought to obtain advanced information about WikiLeaks' planned releases through Roger Stone. At their direction, Stone took action to gain inside knowledge for the Campaign and shared his purported knowledge directly with Trump and senior Campaign officials on multiple occasions.

This wasn't just a one-off; this was information being channeled through Roger Stone to the Trump campaign. It didn't end well for Stone. He was indicted and convicted on charges of lying to Congress about what he and then-Candidate Donald Trump knew about Russian efforts to discredit Hillary Clinton's campaign and witness tampering and obstruction.

On we go to Carter Page, also associated with the campaign, who traveled to Moscow in that timeframe—July 2016—to deliver a commencement speech while working for the campaign. Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Arkady Dvorkovich there expressed "strong support for Mr. Trump"—"strong support for Mr. Trump and a desire to work together."

Another campaign operative, George Papadopoulos—same year, May—was

traveling and told the Greek Foreign Minister that the Russians have “dirt” on Hillary Clinton.

So you have all these pieces coming together about the Russians seeking dirt on Hillary Clinton, getting it, leaking it through WikiLeaks, and constantly having a back channel through members of the Trump campaign.

It didn't end well for Papadopoulos either. He was arrested for lying to FBI investigators and pleaded guilty. And, of course, Trump pardoned him too. Trying to cover up his traces.

Michael Flynn in 2015 delivered remarks at a Moscow gala honoring Russia Today, RT, the same organization that Tulsi Gabbard was the darling of. He was seated at the gala next to Putin—next to Putin. He was paid \$33,750 from RT—whose darling Tulsi Gabbard was—for this one speech. He didn't correctly report the payment. He ended up being paid more than \$67,000 by Russian companies before the 2016 Presidential election.

It didn't end well for him either. He lied to Vice President Pence and to the FBI about communications he was having with Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak about sanctions imposed by the Obama administration while President Obama was in office. Yes, the sanctions related to the orphans conversation at Trump Tower. Flynn pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI about that conversation, and, of course, Trump pardoned him days before Flynn was due to be sentenced.

It is kind of an ongoing thing between Trump and Russia. A lot of us on both sides of the aisle are very concerned about what is going on in Ukraine—indeed, furious that Putin would launch his army into Ukraine and perform massive atrocities and war crimes: firing rockets into children's hospitals, having the soldiers murder through neighborhoods. It is a foul spectacle, and it started with Russia's invasion of Crimea, the so-called little green men.

Trump thought that was all a pretty good thing. You will remember that the way they started it was to foment riots by Russian-speaking people in Crimea to provide a justification for coming over the border—sort of 1930s Europe style tactics coming back to us here. So that kicked it off. There were these demonstrations. Putin said “Oh, my people, my people; they are being abused by those terrible Ukrainians,” and in went the little green men.

Here is how Trump praised Putin's invasion then of Crimea:

When you see the riots in a country because they're hurting the Russians, OK, 'we'll go and take it over.' And he really goes step by step, and you have to give him a lot of credit.

And of course there is the famous comment to Russia publicly, saying:

Russia, if you're listening—

This was during the campaign—

I hope you're able to find the 30,000 e-mails that are missing. I think you will probably be rewarded mightily by our press.

Then there were the episodes that I mentioned earlier where he said “No, Russia wasn't meddling in our elections” despite the fact that everybody knew they were. But he took Putin's side in all of that.

Most recently, he refused to condemn Putin for the death of Alexei Navalny, who had been such a brave fighter, standing up against the corrupt Putin regime, and died in a penal colony at the age of 47.

For a long time, I have described the United States as being in a clash of civilizations with rule-of-law countries like ours on the one side and kleptocrats, autocrats, and governments run by criminal organizations like the narco-traffickers on the other side. Fairly simple clash—rule of law versus rule of thuggery.

There ought to be bipartisan support for making sure that the United States does not become a safe haven for kleptocrats and criminals. We should not be giving aid and comfort to our enemies by allowing them to park their funds here in our country.

We have made progress to combat the kleptocrats and the international criminals who are on the other side of this clash of civilizations. Ms. Gabbard is not on the right side of that clash, not when she is so chummy with Putin, not when she is so chummy with the murderer Bashar al-Assad, not when she is “our darling Tulsi” to Russian media channels, and not when she is lined up with Kash Patel, threatening to take down the FBI Offices that track Russia, taking money from a Russian filmmaker, and then stack that up with Attorney General Bondi taking down the kleptocracy and klepto-capture efforts at the DOJ that have been making the Russian oligarchs' lives miserable by going after their assets.

One, two, three—all unilaterally disarming against Russia in the wake of all that time in which the Trump-Russia connection appeared over and over and over and over again. And as far as I can tell, still persists today.

I see my colleague here on the Senate floor.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. KELLY. Mr. President, today the Senate is deciding whether COL Tulsi Gabbard should be the person who, each day, makes the call on which intelligence gets in front of the President of the United States. That is what the Director of National Intelligence does. They sift through the intelligence collected and analyzed by all of our intelligence Agencies, from the CIA to the NSA, and decide what to brief the President on. This includes information about terrorists planning attacks here in the United States or on our servicemembers abroad. It includes evidence of adversaries backing cyber attacks.

Often, the intelligence is incomplete, or there are pieces that contradict one

another. It is this person's job to cut through the noise and present the President with what he needs to know.

There can't be any spin. There can't be a finger on the scale to get him to do one thing or not do another. It requires impeccable judgment and sound decision making.

Everything we have learned about Colonel Gabbard during her confirmation process suggests that she is not the person for this job. It is that simple.

Now, I went into this process with an open mind. Colonel Gabbard and I, we had a long meeting in my office. She responded to a number of written follow-up questions that my colleagues and I had for her. And I was able to ask her questions in an open and closed hearing of the Senate Intelligence Committee.

And after each of those steps, I became more and more concerned.

Colonel Gabbard is often dismissive and has been, at times, outright hostile towards our intelligence community and the tools that it uses to protect this country.

Now, I have a tremendous amount of respect for Colonel Gabbard's service to this Nation, and I do think that healthy skepticism is a good thing. It is something that I always valued in my crew members at NASA, and I value it today in the Senate.

But that is not what we have seen from Colonel Gabbard. She has a track record of embracing overblown, flimsy claims that confirm her own viewpoint while easily dismissing the thorough assessments and the methods of our own intelligence community. That is not the person that we should want in this job.

Now, let's start here with her record on Edward Snowden. Edward Snowden was a government contractor who stole and then leaked highly classified information from the National Security Agency in 2013. Snowden could have used whistleblower protections to securely and legally share concerns that he had about the legality of certain surveillance programs, but he didn't do that. Instead, he stole millions of documents—most of which didn't pertain to the programs that he had raised concerns about—and then he leaked them, without caring about what would the lasting damage be to our national security.

After the Department of Justice revealed charges against him for committing espionage, Snowden fled to Russia, where he was welcomed with open arms.

Edward Snowden exposed our government's secrets to the world, including to our adversaries. He put intelligence operatives and servicemembers around the world at risk, at great risk. And he made all of us less safe, and that is true even today. He should be in prison for betraying our country.

COL Tulsi Gabbard wanted him to be pardoned. She introduced legislation calling on the Federal Government to

drop all charges against Snowden and, unsurprisingly, it failed to gain support.

This was in September of 2020, after he had been in Russia for nearly 7 years, and after the House Intelligence Committee had released a bipartisan report to the public detailing about how he had broken the law and made our country less safe. This came after that.

And she publicly lobbied President Trump to pardon Snowden during his first term. He didn't.

And on October 6 of 2020, Gabbard called Snowden a brave whistleblower. Two weeks later, Vladimir Putin gave Snowden permanent residency in Russia.

This should, obviously, be a great concern to anyone considering her for this job, and it is clear that Colonel Gabbard knew it would be an issue in her confirmation hearing. She knew that. So she came prepared with a well-practiced answer, and she used it, word for word, over and over again.

Vice Chairman WARNER's first question was whether she thinks Edward Snowden is brave. She said that Edward Snowden broke the law, but that he released information that led to reforms. She didn't mention the harm he did to our national security.

He followed up. She started with the same answer. And on and on it went. Next, with Senator KING.

Then Senator YOUNG asked if she agreed with the House Intelligence Committee report that Snowden caused damage to national security. She repeated the same answer she had given just before. At least eight times, by my count, as I sat there in the hearing room, she gave the same answer word for word.

But the real moment of truth came when Senator LANKFORD of Oklahoma asked her what he himself has publicly said was a softball question, and the question was: Is Edward Snowden a traitor?

It really should have been pretty easy. If you believe Edward Snowden broke the law and the law he broke is the Espionage Act, it is pretty clear that is exactly what he is. He is a traitor.

She wouldn't answer.

Senator BENNET gave her another opportunity. She didn't take it.

Now, Colonel Gabbard came into our confirmation hearing with a plan to give the same nonanswer over and over about Edward Snowden, and she was counting on that being enough to skate by. It wasn't for me.

And I still can't understand. To this day, I still can't figure it out, why she will not call this guy a traitor. Colonel Gabbard would be leading the men and women of our intelligence Agencies whose work and lives Edward Snowden put at risk.

I ask my Republican colleagues: How can we entrust this responsibility with someone who wanted to free Edward Snowden and still, to this day, cannot say whether or not he is a traitor?

For a lot of nominees, that would be a way big enough issue to prevent them from getting this job. That is pretty clear. But so, too, would her hostility toward FISA 702, one of the most important intelligence collection tools that we have. This is the program that enables us to monitor the communications of foreign actors outside of the United States. It has stopped terror attacks. It has protected American troops serving abroad. About 60 percent of the President's brief every single day is derived from intelligence that is gathered from this program, the very brief that Colonel Gabbard would be responsible for compiling every single day. Without it, we would be exposed. We would be less able to detect and prevent terror attacks or other attacks against the American people.

But that is exactly what Colonel Gabbard tried to do. She voted against reauthorizing this program in 2018. And in 2020, she introduced legislation to repeal it—all of it. Not just the piece—the piece of it that Congress was debating how to reform, she wanted to just get rid of the whole thing, all of it. And when she advocated for doing away with the program, she made false statements about how it works and how it impacts American citizens.

This should be a concern for anyone being considered for this job. Because while the Senate Intelligence Committee has a range of views on how this program should work, none of us on the committee, on either side of the aisle, has any interest in getting rid of it because we know how important it is, how critical it is to the safety of all of us. In fact, we came together with others in Congress to deliver reforms that further protect our civil liberties as Americans while retaining the tools our President needs to stay ahead of threats.

Once again, Colonel Gabbard knew that this would be an issue with her confirmation. And, again, she bet that she could just say as little as possible to just get by. That is why, in a written response to the committee, she said:

My prior concerns about FISA were based on insufficient protections for civil liberties . . . Significant FISA reforms have been enacted since my time in Congress to address these issues.

Sounds reasonable. Well, here is the problem. Just last year, she was on a podcast trashing those very reforms she is now saying back up her position on FISA. She said:

This legislation that was just passed recently expanded those authorities . . . in some other ways, it took an already bad problem and made it many, many times worse.

So which is it? Did these reforms fix the issues she had with FISA, as she said in her written response? Or did they make the problem worse, as she said in the podcast? It can't be both.

Colonel Gabbard was asked about this inconsistency during her confirmation hearing, and she couldn't answer

for it. In fact, she couldn't answer for what these reforms are and how they address her concerns or don't.

And, folks, this is not trivial. The Director of National Intelligence works with the Attorney General to assess compliance with the law and improve internal procedures that decide how the intelligence community will collect, use, and store foreign intelligence to combat threats like terrorism while ensuring Americans' constitutional rights are protected. That means Colonel Gabbard would be responsible for implementing these reforms and advising Congress on their effectiveness.

Finally, as we are all aware—well, all of us in the Senate, we are aware—this program is up for reauthorization in just over a year. President Trump has been all over the map on this program, but as recently as last year, he told Congress to kill FISA. The next Director of National Intelligence is going to play a critical role in advising the President and making recommendations to Congress about this program, FISA. Do we really trust that Colonel Gabbard will fight to protect this program, given her track record on this?

I know I don't. That, too, should be disqualifying for this job.

But the last example of Colonel Gabbard's hostility toward the intelligence community is the one that should give everyone the most concern. It is for me. As I said earlier, the primary responsibility of this job is to coordinate across 18 intelligence organizations and sift through intelligence, make some sense of it, and decide what to take to the President of the United States. In her confirmation hearing, I asked Colonel Gabbard: What does a good process look like?

And her answer to this question—it was fine. She said: Build a strong team, welcome dissenting voices, and make sure the truth is reported.

That is great. But then we got into a real-life example when she had sought out the intel, claimed to be reporting the truth, and then got it wrong. That is where, for me, it was obvious she is not the right fit for this job.

Colonel Gabbard accepts the conclusion that former Syrian President Bashar al-Assad used chemical weapons against his own people, except for two incidents. She has publicly disputed the confident conclusion of our intelligence community and international experts that Assad used chemical weapons in Khan Shaykhun in 2017 and in Douma, both in Syria, in 2018. She authored a report—this was put on her campaign website—questioning whether these attacks were staged by anti-Assad groups, despite the repeated determinations that this was yet another incident of him murdering his own citizens.

You might be asking yourself: Why? Why did Colonel Gabbard go to such great lengths to sow doubt about these two attacks, knowing that it would have to be useful to Assad's goals? Why

did she doubt our intelligence community's conclusion in these two cases, but not the others?

Well, I asked her, and here is how that answer began. This is a quote from Colonel Gabbard:

These two cases are being looked at to be used as a pretext for major military movement. And another—my fear was a repeat of the deployment of another half million soldiers like we saw in Iraq towards what was the Obama administration's goals, which was regime change in Syria.

Setting aside that Obama didn't deploy a half million soldiers to Syria, here is the problem. By her own admission, Colonel Gabbard's doubts about U.S. intelligence in these two situations began with her disagreements about how the intelligence was going to be used. She didn't want the United States and our allies to strike Syria as punishment for these chemical weapons attacks. So instead of making a strong argument on the policy, she tried to question whether the attacks happened in the first place.

Colonel Gabbard also invoked the Iraq war. She is right. We needed to learn important lessons from the lead-up to the invasion. The biggest lesson was to carefully follow the intelligence where it actually leads, rather than bending it to fit the outcome that you want, which is exactly what Colonel Gabbard did in this case.

It is that simple, folks, and it is also that dangerous, especially for someone in this job. If she has already disputed intelligence because of how it would be used, would she do it again in this position—the position of the Director of National Intelligence? She is the person deciding what the President would see.

Would she withhold information or would she seek out confirmation without regard for whom it came from or that her viewpoint was correct? Because that is what she did in this case—the report she authored questioning whether these attacks were staged relied on a professor without expertise in chemical weapons. His theories in this case were deeply flawed and have been widely debunked by experts.

I asked Colonel Gabbard if she was aware that this professor had appeared on Russian propaganda news stations. She said she had no idea.

To produce his findings, this professor relied on an Australian chemistry student with a history of defending the Assad regime. I asked her if she was aware of that. She said she was not—not at the time—but since she has been made aware.

Here is what that tells me: Colonel Gabbard was unwilling to even examine, let alone weigh, the biases and shortcomings of the sources she was seeking out and elevating. She embraced these people and their half-baked theories because they confirmed what she wanted to be true—that Assad didn't gas his own people in these two cases. She wanted it to be true so badly that, 5 years later, she says that she

was still unaware of the facts of their background—facts that me and my staff found with some rather routine searching of public information. It was not hard.

And she trusted and further publicized their claims without verification, despite our government making clear that Assad and Russia would attempt to raise these sorts of questions and theories to distract America and our allies.

Mr. President, if that is not a redflag, I don't know what is. Still, 5 years later, Colonel Gabbard came before the U.S. Senate Intelligence Committee and repeated all of this as if it weren't in contention. She continues to apply less skepticism toward these sources and narratives than the assessments of American intelligence operatives, professionals who have a ton of experience at this and whom she is nominated to lead—all because they support her point of view: The United States should not have struck Syria in retaliation for their use of chemical weapons. That is why she believed the people online.

Now, that kind of reverse engineering to try to steer a policy outcome is dangerous in a job like this.

Mr. President, the next couple of years are going to be challenging for our national security. I think we all agree upon that. We face threats that grow more complicated each and every day. And our intelligence community, they are the best in the world. They are really good at gathering intelligence of all kinds. The hardest part is sifting through that information and making some sense of what it all means, making determinations. That is what this job is all about. And everything we have seen from Colonel Gabbard throughout this process suggests that she is the wrong person for this job.

She lifted up Edward Snowden as a hero and is unwilling to call him a traitor. She tried to get rid of one of the most important intelligence collection tools that we have and has contradicted herself when answering for it. And most central to this role, she has displayed poor judgment and poor decision making when assessing intelligence, especially when it comes to chemical weapons use in Syria.

Each of these—each one of them on their own—should be disqualifying for holding this job. Taken together, they paint a picture of someone who is especially ill-suited and unprepared to take on this responsibility.

I know that these concerns are shared by my Republican colleagues. So let's be honest about it. Let's say no to the political pressure. And let's put our national security first, and let's vote no on this nominee.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

MORNING BUSINESS

Ms. LUMMIS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be

in a period of morning business for debate only, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES RULES OF PROCEDURE

Mr. WICKER. Madam President, the Committee on Armed Services has adopted rules governing its procedures for the 119th Congress. Pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 2, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, on behalf of myself and Ranking Member REED, I ask unanimous consent that a copy of the committee rules be printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

UNITED STATES SENATE—COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES RULES OF PROCEDURE, 119TH CONGRESS

1. Regular Meeting Day—The Committee shall meet at least once a month when Congress is in session. The regular meeting days of the Committee shall be Tuesday and Thursday, unless the Chairman, after consultation with the Ranking Minority Member, directs otherwise.

2. Additional Meetings—The Chairman, after consultation with the Ranking Minority Member, may call such additional meetings as he deems necessary.

3. Special Meetings—Special meetings of the Committee may be called by a majority of the members of the Committee in accordance with paragraph 3 of Rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate.

4. Open Meetings—Each meeting of the Committee, or any subcommittee thereof, including meetings to conduct hearings, shall be open to the public, except that a meeting or series of meetings by the Committee or a subcommittee thereof on the same subject for a period of no more than fourteen (14) calendar days may be closed to the public on a motion made and seconded to go into closed session to discuss only whether the matters enumerated below in clauses (a) through (f) would require the meeting to be closed, followed immediately by a record vote in open session by a majority of the members of the Committee or subcommittee when it is determined that the matters to be discussed or the testimony to be taken at such meeting or meetings

(a) will disclose matters necessary to be kept secret in the interests of national defense or the confidential conduct of the foreign relations of the United States;

(b) will relate solely to matters of Committee staff personnel or internal staff management or procedure;

(c) will tend to charge an individual with a crime or misconduct, to disgrace or injure the professional standing of an individual, or otherwise to expose an individual to public contempt or obloquy or will represent a clearly unwarranted invasion of the privacy of an individual;

(d) will disclose the identity of any informer or law enforcement agent or will disclose any information relating to the investigation or prosecution of a criminal offense that is required to be kept secret in the interests of effective law enforcement;

(e) will disclose information relating to the trade secrets or financial or commercial information pertaining specifically to a given person if—

(1) an Act of Congress requires the information to be kept confidential by Government officers and employees; or

(2) the information has been obtained by the Government on a confidential basis, other than through an application by such person for a specific Government financial or other benefit, and is required to be kept secret in order to prevent undue injury to the competitive position of such person; or

(f) may divulge matters required to be kept confidential under other provisions of law or Government regulations.

5. Presiding Officer—The Chairman shall preside at all meetings and hearings of the Committee except that in his absence the Ranking Majority Member present at the meeting or hearing shall preside unless by majority vote the Committee provides otherwise.

6. Quorum—(a) A majority of the members of the Committee are required to be actually present to report a matter or measure from the Committee. (See Standing Rules of the Senate XXVI.7(a)(1)).

(b) Except as provided in subsections (a) and (c), and other than for the conduct of hearings, nine members of the Committee, including one member of the minority party; or a majority of the members of the Committee, shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of such business as may be considered by the Committee.

(c) Three members of the Committee, one of whom shall be a member of the minority party, shall constitute a quorum for the purpose of taking sworn testimony, unless otherwise ordered by a majority of the full Committee.

(d) No measure or matter or recommendation shall be reported by the Committee in the absence of the concurrence of a majority of the members of the Committee who are present.

(e) Proxy votes may not be considered for the purpose of establishing a quorum.

7. Proxy Voting—Proxy voting shall be allowed on all measures and matters before the Committee. The vote by proxy of any member of the Committee may be counted for the purpose of reporting any measure or matter to the Senate if the absent member casting such vote has been informed of the matter on which the member is being recorded and has affirmatively requested that he or she be so recorded. Proxy must be given in writing. In order to report out a nomination, measure or treaty, the "yes" votes must come from those physically present in the room *only* and must outnumber the "no" votes—whether the no votes are cast by members present in the room or by proxy.

8. Announcement of Votes—The results of all roll call votes taken in any meeting of the Committee on any measure, or amendment thereto, shall be announced in the Committee report, unless previously announced by the Committee. The announcement shall include a tabulation of the votes cast in favor and votes cast in opposition to each such measure and amendment by each member of the Committee who was present at such meeting. The Chairman, after consultation with the Ranking Minority Member, may hold open a roll call vote on any measure or matter which is before the Committee until no later than midnight of the day on which the Committee votes on such measure or matter.

9. Subpoenas—Subpoenas for attendance of witnesses and for the production of memoranda, documents, records, and the like may be issued, after consultation with the Ranking Minority Member, by the Chairman or any other member designated by the Chairman, but only when authorized by a majority of the members of the Committee. The subpoena shall briefly state the matter to

which the witness is expected to testify or the documents to be produced.

10. Hearings—(a) Public notice shall be given of the date, place and subject matter of any hearing to be held by the Committee, or any subcommittee thereof, at least 1 week in advance of such hearing, unless the Committee or subcommittee determines that good cause exists for beginning such hearings at an earlier time.

(b) Hearings may be initiated only by the specified authorization of the Committee or subcommittee.

(c) Hearings shall be held only in the District of Columbia unless specifically authorized to be held elsewhere by a majority vote of the Committee or subcommittee conducting such hearings.

(d) The Chairman of the Committee or subcommittee shall consult with the Ranking Minority Member thereof before naming witnesses for a hearing.

(e) Witnesses appearing before the Committee shall file with the clerk of the Committee a written statement of their proposed testimony prior to the hearing at which they are to appear unless the Chairman and the Ranking Minority Member determine that there is good cause not to file such a statement. Witnesses testifying on behalf of the Administration shall furnish an additional 50 copies of their statement to the Committee. All statements must be received by the Committee at least 48 hours (not including weekends or holidays) before the hearing.

(f) Confidential testimony taken or confidential material presented in a closed hearing of the Committee or subcommittee or any report of the proceedings of such hearing shall not be made public in whole or in part or by way of summary unless authorized by a majority vote of the Committee or subcommittee.

(g) Any witness summoned to give testimony or evidence at a public or closed hearing of the Committee or subcommittee may be accompanied by counsel of his own choosing who shall be permitted at all times during such hearing to advise such witness of his legal rights.

(h) Witnesses providing unsworn testimony to the Committee may be given a transcript of such testimony for the purpose of making minor grammatical corrections. Such witnesses will not, however, be permitted to alter the substance of their testimony. Any question involving such corrections shall be decided by the Chairman.

11. Nominations—Unless otherwise ordered by the Committee, nominations referred to the Committee shall be held for at least seven (7) days before being voted on by the Committee. Each member of the Committee shall be furnished a copy of all nominations referred to the Committee.

12. Real Property Transactions—Each member of the Committee shall be furnished with a copy of the proposals of the Secretaries of the Army, Navy, and Air Force, submitted pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 2662 and with a copy of the proposals of the Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, submitted pursuant to 50 U.S.C. App. 2285, regarding the proposed acquisition or disposition of property of an estimated price or rental of more than \$750,000. Any member of the Committee objecting to or requesting information on a proposed acquisition or disposal shall communicate his objection or request to the Chairman of the Committee within thirty (30) days from the date of submission.

13. Legislative Calendar—(a) The clerk of the Committee shall keep a printed calendar for the information of each Committee member showing the bills introduced and referred to the Committee and the status of such bills. Such calendar shall be revised from

time to time to show pertinent changes in such bills, the current status thereof, and new bills introduced and referred to the Committee. A copy of each new revision shall be furnished to each member of the Committee.

(b) Unless otherwise ordered, measures referred to the Committee shall be referred by the clerk of the Committee to the appropriate department or agency of the Government for reports thereon.

14. Except as otherwise specified herein, the Standing Rules of the Senate shall govern the actions of the Committee. Each subcommittee of the Committee is part of the Committee and is therefore subject to the Committee's rules so far as applicable.

15. Powers and Duties of Subcommittees—Each subcommittee is authorized to meet, hold hearings, receive evidence, and report to the full Committee on all matters referred to it. Subcommittee chairmen, after consultation with Ranking Minority Members of the subcommittees, shall set dates for hearings and meetings of their respective subcommittees after consultation with the Chairman and other subcommittee chairmen with a view toward avoiding simultaneous scheduling of full Committee and subcommittee meetings or hearings whenever possible.

U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS RULES OF PROCEDURE

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, the Committee on Veterans' Affairs has adopted rules governing its procedures for the 119th Congress. Pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 2, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, on behalf of myself and Ranking Member BLUMENTHAL, I ask unanimous consent that a copy of the committee rules be printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS RULES OF PROCEDURE 119TH CONGRESS I. MEETINGS

(A) Unless otherwise ordered, the Committee shall meet on the first Wednesday of each month. The Chairman may, upon proper notice, call such additional meetings as deemed necessary.

(B) Except as provided in subparagraphs (b) and (d) of paragraph 5 of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, meetings of the Committee shall be open to the public. The Committee shall prepare and keep a complete transcript or electronic recording adequate to fully record the proceedings of each meeting whether or not such meeting or any part thereof is closed to the public.

(C) The Chairman of the Committee, or the Ranking Majority Member present in the absence of the Chairman, or such other Member as the Chairman may designate, shall preside over all meetings.

(D) Except as provided in rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, no meeting of the Committee shall be scheduled except by majority vote of the Committee or by authorization of the Chairman of the Committee.

(E) The Committee shall notify the office designated by the Committee on Rules and Administration of the time, place, and purpose of each meeting. In the event such meeting is canceled, the Committee shall immediately notify such designated office.

(F) Written or electronic notice of a Committee meeting, accompanied by an agenda

enumerating the items of business to be considered, shall be sent to all Committee Members at least 72 hours (not counting Saturdays, Sundays, and federal holidays) in advance of each meeting. In the event that the giving of such 72-hour notice is prevented by unforeseen requirements or Committee business, the Committee staff shall communicate notice by the quickest appropriate means to Members or appropriate staff assistants of Members and an agenda shall be furnished prior to the meeting.

(G) Subject to the second sentence of this paragraph, it shall not be in order for the Committee to consider any amendment in the first degree proposed to any measure under consideration by the Committee unless a written or electronic copy of such amendment has been delivered to each Member of the Committee at least 24 hours (not counting Saturdays, Sundays, and federal holidays) before the meeting at which the amendment is to be proposed. This paragraph may be waived by a majority vote of the Members and shall apply only when 72-hour written notice has been provided in accordance with paragraph (F).

II. QUORUMS

(A) Subject to the provisions of paragraph (B), ten Members of the Committee shall constitute a quorum for the reporting or approving of any measure or matter or recommendation. Seven Members of the Committee shall constitute a quorum for purposes of transacting any other business.

(B) In order to transact any business at a Committee meeting, at least one Member of the minority shall be present. If, at any meeting, business cannot be transacted because of the absence of such a Member, the matter shall lay over for a calendar day. If the presence of a minority Member is not then obtained, business may be transacted by the appropriate quorum.

(C) One Member shall constitute a quorum for the purpose of receiving testimony.

III. VOTING

(A) Votes may be cast by proxy. A proxy shall be written and may be conditioned by personal instructions. A proxy shall be valid only for the day given.

(B) There shall be a complete record kept of all Committee actions. Such record shall contain the vote cast by each Member of the Committee on any question on which a roll call vote is requested.

IV. HEARINGS AND HEARING PROCEDURES

(A) Except as specifically otherwise provided, the rules governing meetings shall govern hearings.

(B) At least one week in advance of the date of any hearing, the Committee shall undertake, consistent with the provisions of paragraph 4 of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, to make public announcements of the date, place, time, and subject matter of such hearing.

(C)(1) Each witness who is scheduled to testify at a hearing of the Committee shall submit 40 copies of such witness' testimony to the Committee not later than 48 hours (not counting Saturdays, Sundays, and federal holidays) before the witness' scheduled appearance at the hearing.

(2) Any witness who fails to meet the deadline specified in paragraph (1) shall not be permitted to present testimony but may be seated to take questions from Committee members, unless the Chairman and Ranking Minority Member determine there is good cause for the witness' failure to meet the deadline or it is in the Committee's interest to permit such witness to testify.

(D) The presiding Member at any hearing is authorized to limit the time allotted to each witness appearing before the Committee.

(E) The Chairman, with the concurrence of the Ranking Minority Member of the Committee, is authorized to subpoena the attendance of witnesses and the production of memoranda, documents, records, and any other materials. If the Chairman or a Committee staff member designated by the Chairman has not received from the Ranking Minority Member or a Committee staff member designated by the Ranking Minority Member notice of the Ranking Minority Member's non-concurrence in the subpoena within 48 hours (not counting Saturdays, Sundays, and federal holidays) of being notified of the Chairman's intention to subpoena attendance or production, the Chairman is authorized following the end of the 48-hour period involved to subpoena the same without the Ranking Minority Member's concurrence. Regardless of whether a subpoena has been concurred in by the Ranking Minority Member, such subpoena may be authorized by vote of the Members of the Committee. When the Committee or Chairman authorizes a subpoena, the subpoena may be issued upon the signature of the Chairman or of any other Member of the Committee designated by the Chairman.

(F) Except as specified in Committee Rule VII (requiring oaths, under certain circumstances, at hearings to confirm Presidential nominations), witnesses at hearings will be required to give testimony under oath whenever the presiding Member deems such to be advisable.

V. MEDIA COVERAGE

Any Committee meeting or hearing which is open to the public may be covered by television, radio, and print media. Photographers, reporters, and crew members using mechanical recording, filming, or broadcasting devices shall position and use their equipment so as not to interfere with the seating, vision, or hearing of the Committee Members or staff or with the orderly conduct of the meeting or hearing. The presiding Member of the meeting or hearing may for good cause terminate, in whole or in part, the use of such mechanical devices or take such other action as the circumstances and the orderly conduct of the meeting or hearing may warrant.

VI. GENERAL

All applicable requirements of the Standing Rules of the Senate shall govern the Committee.

VII. PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATIONS

(A) Each Presidential nominee whose nomination is subject to Senate confirmation and referred to this Committee shall submit a statement of his or her background and financial interests, including the financial interests of his or her spouse and of children living in the nominee's household, on a form approved by the Committee, which shall be sworn to as to its completeness and accuracy. The Committee form shall be in two parts:

(1) Information concerning employment, education, and background of the nominee, which generally relates to the position to which the individual is nominated and which is to be made public; and

(2) Information concerning the financial and other background of the nominee, to be made public when the Committee determines that such information bears directly on the nominee's qualifications to hold the position to which the individual is nominated.

(B) At any hearing to confirm a Presidential nomination, the testimony of the nominee and, at the request of any Member, any other witness shall be under oath.

(C) Committee action on a nomination, including hearings or a meeting to consider a motion to recommend confirmation, shall

not occur until at least five days (not counting Saturdays, Sundays, and federal holidays) after the nominee submits with respect to the currently pending nomination the form required by this rule unless the Chairman, with the concurrence of the Ranking Minority Member, waives this waiting period.

VIII. NAMING OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FACILITIES

It is the policy of the Committee that a Department of Veterans Affairs facility may be named only after a deceased individual and only under the following circumstances:

(A) Such individual was:

(1) A veteran who (i) was instrumental in the construction or the operation of the facility to be named, or (ii) was a recipient of the Medal of Honor or, as determined by the Chairman and Ranking Minority Member, otherwise performed military service of an extraordinarily distinguished character;

(2) A Member of the United States House of Representatives or Senate who had a direct association with such facility;

(3) An Administrator of Veterans' Affairs, a Secretary of Veterans Affairs, a Secretary of Defense or of a service branch, or a military or other Federal civilian official of comparable or higher rank; or

(4) An individual who, as determined by the Chairman and Ranking Minority Member, performed outstanding service for veterans.

(B) Each Member of the Congressional delegation representing the State in which the designated facility is located must indicate in writing such Member's support of the proposal to name such facility after such individual. It is the policy of the Committee that sponsoring or cosponsoring legislation to name such facility after such individual will not alone satisfy this requirement.

(C) The pertinent State department or chapter of each Congressionally chartered veterans' organization having a national membership of at least 500,000 must indicate in writing its support of such proposal. Under certain circumstances, the Committee may grant a waiver to accept written support from pertinent chapters or posts of chartered veterans' organizations in lieu of the State department.

(D) The above criteria for naming a VA facility may be waived by unanimous consent.

IX. AMENDMENTS TO THE RULES

The rules of the Committee may be changed, modified, amended, or suspended at any time provided, however, that no less than a majority of the entire membership so determine at a regular meeting with due notice or at a meeting specifically called for that purpose. The rules governing quorums for reporting legislative matters shall govern rules changes, modification, amendments, or suspension.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

RECOGNIZING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF PROTECTORS OF ANIMALS

● Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, I rise today to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Protectors of Animals, a remarkable nonprofit organization dedicated to the advocacy and promotion of animal welfare.

Protectors of Animals is a no-kill animal shelter and rescue that was formed in 1975 in East Hartford, CT, to rescue abandoned, abused, and stray

cats and dogs. Today, the shelter stands as one of the oldest and most respected animal welfare organizations in the northeastern United States.

Protectors of Animals has grown into a truly exceptional organization, providing critical animal welfare support and services throughout Connecticut. From online resources for pet owners, to services including low-cost spay and neuter clinics, to the all-important adoption center, Protectors of Animals has truly advanced the cause of animal welfare.

I have been honored to be involved with Protectors of Animals for over 20 years. One of my personal priorities is to treat animals humanely, and I am a long-time advocate for the safeguarding of animals against abuse and neglect. That is why I have been so grateful for the support of Protectors of Animals over the years; they perform incredible advocacy work, and above all else, they truly care about the animals they serve.

I would like to extend my thanks to the dedicated staff, volunteers, and supporters of Protectors of Animals who have helped this august organization save thousands of animals and connect them with their forever home, enhancing the quality of life of so many Connecticut residents.

Protectors of Animals is celebrating their 50th anniversary on Saturday, February 15—50 years of incredibly important advocacy and services, and I am sure that there are many more to come. I hope my colleagues will join me in celebrating Protectors of Animals and the remarkable work they do.●

RECOGNIZING BHFO

● Ms. ERNST. Madam President, as chair of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, each week I recognize an outstanding Iowa small business that exemplifies the American entrepreneurial spirit. This week, it is my privilege to recognize BHFO of Cedar Rapids, IA, as the Senate Small Business of the Week.

In 2003, Jon and Stacie Sefton founded BHFO in the basement of their home in Cedar Rapids. The company's name reflects their family-oriented approach, incorporating the initials of their daughters Brittany and Hannah, along with "Factory Outlet," to emphasize accessibility to premium products. The couple wanted to provide high-quality, designer apparel at affordable prices. The emerging world of e-commerce provided an opportunity for Jon and Stacie to sell brand-name fashion items online through eBay. In 2010, they launched their own website and have continued to reach customers all around the world.

BHFO started as a single online marketplace with two suppliers and has now grown to operate across 18 different marketplaces with hundreds of brand partnerships. Jon, who serves as the CFO and President, and Stacie,

who serves as CEO, relocated the business multiple times to accommodate their rapid expansion before settling into a state-of-the-art, 240,000-square-foot facility in Cedar Rapids. This facility serves as the hub for their operations, allowing them to efficiently source, process, and distribute an extensive selection of clothing, shoes, and accessories to their customers worldwide. Today, BHFO employs over 100 team members, including their daughter Brittany who works as a buyer for the company. The company prides itself on adapting to changing consumer trends and embracing technological advancements to optimize its e-commerce platform and logistics. Their business continues to grow and thrive, with over 2.8 million positive reviews on eBay.

Beyond their impressive business achievements, BHFO remains committed to giving back to the community by supporting food pantry collections and a cancer walk that raises funds towards cancer research. BHFO is a member of the Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance, and in 2013, they awarded BHFO with the Bravo Award for their local growth and economic impact. In 2024, Newsweek ranked BHFO in the top 30 for best multibrand online shop in the United States. The business contributes to charitable organizations such as the Zach Johnson Foundation, Youth for Christ, and Many Hands for Haiti International, reflecting BHFO's belief in using their success to uplift others. In March, BHFO looks forward to celebrating its 22nd anniversary in Iowa.

The entrepreneurial spirit and commitment to excellence demonstrated by BHFO is clear. I want to congratulate Jon and Stacie, their family, along with their entire team, for their hard work, innovation, and dedication to enriching their community in Iowa. I look forward to seeing their continued success.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Ms. Kelly, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations and a withdrawal which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The messages received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 10:03 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the

following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 224. An act to amend section 102(a)(20) of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 to require the exclusion of service-connected disability compensation when determining whether a person is a person of low and moderate income, a person of low income, or a person of moderate income, and for other purposes.

H.R. 386. An act to require the United States Governor of, and the United States Executive Director at, the International Monetary Fund to oppose an increase in the weight of the Chinese renminbi in the Special Drawing Rights basket of the Fund, and for other purposes.

H.R. 692. An act to require the United States Executive Director at the International Monetary Fund to advocate for increased transparency with respect to exchange rate policies of the People's Republic of China, and for other purposes.

H.R. 736. An act to amend title 31, United States Code, to modify the deadline for filing beneficial ownership information reports for reporting companies formed or registered before January 1, 2024.

H.R. 965. An act to amend section 3(b)(4) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 to exclude certain disability benefits from income for the purposes of determining eligibility for the supported housing program under section 8(o)(19), and for other purposes.

H.R. 975. An act to amend the Federal Credit Union Act to modify the frequency of board of directors meetings, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that pursuant to section 803(a) of the Congressional Recognition for Excellence in Arts Education Act (2 U.S.C. 803(a)), and the order of the House of January 3, 2025, the Minority Leader appoints the following individual on the part of the House of Representatives to the Congressional Award Board: Mr. David Trone of Potomac, Maryland.

At 4:16 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Alli, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has agreed to the following concurrent resolution, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H. Con. Res. 11. Concurrent resolution providing for a joint session of Congress to receive a message from the President.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bills were read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 224. An act to amend section 102(a)(20) of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 to require the exclusion of service-connected disability compensation when determining whether a person is a person of low and moderate income, a person of low income, or a person of moderate income, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

H.R. 386. An act to require the United States Governor of, and the United States Executive Director at, the International Monetary Fund to oppose an increase in the weight of the Chinese renminbi in the Special Drawing Rights basket of the Fund, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

H.R. 692. An act to require the United States Executive Director at the International Monetary Fund to advocate for increased transparency with respect to exchange rate policies of the People's Republic of China, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

H.R. 736. An act to amend title 31, United States Code, to modify the deadline for filing beneficial ownership information reports for reporting companies formed or registered before January 1, 2024; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

H.R. 965. An act to amend section 3(b)(4) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 to exclude certain disability benefits from income for the purposes of determining eligibility for the supported housing program under section 8(o)(19), and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

H.R. 975. An act to amend the Federal Credit Union Act to modify the frequency of board of directors meetings, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. WICKER, from the Committee on Armed Services, without amendment:

S. Res. 69. An original resolution authorizing expenditures by the Committee on Armed Services.

By Mr. LEE, from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, without amendment:

S. Res. 70. An original resolution authorizing expenditures by the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Ms. ERNST, from the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, without amendment:

S. Res. 71. An original resolution authorizing expenditures by the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

By Mr. COTTON, from the Select Committee on Intelligence, without amendment:

S. Res. 73. An original resolution authorizing expenditures by the Select Committee on Intelligence.

By Mr. MORAN, from the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, without amendment:

S. Res. 74. An original resolution authorizing expenditures by the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

EXECUTIVE REPORT OF COMMITTEE

The following executive report of a nomination was submitted:

By Mr. WICKER for the Committee on Armed Services.

*Daniel Driscoll, of North Carolina, to be Secretary of the Army.

*Nomination was reported with recommendation that it be confirmed subject to the nominee's commitment to respond to requests to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Senate.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina (for himself, Mr. ROUNDS, Mr. MORAN, Mr.

HAGERTY, Mr. RICKETTS, Mr. LANKFORD, Mr. CRAMER, Ms. LUMMIS, Mrs. BRITT, Mr. TILLIS, and Mr. BANKS):

S. 505. A bill to amend title 31, United States Code, to modify the deadline for filing beneficial ownership information reports for reporting companies formed or registered before January 1, 2024; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. MORAN (for himself and Mr. KING):

S. 506. A bill to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program to coordinate, navigate, and manage care and benefits for veterans enrolled in both the Medicare program and the system of annual patient enrollment of the Department of Veterans Affairs; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. THUNE (for himself and Mr. WARNOCK):

S. 507. A bill to enhance the participation of precision agriculture in the United States, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

By Mr. WYDEN (for himself and Mr. TILLIS):

S. 508. A bill to amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act relating to grants for beach monitoring, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mr. RISCH (for himself, Mr. KING, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. CORNYN, and Mr. SHEEHY):

S. 509. A bill to exempt certain 16- and 17-year-old individuals employed in logging operations from child labor laws; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. MORAN (for himself, Mr. COONS, Mr. BARRASSO, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. KING, Mr. WARNER, Mr. MARSHALL, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. CURTIS, Mr. CRAMER, and Mr. RICKETTS):

S. 510. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend the publicly traded partnership ownership structure to energy power generation projects and transportation fuels, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Ms. ERNST (for herself and Mr. SCOTT of Florida):

S. 511. A bill to amend chapter 71 of title 5, United States Code, to charge labor organizations for the agency resources and employee time used by such labor organizations, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. CRUZ (for himself, Mr. SHEEHY, Mr. CASSIDY, Mrs. BRITT, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. JUSTICE, Mr. BUDD, Mrs. HYDE-SMITH, Mr. LANKFORD, and Mr. HAWLEY):

S. 512. A bill to impose criminal and immigration penalties for intentionally fleeing a pursuing Federal officer while operating a motor vehicle; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. MERKLEY (for himself, Mr. KING, Mr. WYDEN, and Mr. PADILLA):

S. 513. A bill to require the Secretary of Commerce to establish and carry out a grant program to conserve, restore, and manage kelp forest ecosystems, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. LANKFORD:

S. 514. A bill to amend the Clean Air Act to modify the Methane Emissions Reduction Program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mr. LEE:

S. 515. A bill to repeal the Impoundment Control Act of 1974; to the Committee on the Budget.

By Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself and Mr. CORNYN):

S. 516. A bill to provide that it is unlawful to knowingly distribute private intimate visual depictions with reckless disregard for the individual's lack of consent to the distribution, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. OSSOFF (for himself and Mr. CASSIDY):

S. 517. A bill to amend the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Research Act of 1978 to modify the forest inventory and analysis program; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

By Mr. LEE:

S. 518. A bill to prohibit Federal funding for the Public Broadcasting Service and National Public Radio and to provide for the transfer of certain Federal funds that would have been made available to those organizations to reduce the public debt, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. KENNEDY:

S. 519. A bill to amend the Communications Act of 1934 to prohibit Federal funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mrs. BLACKBURN (for herself, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Ms. COLLINS, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. BOOZMAN, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, and Mrs. SHAHEEN):

S. 520. A bill to amend the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to increase grants to combat domestic violence for States that implement domestic violence prevention training for cosmetologists and barbers, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mrs. FISCHER:

S. 521. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to waive certain distance requirements for certain hospitals electing to be designated as critical access hospitals; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. HAGERTY (for himself and Ms. BLUNT ROCHESTER):

S. 522. A bill to amend the Federal Credit Union Act to modify the frequency of board of directors meetings, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. CASSIDY (for himself, Mr. BARRASSO, Mr. WICKER, and Mrs. HYDE-SMITH):

S. 523. A bill to amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to prohibit Federal Medicaid funding for the administrative costs of providing health benefits to individuals who are unauthorized immigrants; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. CRUZ (for himself, Ms. CANTWELL, Mr. SULLIVAN, and Ms. BALDWIN):

S. 524. A bill to authorize appropriations for the Coast Guard, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. MORAN (for himself and Mr. MARSHALL):

S. 525. A bill to transfer the functions, duties, responsibilities, assets, liabilities, orders, determinations, rules, regulations, permits, grants, loans, contracts, agreements, certificates, licenses, and privileges of the United States Agency for International Development relating to implementing and administering the Food for Peace Act to the Department of Agriculture; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself, Ms. CANTWELL, Ms. ERNST, Mr. WELCH, Mrs. CAPITO, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. MARSHALL, Mr. HEINRICH, Mr. MORAN, Mrs. HYDE-SMITH, Mr. TILLIS, and Mr. ROUNDS):

S. 526. A bill to prevent unfair and deceptive acts or practices and the dissemination of false information related to pharmacy benefit management services for prescription drugs, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself, Ms. CANTWELL, Mr. MARSHALL, Mr. WELCH, Mr. TUBERVILLE, Mr. COONS, Mr. TILLIS, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mrs. CAPITO, Ms. HIRONO, and Mr. LANFORD):

S. 527. A bill to require the Federal Trade Commission to study the role of intermediaries in the pharmaceutical supply chain and provide Congress with appropriate policy recommendations, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. PETERS (for himself, Mr. YOUNG, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. MORENO, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. HUSTED, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. SMITH, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. FETTERMAN, Ms. SLOTKIN, Mr. SCHUMER, and Ms. DUCKWORTH):

S. 528. A bill to reauthorize the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mr. WARNOCK (for himself, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. FETTERMAN, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. HEINRICH, Mr. KIM, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mrs. MURRAY, and Mr. WELCH):

S. 529. A bill to limit cost-sharing for prescription drugs, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. BARRASSO (for himself, Mr. CURTIS, Mr. RISCH, Ms. LUMMIS, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. CRAPO, and Mrs. FISCHER):

S. 530. A bill to repeal a rule of the Bureau of Land Management relating to conservation and landscape health; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself and Ms. COLLINS):

S. 531. A bill to assist States in, and pay for the Federal share of the cost of, defraying the cost of pre-apprenticeships or related instruction associated with qualified apprenticeship programs, and for other programs; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. WICKER:

S. Res. 69. An original resolution authorizing expenditures by the Committee on Armed Services; from the Committee on Armed Services; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

By Mr. LEE:

S. Res. 70. An original resolution authorizing expenditures by the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources; from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

By Ms. ERNST:

S. Res. 71. An original resolution authorizing expenditures by the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship; from the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

By Mr. GRAHAM (for himself, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. COTTON, Ms. ROSEN, and Mrs. BRITTY):

S. Res. 72. A resolution affirming that Hamas cannot retain any political or mili-

tary control in the Gaza Strip; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. COTTON:

S. Res. 73. An original resolution authorizing expenditures by the Select Committee on Intelligence; from the Select Committee on Intelligence; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

By Mr. MORAN:

S. Res. 74. An original resolution authorizing expenditures by the Committee on Veterans' Affairs; from the Committee on Veterans' Affairs; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 51

At the request of Mr. VAN HOLLEN, the name of the Senator from Arizona (Mr. GALLEGRO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 51, a bill to provide for the admission of the State of Washington, D.C. into the Union.

S. 94

At the request of Mr. CRAMER, the names of the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. JUSTICE) and the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) were added as cosponsors of S. 94, a bill to award 3 Congressional Gold Medals to the members of the 1980 United States Olympic Men's Ice Hockey Team, in recognition of their extraordinary achievement at the XIII Olympic Winter Games where, being comprised of amateur collegiate players, they defeated the dominant Soviet ice hockey team in the historic "Miracle on Ice", revitalizing morale in the United States at the height of the Cold War, inspiring generations, and transforming the sport of ice hockey in the United States.

S. 157

At the request of Mrs. BLACKBURN, the name of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 157, a bill to authorize certain States to take certain actions on certain Federal land to secure an international border of the United States, and for other purposes.

S. 169

At the request of Ms. KLOBUCHAR, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 169, a bill to assist States in carrying out projects to expand the child care workforce and child care facilities in the States, and for other purposes.

S. 183

At the request of Mr. MORAN, the name of the Senator from California (Mr. PADILLA) was added as a cosponsor of S. 183, a bill to authorize major medical facility projects for the Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2025, and for other purposes.

S. 292

At the request of Mr. CASSIDY, the name of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. BANKS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 292, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow a credit against tax for charitable donations to nonprofit organizations providing education scholarships to qualified elementary and secondary students.

S. 299

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the name of the Senator from Arizona (Mr. GALLEGRO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 299, a bill to establish a competitive grant program to support the establishment, expansion, or enhancement of youth mentoring programs for eligible youth, and to provide for social and emotional learning, employability skill development, career exploration, work-based learning, and other youth workforce opportunities.

S. 331

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from Florida (Mrs. MOODY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 331, a bill to amend the Controlled Substances Act with respect to the scheduling of fentanyl-related substances, and for other purposes.

S. 339

At the request of Mr. CRAPO, the name of the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MARSHALL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 339, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for Medicare coverage of multi-cancer early detection screening tests.

S. 363

At the request of Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina, the names of the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. RICKETTS) and the Senator from Montana (Mr. SHEEHY) were added as cosponsors of S. 363, a bill to impose sanctions with respect to foreign governments that resist efforts to repatriate their citizens who have unlawfully entered the United States and foreign governments and foreign persons that knowingly facilitate unlawful immigration into the United States, and for other purposes.

S. 385

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the names of the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS), the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. RICKETTS), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. KELLY) and the Senator from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO) were added as cosponsors of S. 385, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to periodically review the automatic maximum coverage under the Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance program and the Veterans' Group Life Insurance program, and for other purposes.

S. 391

At the request of Mr. PADILLA, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. LUJÁN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 391, a bill to clarify the rights of certain persons who are held or detained at a port of entry or at any facility overseen by U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

S. 410

At the request of Mr. WARNOCK, the name of the Senator from Georgia (Mr. OSSOFF) was added as a cosponsor of S. 410, a bill to amend titles 10 and 38, United States Code, to improve benefits and services for surviving spouses, and for other purposes.

S. 442

At the request of Mr. CRUZ, the name of the Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 442, a bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of the Air Force to operate a Technical Training Center of Excellence, and for other purposes.

S. 469

At the request of Ms. ERNST, the name of the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. RICKETTS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 469, a bill to restore the exemption of family farms and small businesses from the definition of assets under title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965.

S. 477

At the request of Mr. KENNEDY, the name of the Senator from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 477, a bill to amend the Controlled Substances Act and the Controlled Substances Import and Export Act to modify the offenses relating to fentanyl, and for other purposes.

S. 491

At the request of Mr. KAINE, the name of the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 491, a bill to establish the position of Director of Foreign Assistance in the Department of State, and for other purposes.

S.J. RES. 10

At the request of Mr. KAINE, the names of the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY) and the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) were added as cosponsors of S.J. Res. 10, a joint resolution terminating the national emergency declared with respect to energy.

S. CON. RES. 6

At the request of Mr. CRAPO, the name of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS) was added as a cosponsor of S. Con. Res. 6, a concurrent resolution expressing the sense of Congress that tax-exempt fraternal benefit societies have historically provided and continue to provide critical benefits to the people and communities of the United States.

S. RES. 61

At the request of Mr. MARKEY, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 61, a resolution expressing support for the continued value of arms control agreements and negotiated constraints on Russian and Chinese strategic nuclear forces.

S. RES. 68

At the request of Mr. KAINE, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 68, a resolution expressing the sense of the Senate that the United States shall not deploy United States military assets or personnel to Gaza for purposes of "taking over" Gaza.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

Mr. THUNE (for himself and Mr. WARNOCK):

S. 507. A bill to enhance the participation of precision agriculture in the United States, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the text of the bill was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. 507

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Promoting Precision Agriculture Act of 2025".

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) **ADVANCED WIRELESS COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY.**—The term "advanced wireless communications technology" means advanced technology that contributes to mobile (5G or beyond) networks, next-generation Wi-Fi networks, or other future networks using other technologies, regardless of whether the network is operating on an exclusive licensed, shared licensed, or unlicensed frequency band.

(2) **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE.**—The term "artificial intelligence" has the meaning given the term in section 238(g) of the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019 (Public Law 115-232; 10 U.S.C. note prec. 4061).

(3) **FOREIGN ADVERSARY.**—The term "foreign adversary" means any foreign government or foreign nongovernment person engaged in a long-term pattern or serious instances of conduct significantly adverse to the national security of the United States, or security and safety of United States persons.

(4) **PRECISION AGRICULTURE.**—The term "precision agriculture" means managing, tracking, or reducing crop or livestock production inputs, including seed, feed, fertilizer, chemicals, water, time, and such other inputs as the Secretary determines to be appropriate, at a heightened level of spatial and temporal granularity to improve efficiencies, reduce waste, and maintain environmental quality.

(5) **PRECISION AGRICULTURE EQUIPMENT.**—The term "precision agriculture equipment" means any equipment or technology that directly contributes to a reduction in, or improved efficiency of, inputs used in crop or livestock production, including—

- (A) global positioning system-based or geospatial mapping;
- (B) satellite or aerial imagery;
- (C) yield monitors;
- (D) soil mapping;
- (E) sensors for gathering data on crop, soil, and livestock conditions;
- (F) Internet of Things and technology that relies on edge and cloud computing;
- (G) data management software and advanced analytics;
- (H) network connectivity products and solutions, including public and private wireless networks;
- (I) global positioning system guidance, auto-steer systems, autonomous fleet, and other machine-to-machine operations;
- (J) variable rate technology for applying inputs, such as section control; and
- (K) any other technology that leads to a reduction in, or improves efficiency of, crop

and livestock production inputs, which may include—

- (i) seed;
- (ii) feed;
- (iii) fertilizer;
- (iv) chemicals;
- (v) water;
- (vi) time;
- (vii) fuel;
- (viii) emissions; and
- (ix) such other inputs as the Secretary determines to be appropriate.

(6) **SECRETARY.**—The term "Secretary" means the Secretary of Agriculture.

(7) **TRUSTED.**—The term "trusted" means, with respect to a provider of advanced communications service or a supplier of communications equipment or service, that the Secretary has determined that the provider or supplier is not owned by, controlled by, or subject to the influence of, a foreign adversary.

(8) **VOLUNTARY CONSENSUS STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION.**—The term "voluntary consensus standards development organization" means an organization that develops standards in a process that meets the principles for the development of voluntary consensus standards (as defined in the document of the Office of Management and Budget entitled "Federal Participation in the Development and Use of Voluntary Consensus Standards and in Conformity Assessment Activities" (OMB Circular A-119)).

SEC. 3. PURPOSES.

The purposes of this Act are—

- (1) to enhance the participation of precision agriculture in the United States; and
- (2) to promote United States leadership in voluntary consensus standards development organizations that set standards for precision agriculture.

SEC. 4. INTERCONNECTIVITY STANDARDS FOR PRECISION AGRICULTURE.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary, in consultation with the Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology and the Federal Communications Commission, shall—

- (1) develop voluntary, consensus-based, private sector-led interconnectivity standards, guidelines, and best practices for precision agriculture that will promote economies of scale and ease the burden of the adoption of precision agriculture; and
- (2) in carrying out paragraph (1)—

(A) coordinate with relevant public and trusted private sector stakeholders and other relevant industry organizations, including voluntary consensus standards development organizations; and

(B) consult with sector-specific agencies, other appropriate agencies, and State and local governments.

(b) **CONSIDERATIONS.**—The Secretary, in carrying out subsection (a), shall, in consultation with the Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology and the Federal Communications Commission, consider—

- (1) the evolving demands of precision agriculture;
- (2) the connectivity needs of precision agriculture equipment;
- (3) the cybersecurity challenges facing precision agriculture, including cybersecurity threats for agriculture producers and agriculture supply chains;
- (4) the impact of advanced wireless communications technology on precision agriculture; and
- (5) the impact of artificial intelligence on precision agriculture.

SEC. 5. GAO ASSESSMENT OF PRECISION AGRICULTURE STANDARDS.

(a) **STUDY.**—Not later than 1 year after the Secretary develops standards under section

4, and every 2 years thereafter for the following 8 years, the Comptroller General of the United States shall conduct a study that assesses those standards, including the extent to which those standards, as applicable—

- (1) are voluntary;
- (2) were developed in coordination with relevant industry organizations, including voluntary consensus standards development organizations; and
- (3) have successfully encouraged the adoption of precision agriculture.

(b) REPORT.—The Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation and the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate and the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology and the Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives a report that summarizes the findings of each study conducted under subsection (a).

Mr. BARRASSO (for himself, Mr. CURTIS, Mr. RISCH, Ms. LUMMIS, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. CRAPO, and Mrs. FISCHER):

S. 530. A bill to repeal a rule of the Bureau of Land Management relating to conservation and landscape health; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the text of the bill was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. 530

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Western Economic Security Today Act of 2025” or the “WEST Act of 2025”.

SEC. 2. REPEAL OF BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT RULE.

The final rule based on the proposed rule of the Bureau of Land Management entitled “Conservation and Landscape Health” (88 Fed. Reg. 19583 (April 3, 2023)) shall have no force or effect.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 69—AUTHORIZING EXPENDITURES BY THE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Mr. WICKER submitted the following resolution; from the Committee on Armed Services which was referred to the committee on Rules and Administration:

S. RES. 69

Resolved,

SECTION 1. GENERAL AUTHORITY.

In carrying out its powers, duties, and functions under the Standing Rules of the Senate, in accordance with its jurisdiction under rule XXV of the Standing Rules of the Senate, including holding hearings, reporting such hearings, and making investigations as authorized by paragraphs 1 and 8 of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the Committee on Armed Services (in this resolution referred to as the “committee”) is authorized from March 1, 2025,

through February 28, 2027, in its discretion, to—

- (1) make expenditures from the contingent fund of the Senate;
- (2) employ personnel; and
- (3) with the prior consent of the Government department or agency concerned and the Committee on Rules and Administration, use on a reimbursable or nonreimbursable basis the services of personnel of any such department or agency.

SEC. 2. EXPENSES.

(a) EXPENSES FOR PERIOD ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2025.—The expenses of the committee for the period March 1, 2025, through September 30, 2025, under this resolution shall not exceed \$6,092,832, of which amount—

- (1) not to exceed \$37,000 may be expended for the procurement of the services of individual consultants, or organizations thereof (as authorized by section 202(i) of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 (2 U.S.C. 4301(i))); and
- (2) not to exceed \$12,000 may be expended for the training of the professional staff of the committee (under procedures specified by section 202(j) of that Act).

(b) EXPENSES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026 PERIOD.—The expenses of the committee for the period October 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026, under this resolution shall not exceed \$10,444,856, of which amount—

- (1) not to exceed \$65,000 may be expended for the procurement of the services of individual consultants, or organizations thereof (as authorized by section 202(i) of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 (2 U.S.C. 4301(i))); and
- (2) not to exceed \$20,000 may be expended for the training of the professional staff of the committee (under procedures specified by section 202(j) of that Act).

(c) EXPENSES FOR PERIOD ENDING FEBRUARY 28, 2027.—The expenses of the committee for the period October 1, 2026, through February 28, 2027, under this resolution shall not exceed \$4,352,023, of which amount—

- (1) not to exceed \$27,000 may be expended for the procurement of the services of individual consultants, or organizations thereof (as authorized by section 202(i) of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 (2 U.S.C. 4301(i))); and
- (2) not to exceed \$8,500 may be expended for the training of the professional staff of the committee (under procedures specified by section 202(j) of that Act).

SEC. 3. EXPENSES AND AGENCY CONTRIBUTIONS.

(a) EXPENSES OF THE COMMITTEE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in paragraph (2), expenses of the committee under this resolution shall be paid from the contingent fund of the Senate upon vouchers approved by the chairman of the committee.

(2) VOUCHERS NOT REQUIRED.—Vouchers shall not be required for—

- (A) the disbursement of salaries of employees paid at an annual rate;
- (B) the payment of telecommunications provided by the Office of the Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper;
- (C) the payment of stationery supplies purchased through the Keeper of the Stationery;
- (D) payments to the Postmaster of the Senate;
- (E) the payment of metered charges on copying equipment provided by the Office of the Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper;
- (F) the payment of Senate Recording and Photographic Services; or
- (G) the payment of franked and mass mail costs by the Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper.

(b) AGENCY CONTRIBUTIONS.—There are authorized to be paid from the appropriations account for “Expenses of Inquiries and Invest-

tigations” of the Senate such sums as may be necessary for agency contributions related to the compensation of employees of the committee—

- (1) for the period March 1, 2025, through September 30, 2025;
- (2) for the period October 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026; and
- (3) for the period October 1, 2026, through February 28, 2027.

SENATE RESOLUTION 70—AUTHORIZING EXPENDITURES BY THE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. LEE submitted the following resolution; from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources which was referred to the Committee on Rules and Administration:

S. RES. 70

Resolved,

SECTION 1. GENERAL AUTHORITY.

In carrying out its powers, duties, and functions under the Standing Rules of the Senate, in accordance with its jurisdiction under rule XXV of the Standing Rules of the Senate, including holding hearings, reporting such hearings, and making investigations as authorized by paragraphs 1 and 8 of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources (in this resolution referred to as the “committee”) is authorized from March 1, 2025, through February 28, 2027, in its discretion, to—

- (1) make expenditures from the contingent fund of the Senate;
- (2) employ personnel; and
- (3) with the prior consent of the Government department or agency concerned and the Committee on Rules and Administration, use on a reimbursable or nonreimbursable basis the services of personnel of any such department or agency.

(a) EXPENSES FOR PERIOD ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2025.—The expenses of the committee for the period March 1, 2025, through September 30, 2025, under this resolution shall not exceed \$4,394,583, of which amount—

- (1) not to exceed \$17,500 may be expended for the procurement of the services of individual consultants, or organizations thereof (as authorized by section 202(i) of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 (2 U.S.C. 4301(i))); and
- (2) not to exceed \$8,750 may be expended for the training of the professional staff of the committee (under procedures specified by section 202(j) of that Act).

(b) EXPENSES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026 PERIOD.—The expenses of the committee for the period October 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026, under this resolution shall not exceed \$7,533,571, of which amount—

- (1) not to exceed \$30,000 may be expended for the procurement of the services of individual consultants, or organizations thereof (as authorized by section 202(i) of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 (2 U.S.C. 4301(i))); and
- (2) not to exceed \$15,000 may be expended for the training of the professional staff of the committee (under procedures specified by section 202(j) of that Act).

(c) EXPENSES FOR PERIOD ENDING FEBRUARY 28, 2027.—The expenses of the committee for the period October 1, 2026, through February 28, 2027, under this resolution shall not exceed \$3,138,988, of which amount—

- (1) not to exceed \$12,500 may be expended for the procurement of the services of individual consultants, or organizations thereof

(as authorized by section 202(i) of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 (2 U.S.C. 4301(i))); and

(2) not to exceed \$6,250 may be expended for the training of the professional staff of the committee (under procedures specified by section 202(j) of that Act).

SEC. 3. EXPENSES AND AGENCY CONTRIBUTIONS.

(a) EXPENSES OF THE COMMITTEE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in paragraph (2), expenses of the committee under this resolution shall be paid from the contingent fund of the Senate upon vouchers approved by the chairman of the committee.

(2) VOUCHERS NOT REQUIRED.—Vouchers shall not be required for—

(A) the disbursement of salaries of employees paid at an annual rate;

(B) the payment of telecommunications provided by the Office of the Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper;

(C) the payment of stationery supplies purchased through the Keeper of the Stationery;

(D) payments to the Postmaster of the Senate;

(E) the payment of metered charges on copying equipment provided by the Office of the Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper;

(F) the payment of Senate Recording and Photographic Services; or

(G) the payment of franked and mass mail costs by the Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper.

(b) AGENCY CONTRIBUTIONS.—There are authorized to be paid from the appropriations account for “Expenses of Inquiries and Investigations” of the Senate such sums as may be necessary for agency contributions related to the compensation of employees of the committee—

(1) for the period March 1, 2025, through September 30, 2025;

(2) for the period October 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026; and

(3) for the period October 1, 2026, through February 28, 2027.

SENATE RESOLUTION 71—AUTHORIZING EXPENDITURES BY THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Ms. ERNST submitted the following resolution; from the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship which was referred to the Committee on Rules and Administration:

S. RES. 71

Resolved,

SECTION 1. GENERAL AUTHORITY.

In carrying out its powers, duties, and functions under the Standing Rules of the Senate, in accordance with its jurisdiction under rule XXV of the Standing Rules of the Senate, including holding hearings, reporting such hearings, and making investigations as authorized by paragraphs 1 and 8 of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship (in this resolution referred to as the “committee”) is authorized from March 1, 2025, through February 28, 2027, in its discretion, to—

(1) make expenditures from the contingent fund of the Senate;

(2) employ personnel; and

(3) with the prior consent of the Government department or agency concerned and the Committee on Rules and Administration, use on a reimbursable or nonreimbursable basis the services of personnel of any such department or agency.

SEC. 2. EXPENSES.

(a) EXPENSES FOR PERIOD ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2025.—The expenses of the com-

mittee for the period March 1, 2025, through September 30, 2025, under this resolution shall not exceed \$2,769,908, of which amount—

(1) not to exceed \$50,000 may be expended for the procurement of the services of individual consultants, or organizations thereof (as authorized by section 202(i) of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 (2 U.S.C. 4301(i))); and

(2) not to exceed \$10,000 may be expended for the training of the professional staff of the committee (under procedures specified by section 202(j) of that Act).

(b) EXPENSES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026 PERIOD.—The expenses of the committee for the period October 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026, under this resolution shall not exceed \$4,748,413, of which amount—

(1) not to exceed \$50,000 may be expended for the procurement of the services of individual consultants, or organizations thereof (as authorized by section 202(i) of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 (2 U.S.C. 4301(i))); and

(2) not to exceed \$10,000 may be expended for the training of the professional staff of the committee (under procedures specified by section 202(j) of that Act).

(c) EXPENSES FOR PERIOD ENDING FEBRUARY 28, 2027.—The expenses of the committee for the period October 1, 2026, through February 28, 2027, under this resolution shall not exceed \$1,978,505, of which amount—

(1) not to exceed \$50,000 may be expended for the procurement of the services of individual consultants, or organizations thereof (as authorized by section 202(i) of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 (2 U.S.C. 4301(i))); and

(2) not to exceed \$10,000 may be expended for the training of the professional staff of the committee (under procedures specified by section 202(j) of that Act).

SEC. 3. EXPENSES AND AGENCY CONTRIBUTIONS.

(a) EXPENSES OF THE COMMITTEE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in paragraph (2), expenses of the committee under this resolution shall be paid from the contingent fund of the Senate upon vouchers approved by the chairman of the committee.

(2) VOUCHERS NOT REQUIRED.—Vouchers shall not be required for—

(A) the disbursement of salaries of employees paid at an annual rate;

(B) the payment of telecommunications provided by the Office of the Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper;

(C) the payment of stationery supplies purchased through the Keeper of the Stationery;

(D) payments to the Postmaster of the Senate;

(E) the payment of metered charges on copying equipment provided by the Office of the Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper;

(F) the payment of Senate Recording and Photographic Services; or

(G) the payment of franked and mass mail costs by the Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper.

(b) AGENCY CONTRIBUTIONS.—There are authorized to be paid from the appropriations account for “Expenses of Inquiries and Investigations” of the Senate such sums as may be necessary for agency contributions related to the compensation of employees of the committee—

(1) for the period March 1, 2025, through September 30, 2025;

(2) for the period October 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026; and

(3) for the period October 1, 2026, through February 28, 2027.

SENATE RESOLUTION 72—AFFIRMING THAT HAMAS CANNOT RETAIN ANY POLITICAL OR MILITARY CONTROL IN THE GAZA STRIP

Mr. GRAHAM (for himself, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. COTTON, Ms. ROSEN, and Mrs. BRITT) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 72

Whereas Hamas was established in 1987, with the Hamas Covenant stating “Israel will exist and will continue to exist until [it is] obliterated[.]” clearly signifying the intent of Hamas to destroy the State of Israel, eradicate the Jewish population, and undermine peace and prosperity in the Middle East;

Whereas, on October 8, 1997, the Secretary of State designated Hamas a foreign terrorist organization in accordance with section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1189) for their repeated support for acts of terrorism;

Whereas, since 2007, Hamas has served as the de facto governing body in the Gaza Strip;

Whereas, on October 7, 2023, Hamas—

(1) launched an unprovoked attack against the State of Israel;

(2) brutally murdered more than 1,200 innocent men, women, and children;

(3) took more than 250 individuals hostage; and

(4) injured thousands more individuals in the deadliest attack on the Jewish people since the Holocaust;

Whereas the United States Government has concluded that—

(1) “Hamas has received funding, weapons, and training from the Islamic Republic of Iran”; and

(2) “Iran provides up to \$100,000,000 annually in combined support to Palestinian terrorist groups, including Hamas”; and

Whereas Hamas has threatened to attack the State of Israel again and stated “We must teach Israel a lesson, and we will do this again and again. The Al-Aqsa Deluge [the name Hamas gave its October 7 onslaught] is just the first time, and there will be a second, a third, a fourth”: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) affirms that Hamas cannot be allowed to retain any political or military control in the Gaza Strip;

(2) calls upon the President to use all economic and diplomatic tools possible to halt all sources of funding for Hamas from the Islamic Republic of Iran and all other sources of revenue; and

(3) supports the State of Israel as it continues to defend its sovereignty against attacks from Hamas, the Islamic Republic of Iran, and all other Iranian proxies.

SENATE RESOLUTION 73—AUTHORIZING EXPENDITURES BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

Mr. COTTON submitted the following resolution; from the Select Committee on Intelligence which was referred to the Committee on Rules and Administration:

S. RES. 73

Resolved,

SECTION 1. GENERAL AUTHORITY.

In carrying out its powers, duties, and functions under Senate Resolution 400 (94th

Congress), agreed to May 19, 1976, in accordance with its jurisdiction under sections 3(a) and 17 of such Senate Resolution, including holding hearings, reporting such hearings, and making investigations as authorized by section 5 of such Senate Resolution, the Select Committee on Intelligence (in this resolution referred to as the "committee") is authorized from March 1, 2025, through February 28, 2027, in its discretion, to—

(1) make expenditures from the contingent fund of the Senate;

(2) employ personnel; and

(3) with the prior consent of the Government department or agency concerned and the Committee on Rules and Administration, use on a reimbursable or nonreimbursable basis the services of personnel of any such department or agency.

SEC. 2. EXPENSES.

(a) EXPENSES FOR PERIOD ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2025.—The expenses of the committee for the period March 1, 2025, through September 30, 2025, under this resolution shall not exceed \$5,261,497, of which amount not to exceed \$10,208 may be expended for the procurement of the services of individual consultants, or organizations thereof (as authorized by section 202(i) of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 (2 U.S.C. 4301(i))).

(b) EXPENSES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026 PERIOD.—The expenses of the committee for the period October 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026, under this resolution shall not exceed \$9,019,709, of which amount not to exceed \$17,500 may be expended for the procurement of the services of individual consultants, or organizations thereof (as authorized by section 202(i) of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 (2 U.S.C. 4301(i))).

(c) EXPENSES FOR PERIOD ENDING FEBRUARY 28, 2027.—The expenses of the committee for the period October 1, 2026, through February 28, 2027, under this resolution shall not exceed \$3,758,212, of which amount not to exceed \$7,292 may be expended for the procurement of the services of individual consultants, or organizations thereof (as authorized by section 202(i) of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 (2 U.S.C. 4301(i))).

SEC. 3. EXPENSES AND AGENCY CONTRIBUTIONS.

(a) EXPENSES OF THE COMMITTEE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in paragraph (2), expenses of the committee under this resolution shall be paid from the contingent fund of the Senate upon vouchers approved by the chairman of the committee.

(2) VOUCHERS NOT REQUIRED.—Vouchers shall not be required for—

(A) the disbursement of salaries of employees paid at an annual rate;

(B) the payment of telecommunications provided by the Office of the Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper;

(C) the payment of stationery supplies purchased through the Keeper of the Stationery;

(D) payments to the Postmaster of the Senate;

(E) the payment of metered charges on copying equipment provided by the Office of the Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper;

(F) the payment of Senate Recording and Photographic Services; or

(G) the payment of franked and mass mail costs by the Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper.

(b) AGENCY CONTRIBUTIONS.—There are authorized to be paid from the appropriations account for "Expenses of Inquiries and Investigations" of the Senate such sums as may be necessary for agency contributions related to the compensation of employees of the committee—

(1) for the period March 1, 2025, through September 30, 2025;

(2) for the period October 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026; and

(3) for the period October 1, 2026, through February 28, 2027.

SENATE RESOLUTION 74—AUTHORIZING EXPENDITURES BY THE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Mr. MORAN submitted the following resolution; from the Committee on Veterans' Affairs which was referred to the Committee on Rules and Administration:

S. RES. 74

Resolved,

SECTION 1. GENERAL AUTHORITY.

In carrying out its powers, duties, and functions under the Standing Rules of the Senate, in accordance with its jurisdiction under rule XXV of the Standing Rules of the Senate, including holding hearings, reporting such hearings, and making investigations as authorized by paragraphs 1 and 8 of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the Committee on Veterans' Affairs (in this resolution referred to as the "committee") is authorized from March 1, 2025, through February 28, 2027, in its discretion, to—

(1) make expenditures from the contingent fund of the Senate;

(2) employ personnel; and

(3) with the prior consent of the Government department or agency concerned and the Committee on Rules and Administration, use on a reimbursable or nonreimbursable basis the services of personnel of any such department or agency.

SEC. 2. EXPENSES.

(a) EXPENSES FOR PERIOD ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2025.—The expenses of the committee for the period March 1, 2025, through September 30, 2025, under this resolution shall not exceed \$2,673,928, of which amount—

(1) not to exceed \$58,000 may be expended for the procurement of the services of individual consultants, or organizations thereof (as authorized by section 202(i) of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 (2 U.S.C. 4301(i))); and

(2) not to exceed \$40,000 may be expended for the training of the professional staff of the committee (under procedures specified by section 202(j) of that Act).

(b) EXPENSES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026 PERIOD.—The expenses of the committee for the period October 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026, under this resolution shall not exceed \$4,583,876, of which amount—

(1) not to exceed \$100,000 may be expended for the procurement of the services of individual consultants, or organizations thereof (as authorized by section 202(i) of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 (2 U.S.C. 4301(i))); and

(2) not to exceed \$70,000 may be expended for the training of the professional staff of the committee (under procedures specified by section 202(j) of that Act).

(c) EXPENSES FOR PERIOD ENDING FEBRUARY 28, 2027.—The expenses of the committee for the period October 1, 2026, through February 28, 2027, under this resolution shall not exceed \$1,909,948, of which amount—

(1) not to exceed \$42,000 may be expended for the procurement of the services of individual consultants, or organizations thereof (as authorized by section 202(i) of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 (2 U.S.C. 4301(i))); and

(2) not to exceed \$30,000 may be expended for the training of the professional staff of the committee (under procedures specified by section 202(j) of that Act).

SEC. 3. EXPENSES AND AGENCY CONTRIBUTIONS.

(a) EXPENSES OF THE COMMITTEE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in paragraph (2), expenses of the committee under this resolution shall be paid from the contingent fund of the Senate upon vouchers approved by the chairman of the committee.

(2) VOUCHERS NOT REQUIRED.—Vouchers shall not be required for—

(A) the disbursement of salaries of employees paid at an annual rate;

(B) the payment of telecommunications provided by the Office of the Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper;

(C) the payment of stationery supplies purchased through the Keeper of the Stationery;

(D) payments to the Postmaster of the Senate;

(E) the payment of metered charges on copying equipment provided by the Office of the Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper;

(F) the payment of Senate Recording and Photographic Services; or

(G) the payment of franked and mass mail costs by the Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper.

(b) AGENCY CONTRIBUTIONS.—There are authorized to be paid from the appropriations account for "Expenses of Inquiries and Investigations" of the Senate such sums as may be necessary for agency contributions related to the compensation of employees of the committee—

(1) for the period March 1, 2025, through September 30, 2025;

(2) for the period October 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026; and

(3) for the period October 1, 2026, through February 28, 2027.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Ms. LUMMIS. Mr. President, I have three requests for committees to meet during today's session of the Senate. They have the approval of the Majority and Minority Leaders.

Pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 5(a), of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the following committees are authorized to meet during today's session of the Senate:

COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS

The Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, February 11, 2025, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, February 11, 2025, at 10 a.m., to consider an original resolution and adopt subcommittee assignments.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

The Select Committee on Intelligence is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, February 11, 2025, at 2:30 p.m., to conduct a closed business meeting and closed briefing.

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the following detailees in the Senate Judiciary Committee be granted floor privileges for

the remainder of the 119th Congress: Allison Kent and Dorothea Lay.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

APPOINTMENT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair, in accordance with Public Law 93-618, as amended by Public Law 100-418, on behalf of the President pro tempore and upon the recommendation of the Chairman of the Committee on Finance, appoints the following Members of the Finance Committee as congressionally advised on trade policy and negotiations to International conferences, meetings and negotiation sessions relating to trade agreements: the Senator from Idaho, Mr. CRAPO; the Senator from Iowa, Mr. GRASSLEY; the Senator from Texas, Mr. CORNYN; the Senator from Oregon, Mr. WYDEN; and the Senator from Washington, Ms. CANTWELL.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—READING OF WASHINGTON'S FAREWELL ADDRESS

Ms. LUMMIS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding the order of January 24, 1901, the traditional reading of Washington's Farewell Address take place on Tuesday, February 18, 2025, following the prayer and pledge of the flag.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

APPOINTMENT OF SENATOR ROGER WICKER TO READ WASHINGTON'S FAREWELL ADDRESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair, on behalf of the Vice President, pursuant to the order of the Senate of January 24, 1901, as modified by the order of February 11, 2025, appoints the Senator from Mississippi, Mr. WICKER, to read Washington's Farewell Address on Tuesday, February 18, 2025.

ORDERS FOR WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2025

Ms. LUMMIS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it stand adjourned until 10 a.m. on Wednesday, February 12; that following the prayer and pledge, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the morning hour be deemed expired, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, morning business be closed, and the Senate proceed to executive session and resume Executive Calendar No. 18 under the previous order; finally, that if any nominations are confirmed during Wednesday's session, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Ms. LUMMIS. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask that it stand adjourned under the previous order following the remarks of Senators BLUMENTHAL, WARREN, and SCHUMER.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Connecticut.

NOMINATION OF TULSI GABBARD

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I am here to ask my colleagues to join me in a very simple truth: Tulsi Gabbard should not be the next Director of National Intelligence.

It is a simple, unequivocal truth, and it should be so clear to everyone because she is unprepared and unqualified for this role. She lacks the confidence and character, and that has been made crystal clear in the proceedings so far during her confirmation.

I urge my colleagues to consider not just her lack of preparedness but the existential threat her confirmation would pose within the intelligence community that she would have.

Since the Revolutionary War, our Nation's intelligence professionals have served out of the spotlight, never expecting recognition or adulation or award. They serve in some of the most demanding, dangerous posts, in harm's way and hostile environments, far from their families—in many cases, unable to speak to their friends and loved ones for long periods of time and unable to tell them where they are or what they are doing. Others serve in the Nation's most sensitive facilities here in Washington, DC, or elsewhere in this country. Many of them constitute the best mathematicians, the best linguists, the best analysts, and cryptographic minds in the world.

These silent sentinels choose to serve because they believe in the values and institutions that we should cherish and protect: democracy, integrity, the truth. We expect our intelligence professionals to live to the standards personified by one of Connecticut's greatest sons, Nathan Hale, whose dying regret was that he had but one life to give to his country. He served ably and instrumentally during the Revolutionary War. He came to be admired and adulated for his patriotism, his dedication, his willingness to give his life for his country.

That is the tradition of our Nation's intelligence community. They know they are going into some of the riskiest places on the planet. They do it for their country, and they keep it secret. I can't support Tulsi Gabbard to be in charge of them. I can't countenance allowing someone who is this risky to them and to our country having responsibility over their lives and their capacity to contribute to the intelligence that is critical to this country avoiding disasters.

What I have learned in this body is that, very often, the most important

work of the intelligence community is to avoid disaster—a terrorist attack or other kinds of catastrophes—and the country never knows about it because it has been avoided. The history of these last 2½ decades, since 9/11, is we have avoided some of the greatest disasters that might have befallen us because of that intelligence community—their competence and their dedication.

Ms. Gabbard has given a part of her life to the Nation through uniformed service, and I respect her service in that role, but she has given another part of her life to our adversaries—in service to those who would see us become supplicants of ruthless, ruinous powers. Her integrity is, at best, suspect. Her judgment is flawed. Her moral compass is capricious. That is a nice way of putting it. For the last several years, she has made a career of antagonizing the very patriots who serve in the community she now wants to lead. Her disdain for the intelligence community undermines the public's trust in those very Agencies that often serve as our first line of defense and avoid those catastrophic attacks on this country or on our allies and partners and friends around the world. Those Agencies are not just our first line of defense; they are sometimes the line of defense against attacks.

Make no mistake, we are in an age of strife and conflict that demands leaders of principle and determination, leaders who are willing to counter the efforts of anyone who would seek to end all of our democratic and free people. A revanchist Russia is waging an illegal, murderous war against Ukraine. It is hell-bent on establishing itself as a disruptor in Europe for the foreseeable future—a disruptor of democracies. It is using disinformation through social media and tech for spreading lies and dividing democracy, bolstering far-right movements that threaten the fabric of our allies.

Democracy: It isn't just our Nation that is at risk; it is democracies around the world that are at risk from Russia. In the Indo-Pacific, the People's Republic of China is determined to defy the international norms that have maintained security in the region for 60 years. Iranian temerity in the Middle East throws the region potentially into an uncontained religious war, stained by sectarian zeal, and a potential use of nuclear weapons.

We must stop a nuclear-armed Iran at every potential cost, and we should be siding with our ally there—our great friend and partner, Israel—to stop a nuclear-armed Iran. We should support their effort to eradicate terrorism— Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis—proxies of Iran.

The axis of evil that we are seeing now—Russia, China, Iran—is moving against us. They are working together, and they are developing new methods to threaten the United States and our allies around the globe. They are potentially disastrous to our security and

our allies, and the intelligence community stands as a bulwark, seeking information sometimes at great cost, developing human sources of intelligence, using electronic surveillance—all of it depending on secrecy and trust.

The credibility of this Nation will crater if Tulsi Gabbard is confirmed. Ms. Gabbard's confirmation would be a self-inflicted wound.

I don't believe that conflict is unavoidable or inevitable, but we should not do our adversaries' work for them. Confirming Tulsi Gabbard puts in place someone who has been proven untrustworthy throughout her career, potentially an aide to Moscow, Beijing, Tehran, and others. They are waiting for this body to give her control of the intelligence community.

Putin's minions call Ms. Gabbard "dyevuchka nasha"—"our little girl." I am probably mispronouncing the Russian, but I have got the English right—"our little girl." She has routinely parroted the Kremlin's talking points on the war in Ukraine, castigated NATO, and painted Vladimir Putin as a victim. That is exactly how Vladimir Putin wants to be depicted—and Mother Russia—to seek the reestablishment of the Russian Empire, including Ukraine, potentially Poland, and other Eastern European countries. That is his agenda, and Ms. Tulsi Gabbard, apparently, is sympathetic.

As my colleagues in the intelligence community noted, she went as far as meeting with President Bashar al-Assad and upending the Obama administration's efforts to isolate a vicious dictator. For years, she has been one of the most effective apologists for autocracy—exactly what we should be eschewing at this moment when autocracy poses such a threat around the world. Her comments on podcasts were shared millions of times by the Kremlin's media arm in Africa, South America, and Asia. She is a star but not in a good way. She is a star for our adversaries, our enemies, and others who mean us harm.

She is either complicit in Putin's machinations or completely unable to distinguish fact from fiction. Either one makes her unqualified for this highly sensitive and critically important role. We can't let her—the proverbial fox—into the henhouse. We can't let her into a position that demands character, integrity, and sound judgment.

We can't let her be confirmed. I ask my colleagues to join with me in saying no to Tulsi Gabbard.

There are other confirmations that we have opposed. There are other individuals whom I have said are unqualified for positions of high trust in the President's Cabinet.

There is a general deference that should be paid to the President in choosing his team, but this position is one of the most critical in sensitivity and importance, demanding the highest trust and credibility. It should not be occupied by Tulsi Gabbard.

I ask my colleagues to join me in saying and voting no.

I yield the floor to my great colleague from the State of Massachusetts, Senator WARREN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. LUMMIS). The Senator from Massachusetts.

NOMINATION OF TULSI GABBARD

Ms. WARREN. Madam President, I thank Senator BLUMENTHAL for his unrelenting work to help protect our Nation and in raising this issue around Tulsi Gabbard as a nominee to be the Director of National Intelligence. I appreciate his work here, and I am proud to be able to follow him in this effort.

I am here today because Tulsi Gabbard's nomination is a national security threat. We are being confronted with a vote that could put all of us at risk.

Look, everybody in the Senate understands the threat that Tulsi Gabbard poses, but I want to make sure that everyone understands the job she would have.

Why do we even have a Director of National Intelligence? The short answer is to prevent another 9/11. The Director of National Intelligence position was born in the aftermath of the terrorist attack on New York that caused the Twin Towers to crash to the ground, that collapsed part of the Pentagon, that led to the deaths of 40 brave passengers on Flight 93. These terrorist attacks together killed almost 3,000 people, and they affected millions of family members, coworkers, neighbors, and people in every State in our country and around the world.

Soon after the attacks, we asked the most obvious questions: How did this happen? Why didn't we see this coming? Why weren't we able to head it off?

It rapidly became clear that our Nation had major intelligence failures. We were gathering intelligence abroad and here at home, but we were not effectively integrating and coordinating foreign, military, and domestic intelligence, and the result of that failure was catastrophic.

That is where the DNI Director comes in. The Director of National Intelligence is the keystone that holds together our intelligence community. This is the person who coordinates across Agencies to make sure that each component of our intelligence system is talking with every other, to make sure that what happened on 9/11 doesn't happen again. This person is the principal adviser to the President on any national security-related intelligence.

The Director of National Intelligence is central to how we make decisions about where our military should be deployed, is central to how we identify our greatest national security threats, and is central to knowing what our enemy is going to do next—all of that.

Tulsi Gabbard is aggressively unqualified for this job, and making her

the Director of National Intelligence will increase the risk of a national security crisis. For starters, she has no experience in the intelligence community, and she has never served as a national security official in the executive branch.

Tulsi Gabbard is also disqualified to be Director of National Intelligence—not just unqualified but actually disqualified. Her disqualifications mean she should be kept far, far away from any part of our government intelligence system.

The problems with Tulsi Gabbard are many. She is an apologist for Vladimir Putin, routinely spreading Russian misinformation and Russian talking points about both Ukraine and Syria. She rejected our own U.S. intelligence that Assad used chemical weapons against Syrian civilians, and she went to Syria to meet with Assad and with a Syrian cleric who had threatened to activate a network of suicide bombers within the United States and Europe.

So let me say this as clearly as I can: Tulsi Gabbard would be the No. 1 person in charge of all of our Nation's secrets—all of them: all of our intelligence, every piece of secret information that we gather from around the world and every secret that our allies around the world might share with us. She would know all of it, and she would have access to all of it, and she would be the one who would fit it all together. Then she would be one of the people responsible for advising the President on when and where to use our military.

I am deeply concerned about Tulsi Gabbard's track record and whether she can be trusted with our secrets, but I am not the only one who is worried. With the history that Tulsi Gabbard has, can we reasonably expect other nations to trust us with the secret information they gather?

Even if Gabbard behaved admirably as DNI, the United States would likely have less access to sensitive information because our allies just wouldn't want to take a chance on her, just wouldn't want to take a chance that information they gathered and passed along—information that could put their own operatives at risk, for example—would not want to take the chance that they would pass that information along to the United States, that Tulsi Gabbard would see it, and then who knows where it goes.

I am concerned that other countries would say, because they don't want to take a chance on her, that it would further undercut national security if Tulsi Gabbard were confirmed as DNI.

What I am saying tonight is not breaking news. There is nothing here that hasn't been said before. Concerns about Tulsi Gabbard have been circulating on Capitol Hill for years. Every single Senator—Democrat, Republican, or Independent—knows that they are putting our national security at risk if they support Tulsi Gabbard's confirmation to head our Nation's intelligence

coordination. Every single Senator—Republican, Democrat, Independent—knows the threat that Tulsi Gabbard poses. Every single Senator—Republican, Democrat, or Independent—knows that Tulsi Gabbard could be handing our secrets over to our staunchest adversaries.

The risks our Nation faces are rising by the hour. Tulsi Gabbard at DNI. Pete Hegseth at DOD. And it isn't just confirmed Cabinet appointees who are putting our Nation at risk; just look at what is going on with Elon Musk and his team of DOGE minions at Treasury. In order for this handful of programmers to gain access to our over \$6 trillion payment system, we don't know what safeguards those hackers pulled down. We don't know what gates they opened. And they have apparently tried to get access to sensitive information at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, and they have gained access to Medicare and Medicaid records—which, by the way, is another \$1.5 trillion in payments every year. They seem to be rushing to access more large datasets across the U.S. Government every day.

When Musk's team got into our Federal databases, were the gates opened for hackers from China, from North Korea, from Iran, from Russia? What criminal gangs and black hat hackers now have access to our personal data?

I never thought we would get to this moment. My colleagues in the Senate, despite our differences, have always taken national security seriously, but at a moment when they are faced with a choice between endangering our country or bending a knee to Donald Trump, too many Republican Senators are too afraid of billionaires and Trump in their own party to do what they know is right.

I want to take some time to underscore just how dangerous Tulsi Gabbard will be to our national security. Let's start with Tulsi Gabbard's ties to Russia. These connections are laid out nicely in the New York Times article "How Tulsi Gabbard Became a Favorite of Russia's State Media."

In 2017, when she was still a Democratic member of Congress, Tulsi Gabbard traveled to Syria and met the country's authoritarian president, Bashar al-Assad. She also accused the United States of supporting terrorists there.

The day after Vladimir [V.] Putin began a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Ms. Gabbard blamed the United States and NATO for provoking the war by ignoring Russia's security concerns.

She has since suggested that the United States covertly worked with Ukraine on dangerous biological pathogens and was culpable for the bombing of the Nord Stream gas pipeline from Russia to Germany in September 2022. European prosecutors and U.S. officials say that sabotage was carried out by Ukrainian operatives.

According to analysts and former officials, Ms. Gabbard seems to simply share the Kremlin's geopolitical views, especially when it comes to the exercise of American military power.

Let me just say that again.

According to analysts and former officials, Ms. Gabbard seems to simply share the

Kremlin's geopolitical views, especially when it comes to the exercise of American military power.

Back to the story.

In Russia, the reaction to her potential appointment has been gleeful, even if Mr. Putin's government remains wary of American policies, even under a second Trump administration.

"The C.I.A. and the F.B.I. are trembling" . . . Pravda, a Russian newspaper, wrote on Friday in a glowing profile of Ms. Gabbard, noting, positively, that Ukrainians consider her "an agent of the Russian state." Rossiya-1, a state television channel, called her a Russian "comrade" in Mr. Trump's emerging cabinet.

Russian media has emphasized Ms. Gabbard's desire to improve relations with Moscow, according to FilterLabs, a firm that analyzes social media, state-run news organizations and other internet postings to track public sentiment in Russia.

"Gabbard fits an overall pattern of Trump breaking with much of the post-Cold War consensus," said Jonathan Teubner, the chief executive of FilterLabs. "She is, for Russia, the one that perhaps most perfectly embodies the changes they were hoping for from the U.S."

In other words, Tulsi Gabbard is Russia's dream come true.

Mr. Trump's critics called the choice a dangerous one that would undermine national security and that signaled a deference to Mr. Putin's world view.

"Nominating Gabbard for director of national intelligence is the way to Putin's heart, and it tells the world that America under Trump will be the Kremlin's ally rather than an adversary," Ruth Ghat, a professor of history at New York University and author of "Strongmen," a 2020 book about authoritarian leaders, wrote on Friday. "And so we would have a national security official who would potentially compromise our national security."

Let me say that again: "And so we would have a national security official who would potentially compromise our national security."

"This war and suffering could have easily been avoided if Biden Admin/NATO had simply acknowledged Russia's legitimate security concerns regarding Ukraine's becoming a member of NATO, which would mean US/NATO forces right on Russia's border," Gabbard wrote on Twitter, now known as X, when the war began in February 2022.

A month later, she posted a video on the platform saying the United States was operating 25 to 30 biological research labs in Ukraine. She accused the Biden administration of covering them up and said they could release dangerous pathogens, although she stopped short of claiming the labs were making biological weapons, as Russia has falsely claimed.

Ms. Gabbard's remarks were quickly called out by Republican Members of Congress, including Representative Adam Kinzinger of Illinois and Senator Mitt Romney of Utah.

Her willingness to criticize the Biden administration made her, like other prominent critics of the government, a favorite source of anti-American content on Russia's state television networks.

Vladimir Solovyov, a popular talk show host, called her "our girlfriend" in a segment in 2022. The program included an interview Ms. Gabbard did with Tucker Carlson, in which she claimed that Mr. Biden's goal was to end Mr. Putin's control of the Russian

Government, according to Julia Davis, the creator of the Russian Media Monitor, which tracks Kremlin propaganda.

Her appearances were regularly picked up by Russia's state media, including the international network RT, which promoted her critiques and lauded her with headlines such as "Tulsi Gabbard dares to challenge Washington's war machine" and "Biden wants regime change in Russia—ex-congresswoman."

By this year, Ms. Gabbard's politics converged with Mr. Trump's. In October, she joined the Republican Party and hit the campaign trail on his behalf, extolling him as a peacemaker.

"A vote for Donald Trump is a vote for a man who wants to end wars, not start them," she said at Mr. Trump's rally at Madison Square Garden shortly before Election Day, "and who has demonstrated already that he has the courage and strength to stand up and fight for peace."

That is the end of the article.

Ah, Tulsi Gabbard—beloved by Russian press, touted in Russian press, an attacker of American's military.

Or take key sections from this letter that William Webster—the only person to lead both the FBI and the CIA—sent to me. He was appointed by President Jimmy Carter, remained Director under President Ronald Reagan, and Reagan tapped him to be the head of the CIA.

I will quote directly from the letter:

DEAR SENATOR WARREN,

I had the honor of serving as Director of both the FBI and CIA, organizations vital to safeguarding our Nation. Their effectiveness depends on operating with complete independence from political influence—a principle essential to maintaining public trust and national security.

History has shown us the dangers of compromising this independence. When leaders of these organizations become too closely aligned with political figures, public confidence erodes and our nation's security is jeopardized. This underscores the necessity for these institutions to serve the American people, not the political agendas of the executive or legislative branches.

Congresswoman Gabbard's profound lack of intelligence experience and the daunting task of overseeing 18 disparate intelligence agencies, further highlight the need for seasoned leadership. Effective management of our intelligence community requires unparalleled expertise to navigate the complexities of global threats and to maintain the trust of allied nations. Without that trust, our ability to safeguard sensitive secrets and collaborate internationally is severely diminished. As someone who transitioned from the FBI to the CIA, I can attest to the steep learning curve even for a seasoned professional. This is no time in world history for a novice in the field to learn this role.

Every President deserves appointees they trust, but the selection process must prioritize competence and independence to uphold the rule of law. As you consider these and future nominations, I urge you to weigh the critical importance of nonpartisan leadership and experience. The safety of the American people—and your own families—depends on it. Trust in our intelligence and law enforcement agencies is also crucial for our international partners. Without that trust, we cannot be effective in guarding sensitive secrets or collaborating to address shared threats.

Thank you for your careful consideration of these pivotal appointments.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM WEBSTER,
Former director of the CIA and FBI.

That is the end of his letter. I just want to say how grateful I am both for William Webster's outstanding public service and commitment to our Nation and for his willingness to stand up now and call out the threats posed by Tulsi Gabbard's nomination to DNI.

The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists echoes these concerns in a piece they published this week entitled "Tulsi Gabbard as U.S. intelligence chief would undermine efforts against the spread of chemical and biological weapons."

Gabbard's confirmation would undermine one of the signature foreign policy accomplishments of President Donald Trump's first term: countering the threat posed by chemical weapons. Following a sarin attack on the Syrian city of Khan Sheikhoun on April 4, 2017, the Trump Administration launched a cruise missile strike against an airbase that U.S. intelligence determined Assad's forces had used to launch the chemical assault. After intelligence agencies determined that Syrian helicopters had conducted a chlorine gas attack on Douma on April 7, 2018, Trump authorized another missile strike, this time along with the United Kingdom and France, against Syrian chemical weapons facilities. Both strikes were effective at deterring further Syrian use of chemical weapons. After April 2017 the Syrian air force did not use sarin and after April 2018 Syrian helicopters stopped dropping chlorine barrel bombs.

Gabbard, however, has repeatedly claimed, including at her confirmation hearing, that the chemical attacks against Khan Sheikhoun and Douma were staged by anti-Assad groups to provoke a Western military intervention. In 2019, Gabbard, then a Democratic presidential candidate, accused Trump of launching the strikes based on flawed intelligence: "Rather than waiting for evidence, Trump acted on impulse and emotion, relying on social media posts and unverified sources originating from within territory held by al Qaeda. In March 2021, Gabbard repeated her unfounded allegation that there is no evidence supporting the Syrian government's responsibility for conducting the "alleged" chemical attack on Douma. She accused the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, (OPCW), which administers the global treaty banning chemical weapons and investigated the attack, of a cover-up and claimed that Trump's missile strikes on Syria were "unconstitutional."

Gabbard's claims about false-flag attacks, however, ignores intelligence put forward by the Trump Administration and France, an investigation by the United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, and multiple investigations by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. These national and international investigations based their conclusions on a compelling combination of signals intelligence, eyewitness testimony, photographs, videos, chemical forensic analyses, medical records, analyses of munitions fragments, satellite imagery, and information provided by third parties. For Gabbard to accuse opposition groups, [who were] the victims of Syria's chemical atrocities, of attacking themselves with chlorine and sarin is a grotesque perversion of the truth.

And yet she continues it.

Instead of relying on reputable sources, Gabbard has repeated Russian and Syrian disinformation and discredited conspiracy theories to call into question the quality of US intelligence, Trump's judgment, and the credibility of the Organization for the Prohi-

bition of Chemical Weapons. In March 2021, Gabbard signed a "statement of concern" about the organization's investigation of the Douma attack that echoed Russian propaganda and was promoted by a group linked to Wikileaks. Gabbard has made her claims about the Syrian chemical attacks despite warnings from the US intelligence community that these types of allegations are a common feature of the Kremlin's disinformation campaigns. Her reliance on these dubious sources demonstrates a dangerously poor lack of judgment for someone seeking the highest-ranking position in the intelligence community.

Gabbard's deeply flawed position on Syria's use of chemical weapons is still highly relevant today. With the fall of the Assad regime last December, the issue of how to secure and destroy Syria's remaining chemical weapons is back on the international agenda. How can Gabbard be trusted to oversee intelligence on this topic if she refuses to believe that Syria used chemical weapons after it joined the Chemical Weapons Convention, CWC, that treaty banning chemical weapons, in 2013? Will she provide Trump with intelligence that undermines her own strongly held position on this issue or will she twist intelligence to fit her [own] worldview?

And there is more at stake than just the threat posed by Syria's remaining chemical weapons. Between 2017 and 2020, the Trump Administration found Russia in violation of both the chemical weapons treaty and the Biological Weapons Convention, which bans biological weapons. Trump imposed two rounds of sanctions on Russia for using the Novichok nerve agent to poison a Russian defector. In August 2020, Trump blacklisted three Russian institutes responsible for developing chemical and biological weapons. Since then, the United States has accused Russia of using the chemical weapon chloropicrin, and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has confirmed Russia's use of riot control agents on the battlefield in Ukraine, both of which are violations of the chemical weapons treaty. There are also disturbing signs that Russia is modernizing its biological weapons program by building a new maximum containment laboratory in a military facility.

To divert attention from its own chemical and biological weapons, Russia has made a series of unfounded and debunked allegations that the United States and Ukraine are developing and using these weapons. Gabbard came perilously close to endorsing these claims in 2022 and she did embrace other elements of Russian (and Chinese) disinformation about the allegedly nefarious and dangerous activities of US-supported public health labs in Ukraine, including labs built during Donald Trump's first term. How can Gabbard be trusted to advise the president on issues related to the verification of Russia's compliance with chemical and biological arms control?

Based on this track record, it is difficult to see how Gabbard can be relied upon to provide the quality of intelligence and national security advice needed by the commander in chief during these perilous times. For the Senate to confirm Gabbard would be national security malpractice.

And that is the end of the piece.

I am looking to see who else is going to be here.

Just finish up? OK. Just wanted to make sure, because I know what is happening here.

In a relay race, it is always important to know if you have to hand off the baton.

Look, I will conclude with this: National security officials and experts in

intelligence are begging the Senate to exercise their constitutional duty and vote no on Tulsi Gabbard for Director of National Intelligence. We are being asked to vote for someone whose loyalty to this country has been questioned repeatedly and has raised alarms for our allies across the globe. It would be a dangerous mistake to give Tulsi Gabbard access to all of our secrets, and an even greater mistake to trust Tulsi Gabbard to protect this country.

I urge all of my colleagues to vote no.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

NOMINATION OF TULSI GABBARD

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, this week, Senate Republicans will force a pair of nominees through the Senate they know perfectly well do not merit confirmation. But Republicans will confirm them anyway because Donald Trump is strong-arming them into submission.

Today, Senate Democrats are here on the floor to oppose one of those two nominees, Tulsi Gabbard. She has been nominated by the President to serve as Director of National Intelligence, the No. 1 intelligence officer of the entire Federal Government.

By now, there is no question about whether or not Ms. Gabbard is qualified to lead America's intelligence Agencies because by any objective measure and by every objective measure as well, she is not qualified.

From the moment she was nominated, both Democrats and Republicans were puzzled by this choice. Of all people Donald Trump could have picked to oversee national intelligence, he picked someone known for repeating Russian propaganda and getting duped by conspiracy theories. Do Republicans honestly think this is the best person for the job of all the other so many qualified people?

Fifty-two Republicans voted last night to advance her, but I know both sides of the aisle still remain troubled by this nominee. I hope—I pray—for the sake of our country, of our security, Republican colleagues think very carefully before casting their vote. I hope they think about the safety of our people, the concerns of our allies, and the threats—the threats—posed by the likes of Putin and Xi and others before casting their vote.

Every single Democrat, I am proud to say, will oppose the nomination of Tulsi Gabbard because we simply cannot in good conscience trust our most classified secrets to someone who echoes Russian propaganda and falls for conspiracy theories. It is alarmingly dangerous—dangerous—not just bad but dangerous—to trust someone like that. The job of national intelligence is a matter of life and death. The job is to oversee all 18 of the Nation's intelligence Agencies.

DNI would be the top intelligence adviser to the President of the United States. It would be their job to decide what intelligence reaches the President's desk and what does not. Few positions in government carry the burden that DNI will carry every single day.

The person who serves as DNI, therefore, cannot be someone controversial; they cannot be someone who has to literally convince Senators to ignore their checkered past, to ignore their conspiratorial views, and, essentially, ask Senators to hold their nose while they support her. And that is what Tulsi Gabbard has had to do with so many Senate Republicans.

Who is kidding who? Who are our Republican colleagues kidding when they talk about that she is a good choice? It is incredible. It is incredible given her long list of frailties and dishonesty and conspiracies. There should never—never—be a shred of doubt that the DNI is qualified, informed, and shows sound judgment. Tulsi fails to meet—she wouldn't meet a low bar, but this job has a very high bar because it is so important to our security.

The Director of National Intelligence must be fluent in the truth—fluent in the truth. But Ms. Gabbard speaks the language of falsities and conspiracy theories.

Shortly after—listen to this, America. This is who they want to put in. This is who Donald Trump wants to put in, someone who, shortly after Russia invaded Ukraine, Gabbard infamously spread a false conspiracy theory. She suggested that the U.S. was supporting bioweapon laboratories in Ukraine without a shred of evidence.

You know where this myth came from, Donald Trump? From Russia. It was spread to justify Putin's invasion. That alone is more than enough to be disqualified for anyone seeking to become the top intelligent adviser to the President of the United States.

But the world is inside-out, turned topsy-turvy, upside down by Donald Trump. And it is confounding that America is at this point and even more confounding that our Republican colleagues at this point are going along with someone they know is so patently bad for this Agency. They should be ashamed of themselves. There are certain times when you have to buck up. And with Ms. Gabbard, this is one of them.

The Director of National Intelligence must be strong against America's adversaries. But Ms. Gabbard has spent years sympathizing not with America's allies—oh, no—but with the likes of Putin and Bashar al-Assad. Nobody who plans a secret face-to-face meeting with Bashar al-Assad while in the middle of slaughtering his own people should be in this job. You can't possibly claim to be strong against America's adversaries after Assad used chemical weapons against his own people. This list goes on and on. It is almost fictional, it is so bad.

After Assad used chemical weapons against his own people in 2017 and 2018,

Tulsi Gabbard turned against U.S. intelligence and sided with fringe conspiracy theorists to cast doubt on these two specific incidents.

I want to be clear on how strange and troubling this episode was. On the one side, you had the entire U.S. intelligence ecosystem and the intelligence of the French Government and the organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons all saying the same thing: Assad used chemical weapons against his own people in both 2017 and 2018. These findings were not just conjecture; they were based on satellite imagery, witness accounts, medical experts. In other words, the kind of intelligence data that Ms. Gabbard would be responsible for evaluating on this important job.

And then on the other side, on the other side of all these intelligence experts and all this evidence, you have Tulsi Gabbard relying on the judgment of an individual who had appeared on Russian-funded propaganda outlets. That is who she relied on, someone who appears on Russian-funded propaganda outlets, puts out this crazy theory against all evidence of every intelligence Agency in the U.S. and other countries. And Gabbard goes for it.

She was trying to shield Assad for his inhumane conduct because she met with him. She supported Assad.

I have to say, I have never heard—never heard—of a nominee for any intelligence Agency who was so ready and willing to question the findings of America's own intelligence operations, yet accepts Russian disinformation so easily without the same kind of skepticism.

And, of course, I am deeply troubled by Ms. Gabbard's long record showing weakness against Russia when it comes to Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

On the night Russia invaded Ukraine—a horrible night—and launched the first full-scale invasion of a sovereign nation in Europe since World War II, what was Ms. Gabbard doing? She was on Twitter at 11:30 blaming NATO and the U.S. for starting the war.

This is the head of national intelligence? Give me a break.

She was saying that the war could have been avoided had NATO and the U.S. just accommodated Putin. That is who we are going to have as the head of DNI when we deal with our adversary Vladimir Putin. Russian TV, of course, aired Tulsi Gabbard's comments shortly thereafter.

And now—and now—with all this evidence, Republicans want to make this person the top U.S. intel chief. Who could believe it? Where is all our right-wing friends in the hawkish community? Where are the editorial pages of these rightwing newspapers?

When Ms. Gabbard had the opportunity to repair her image before the Senate Intel Committee and ease the deep worries Senators from both sides of the aisle had about her, she only exacerbated the worries. She refused to

state the very obvious truth about Edward Snowden: that he is a traitor—a traitor—who stole sensitive intelligence and now lives in Russia under the watchful eye of Russian security services. We had so many of our Republican colleagues denounce Snowden, and now they vote for Ms. Gabbard. Incredible.

I can't imagine what our allies were thinking, watching Tulsi Gabbard testifying, refusing to do something as simple as condemning Edward Snowden. I fear the great erosion of trust between the United States and our allies, whose intelligence we rely on to keep America safe. We have a good sharing arrangement with them. I fear that erosion should Gabbard be confirmed.

Senate Republicans know very well that Gabbard has no business advising the President on matters of classified intelligence. They know her judgment is way off the mark—way off the mark. They know her troubling history of pushing conspiracy theories and repeating Russian propaganda.

So deep down, this nominee is about one very simple question: What do Senate Republicans care more about? Doing the right thing for national security, making sure a known conspiracy theorist, a believer in false information, someone who has no fact-based analysis of anything—do they care more about doing the right thing for national security? Do Republicans care more about doing the right thing for national security? Or doing whatever is necessary to keep Donald Trump happy? The American people will know the answer tomorrow.

I yield the floor.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10 A.M. TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 8:40 p.m., adjourned until Wednesday, February 12, 2025, at 10 a.m.

NOMINATIONS

Executive nominations received by the Senate:

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

KIRSTEN BAESLER, OF NORTH DAKOTA, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, VICE FRANK T. BROGAN.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

SEAN CAIRCROSS, OF MINNESOTA, TO BE NATIONAL CYBER DIRECTOR, VICE HARRY COKER, JR., RESIGNED.

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

JOHN HURLEY, OF CALIFORNIA, TO BE UNDER SECRETARY FOR TERRORISM AND FINANCIAL CRIMES, VICE BRIAN EDDIE NELSON.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

CHARLES KUSHNER, OF NEW YORK, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE FRENCH REPUBLIC, AND TO SERVE CONCURRENTLY AND WITHOUT ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION AS AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE PRINCIPALITY OF MONACO. WARREN STEPHENS, OF ARKANSAS, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND.

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

OLIVIA TRUSTY, OF MARYLAND, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE TERM EXPIRING JUNE 30, 2025, VICE JESSICA ROSENWORCEL.

OLIVIA TRUSTY, OF MARYLAND, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION FOR A TERM OF FIVE YEARS FROM JULY 1, 2025. (REAPPOINTMENT)

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

GARY ANDRES, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, VICE MELANIE ANNE EGORIN, RESIGNED.

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

DANIEL ARONOWITZ, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF LABOR, VICE LISA M. GOMEZ, RESIGNED.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

JAMES BAEHR, OF LOUISIANA, TO BE GENERAL COUNSEL, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS, VICE RICHARD A. SAUBER.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

JOSEPH BARLOON, OF MARYLAND, TO BE A DEPUTY UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE (GENEVA OFFICE), WITH THE RANK OF AMBASSADOR, VICE MARIA PAGAN, RESIGNED.

UNITED STATES INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT FINANCE CORPORATION

BENJAMIN BLACK, OF NEW YORK, TO BE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF THE UNITED STATES INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT FINANCE CORPORATION, VICE SCOTT A. NATHAN, RESIGNED.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

KEVIN CABRERA, OF FLORIDA, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF PANAMA.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

GUSTAV CHIARELLO III, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, VICE ROBERT MICHAEL GORDON.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

TYLER CLARKSON, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE GENERAL COUNSEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, VICE JANIE SIMMS HIPP.

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

JASON DE SENA TRENNERT, OF NEW YORK, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY, VICE JOSHUA FROST, RESIGNED.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

THOMAS DINANNO, OF FLORIDA, TO BE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ARMS CONTROL AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY, VICE BONNIE D. JENKINS, RESIGNED.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

SEAN DONAHUE, OF FLORIDA, TO BE AN ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY, VICE JEFFREY M. PRIETO.

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

DAVID EISNER, OF NEW YORK, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF ENERGY, VICE ANDREW EILPERIN LIGHT, RESIGNED.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

DAVID FOGEL, OF CONNECTICUT, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF COMMERCE AND DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES AND FOREIGN COMMERCIAL SERVICE, VICE ARUN VENKATARAMAN, RESIGNED.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

GEORGE GLASS, OF OREGON, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO JAPAN.

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

JONATHAN GOULD, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE COMPTROLLER OF THE CURRENCY FOR A TERM OF FIVE YEARS, VICE JOSEPH OTTING.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

CATHERINE HANSON, OF SOUTH CAROLINA, TO BE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER, ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY, VICE FAISAL AMIN, RESIGNED.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

LONDON HEID, OF MISSOURI, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF COMMERCE, VICE THEA D. ROZMAN KENDLER, RESIGNED.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

PETER HOEKSTRA, OF MICHIGAN, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO CANADA.

ALLISON HOOKER, OF GEORGIA, TO BE AN UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE (POLITICAL AFFAIRS), VICE VICTORIA NULAND, RESIGNED.

MIKE HUCKABEE, OF ARKANSAS, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE STATE OF ISRAEL.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

SCOTT HUTCHINS, OF INDIANA, TO BE UNDER SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE FOR RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND ECONOMICS, VICE CHAVONDA J. JACOBS-YOUNG, RESIGNED.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

RONALD JOHNSON, OF FLORIDA, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE UNITED MEXICAN STATES.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

TAYLOR JORDAN, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF COMMERCE, VICE MICHAEL COTTMAN MORGAN, RESIGNED.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

PAUL KAPUR, OF CALIFORNIA, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SOUTH ASIAN AFFAIRS, VICE DONALD LU.

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

DAVID KEELING, OF KENTUCKY, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF LABOR, VICE DOUGLAS L. PARKER, RESIGNED.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

NICHOLAS KENT, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE UNDER SECRETARY OF EDUCATION, VICE JAMES RICHARD KVAAL, RESIGNED.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE

JOSEPH KENT, OF WASHINGTON, TO BE DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL COUNTERTERRORISM CENTER, OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE, VICE CHRISTINE ABIZAID, RESIGNED.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

JESSICA KRAMER, OF WISCONSIN, TO BE AN ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY, VICE RADHIKA FOX.

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

HENRY MACK III, OF FLORIDA, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF LABOR, VICE JOSE JAVIER RODRIGUEZ, RESIGNED.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NED MAMULA, OF PENNSYLVANIA, TO BE DIRECTOR OF THE UNITED STATES GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, VICE DAVID APPLGATE, RESIGNED.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

JENNIFER MASCOTT, OF MARYLAND, TO BE GENERAL COUNSEL, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, VICE ELIZABETH MERRILL BROWN, RESIGNED.

BUREAU OF CONSUMER FINANCIAL PROTECTION

JONATHAN MCKERNAN, OF TENNESSEE, TO BE DIRECTOR, BUREAU OF CONSUMER FINANCIAL PROTECTION FOR A TERM OF FIVE YEARS, VICE ROHIT CHOPRA.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

JONATHAN MORRISON, OF CALIFORNIA, TO BE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION, VICE STEVEN SCOTT CLIFF, RESIGNED.

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

BRIAN MORRISSEY, JR., OF VIRGINIA, TO BE GENERAL COUNSEL FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY, VICE NEIL HARVEY MACBRIDE.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

BRIAN NESVIK, OF WYOMING, TO BE DIRECTOR OF THE UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE, VICE MARTHA WILLIAMS, RESIGNED.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

KEVIN O'FARRELL, OF FLORIDA, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR CAREER, TECHNICAL, AND ADULT EDUCATION, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, VICE SCOTT STUMP.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

CALEB ORR, OF TEXAS, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE (ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS AFFAIRS), VICE RAMIN TOLOUI, RESIGNED.

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

WAYNE PALMER, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF LABOR FOR MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH, VICE CHRISTOPHER JOHN WILLIAMSON, RESIGNED.

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

LUKE PETTIT, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY, VICE GRAHAM SCOTT STEELE.

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

TINA PIERCE, OF IDAHO, TO BE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER, DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY, VICE JOHN G. VONGLIS.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

CHRIS PRATT, OF UTAH, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE (POLITICAL-MILITARY AFFAIRS), VICE JESSICA LEWIS, RESIGNED.

COMMODITY FUTURES TRADING COMMISSION

BRIAN QUINTEZ, OF OHIO, TO BE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMODITY FUTURES TRADING COMMISSION, VICE ROSTIN BEHNAM.

BRIAN QUINTEZ, OF OHIO, TO BE A COMMISSIONER OF THE COMMODITY FUTURES TRADING COMMISSION FOR THE TERM EXPIRING APRIL 13, 2029, VICE CHRISTY GOLDSMITH ROMERO, TERM EXPIRED.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

DAVID RADER, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF COMMERCE, VICE GRANT T. HARRIS, RESIGNED.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

JOEL RAYBURN, OF OKLAHOMA, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE (NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS), VICE BARBARA A. LEAF, RESIGNED.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

KIMBERLY RICHEY, OF TEXAS, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR CIVIL RIGHTS, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, VICE CATHERINE ELIZABETH LHAMON, RESIGNED.

MARY RILEY, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR LEGISLATION AND CONGRESSIONAL AFFAIRS, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, VICE GWEN GRAHAM, RESIGNED.

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

AUDREY ROBERTSON, OF COLORADO, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF ENERGY (ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND RENEWABLE ENERGY), VICE DANIEL SIMMONS.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

SARAH ROGERS, OF NEW YORK, TO BE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY, VICE ELIZABETH ALLEN, RESIGNED.

REED RUBINSTEIN, OF MARYLAND, TO BE LEGAL ADVISER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, VICE MARGARET L. TAYLOR.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

KATHLEEN SGAMMA, OF COLORADO, TO BE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT, VICE TRACY STONE-MANNING, RESIGNED.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

MICHAEL STUART, OF WEST VIRGINIA, TO BE GENERAL COUNSEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, VICE SAMUEL R. BAGENSTOS, RESIGNED.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

AARON SZABO, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE AN ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY, VICE JOSEPH GOFFMAN, RESIGNED.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

RICHARD TOPPING, OF OHIO, TO BE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS, VICE JON J. RYCHALSKI.

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

CRAIG TRAINOR, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, VICE ANNA MARIA FARIAS.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

MATTHEW WHITAKER, OF IOWA, TO BE UNITED STATES PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE ON THE COUNCIL OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION, WITH THE RANK AND STATUS OF AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY.

WITHDRAWAL

Executive Message transmitted by the President to the Senate on February 11, 2025 withdrawing from further Senate consideration the following nomination:

LUKE PETTIT, OF WASHINGTON, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY, VICE GRAHAM SCOTT STEELE, WHICH WAS SENT TO THE SENATE ON FEBRUARY 3, 2025.