

As I stand here today, DOGE operatives continue to work under the cover of darkness, including at the Small Business Administration. The American people want answers. Is the private information of families and businesses and individuals safe at the SBA? Will an entrepreneur looking to open their beauty salon be looking to close on an SBA loan and get their money on schedule? Can government contractors, many of whom are veterans, continue providing critical services while getting paid on time?

Lawmakers and American families alike are scrambling to figure out whether the government is open for business. Small business owners are wondering what will come from the illegal access to their private data by Musk's minions. These are just small business people across the country who have handed over the financial secrets of their families, and there is no guarantee that all of those secrets of their families are being protected right now. They are small business people. We have 7 million people in Massachusetts and 722,000 small businesses.

Meanwhile, Donald Trump continues to attack DEI—diversity, equity, and inclusion—when, in reality, the administration is carrying out a different kind of DEI—“defending Elon's interests.”

So today, I stand in opposition to the confirmation of Kelly Loeffler because of this effort which is going to be throwing us into a constitutional crisis through their illegal actions. I fear that, as Administrator, Senator Loeffler will put the interests—at the command of Donald Trump and Elon Musk—of the more than 34 million small businesses second and of Elon and billionaire interests first.

In a moment when our democracy is under threat, I expect a clearer commitment to the rule of law. So far, Senator Loeffler has offered an unapologetic defense of Trump's Executive orders, which attempt to supersede the law of the land, and has supported pardons for the January 6 insurrectionists.

Taxpayers need to ensure they have an environment which is fair and impartial at the SBA. Instead, Senator Loeffler has, in the past, basically bragged that she is more conservative even than Attila the Hun.

I need to make sure that this environment that is being created is one which is going to be hospitable to small businesses, because they need to ensure that there is an Administrator who will act ethically and for the benefit of America's entrepreneurs. Small businesses need an Administrator who will help them compete and innovate. They do not need an Administrator who is only listening to the White House's, Trump's, and Elon Musk's orders.

To conclude, under the Biden administration, we saw a record number of new small businesses, but just because they were recovering, it doesn't mean they weren't hurting.

So to all of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, we have to work together to uplift our entrepreneurs and promote a ruthless Darwinian marketplace that would bring a smile to ADAM SMITH. That is my goal. The vibrancy of our communities depends on us ensuring small business can compete, expand, and create jobs.

By crippling government from within, Trump is trying to damage the critical services that help working families put food on the table. So I urge a “no” vote on the confirmation of Senator Loeffler to serve as Administrator of the Small Business Administration.

Unfortunately, by now, we are able to look back and see the totality across the EPA, across the NIH, across the President's call for the dismantlement of the Department of Education as to what the real story line is here as the Trump administration and the DOGE apparatchiks move into Agency after Agency and are in the Small Business Administration right now.

So my goal is to try to protect that SBA that we have all known on a bipartisan basis for generations—to just protect it from this storm of partisanship that is taking over our country, and on that basis, I recommend a “no” vote.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

MS. ERNST. Mr. President, later today, we have the opportunity to advance the nomination of the Honorable Kelly Loeffler to be the Administrator of the Small Business Administration.

Senator Loeffler is immensely qualified for this role. As a successful businesswoman, it is abundantly clear that Senator Loeffler truly understands what it takes to be an entrepreneur and will be an effective voice for small businesses across America.

Since President Trump's election in November, optimism on Main Street has surged to its highest levels since 2018. Our Nation's job creators—small businesses—are excited about the prospect of having a dedicated and knowledgeable leader at the helm of the SBA.

Last week, the Small Business Committee, on which I serve as chair, favorably reported her nomination out with a bipartisan vote—a sure sign that my friends on both sides of the aisle believe she is fit to lead the SBA.

Senator Loeffler will bring accountability back to the Agency and promote policies that will truly benefit America's small businesses. As evidenced in her nomination hearing, Senator Loeffler's experience and her expertise make her the right person to lead the SBA and advocate for our small businesses.

Growing up on her family's farm in Bloomington, IL, Senator Loeffler experienced firsthand the problems facing America's farmers and small business owners. And as a fellow farm girl myself, I look forward to having some more Midwest common sense in Washington, DC.

Senator Loeffler also witnessed her parents start up a small trucking busi-

ness and navigate complex rules and regulations. She understands the struggles small businesses face because—do you know what?—she has experienced them. Fortunately, Senator Loeffler is ready to cut the redtape and reduce the burdens that so many of our job creators still face today.

Senator Loeffler is also a successful entrepreneur. She was the first employee and CEO of a financial technology company. Through her hard work and tenacity, she aggressively grew the company and took it public within 3 years.

Additionally, Senator Loeffler knows what it means to work for Main Street and the American people. During COVID, as a U.S. Senator, she worked tirelessly to bring relief to the people of Georgia, specifically through the Paycheck Protection Program. However, she, like me, recognizes that some took advantage of this program, and they need to be held accountable. During her confirmation hearing, Senator Loeffler detailed her zero-tolerance policy for waste, fraud, and abuse in the SBA. That should be welcome news for all of us.

In addition, Senator Loeffler indicated the need for a full-scale audit—I started my political career as an auditor, so I agree with this—a full-scale audit at the SBA to uncover improper spending and stated she would rely on that data to make the best decisions for the future of the SBA.

Senator Loeffler also noted the importance of working with Congress, particularly when it comes to disaster relief. She recognized the tragedy of the SBA's disaster shortfall, which lasted for 66 days in the middle of back-to-back natural disasters. She recognized this should never happen again.

SBA's vital role in the disaster process cannot be overstated, and we must ensure we have an Administrator who will alert Congress at the first signs of any concerns.

The SBA needs a strong leader with a proven track record in business management, and Senator Loeffler brings all of that and more to the table.

I look forward to working with Senator Loeffler to ensure small businesses all across America can thrive and maintain these high levels of optimism we are already seeing under this administration.

I urge my colleagues to advance her nomination and support her with a “yes” vote.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

NOMINATION OF HOWARD LUTNICK

MR. CRUZ. Mr. President, I rise in support of the nomination of Howard Lutnick to be Secretary of Commerce.

Two weeks ago, Mr. Lutnick appeared before the Commerce Committee, where he received a warm reception from Senators. The following week, he was reported out with bipartisan support, underscoring that many Commerce Committee members see Mr. Lutnick as highly qualified to serve as Secretary of Commerce.

Mr. Lutnick has demonstrated great resilience and grit throughout his life. As he revealed at the hearing, growing up with some real personal adversity has given him a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by ordinary working Americans.

He lost both of his parents before his 18th birthday, and he put himself through college and helped to raise his younger siblings.

On 9/11, Howard personally witnessed the fall of the Twin Towers. On that day, he lost two-thirds of his staff, including his own brother. Few men can recover from an experience like that, but Howard not only rebuilt Cantor Fitzgerald, but he made it into an international powerhouse with 13,000 employees and operations in more than 20 countries.

Just as importantly, he has dedicated his rebuilt company to helping support the families who lost loved ones on 9/11. He created the Cantor Fitzgerald Relief Fund to ensure that the families of employees who were killed received healthcare and millions in financial support. And he continues to serve as a board member of the National September 11th Memorial.

Over the next few years, Mr. Lutnick will lead on key issues vital to the success of America's economy: expanding commercial access to midband spectrum, keeping the gulf open for oil and gas exploration, and spurring a resurgence of manufacturing in America.

Mr. Lutnick will ensure that American taxpayer dollars are spent efficiently and that Congress gets "the benefit of the bargain" on legislation like the Chips and Science Act.

Mr. Lutnick has earned the support of nearly 50 organizations and associations. From agriculture to aviation, broadband to manufacturing, companies across the spectrum support President Trump's selection of Howard Lutnick to serve as Secretary of Commerce.

As the Wireless Association put it, "Mr. Lutnick's leadership will bring a fresh, innovative approach to the Department of Commerce." He will "advance policies that promote innovation, foster economic growth, and strengthen America's position as a global leader in wireless technology and digital transformation."

Mr. President, it is my hope that, given the bipartisan support Mr. Lutnick received in committee, the full Senate will follow suit and agree that he is the forward-looking leader focused on jobs who we need at the Department.

I urge my colleagues to support Howard Lutnick's nomination for Secretary of Commerce.

#### WAIVING MANDATORY QUORUM CALL

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call with respect to the Lutnick and Loeffler nominations be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the scheduled roll-call votes begin immediately.

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

#### CLOTURE MOTION

Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant executive clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 19, Howard Lutnick, of New York, to be Secretary of Commerce.

John Thune, John R. Curtis, Tommy Tuberville, Kevin Cramer, Ashley B. Moody, Mike Crapo, Markwayne Mullin, David McCormick, Mike Lee, Ron Johnson, John Barrasso, Pete Ricketts, Jim Justice, Jon A. Husted, Bernie Moreno, Josh Hawley, Tom Cotton.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Howard Lutnick, of New York, to be Secretary of Commerce, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH), and the Senator from Arizona (Mr. GALLEGO) are necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 52, nays 45, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 54 Ex.]

#### YEAS—52

Banks	Grassley	Mullin
Barrasso	Hagerty	Murkowski
Blackburn	Hawley	Paul
Britt	Hoeven	Ricketts
Budd	Husted	Risch
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Rounds
Cassidy	Johnson	Schmitt
Collins	Justice	Scott (FL)
Cornyn	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Cotton	Lankford	Sheehy
Cramer	Lee	Sullivan
Crapo	Lummis	Thune
Cruz	Marshall	Tillis
Curtis	McConnell	Tuberville
Daines	McCormick	Wicker
Ernst	Moody	Young
Fischer	Moran	
Graham	Moreno	

#### NAYS—45

Alsobrooks	Booker	Fetterman
Baldwin	Cantwell	Gillibrand
Bennet	Coons	Hassan
Blumenthal	Cortez Masto	Heinrich
Blunt Rochester	Durbin	Hickenlooper

Hirono	Murray	Shaheen
Kaine	Ossoff	Slotkin
Kelly	Padilla	Smith
Kim	Peters	Van Hollen
King	Reed	Warner
Klobuchar	Rosen	Warnock
Lujan	Sanders	Warren
Markey	Schatz	Welch
Merkley	Schiff	Whitehouse
Murphy	Schumer	Wyden

#### NOT VOTING—3

Boozman	Duckworth	Gallego
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The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MORENO). On this vote, the yeas are 52, the nays are 45.

The motion is agreed to.

#### CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 20, Kelly Loeffler, of Georgia, to be Administrator of the Small Business Administration.

John Thune, John R. Curtis, Tommy Tuberville, Kevin Cramer, Ashley B. Moody, Mike Crapo, Markwayne Mullin, David McCormick, Mike Lee, Ron Johnson, John Barrasso, Pete Ricketts, Jim Justice, Jon A. Husted, Bernie Moreno, Josh Hawley, Tom Cotton.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Kelly Loeffler, of Georgia, to be Administrator of the Small Business Administration, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN), the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MARSHALL), and the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. PAUL).

Further, if present and voting: the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON) would have voted "YEA."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Arizona (Mr. GALLEGO) and the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) are necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 51, nays 43, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 55 Ex.]

#### YEAS—51

Banks	Cotton	Grassley
Barrasso	Cramer	Hagerty
Blackburn	Crapo	Hawley
Britt	Cruz	Hoeven
Budd	Curtis	Husted
Capito	Daines	Hyde-Smith
Cassidy	Ernst	Justice
Collins	Fischer	Kelly
Cornyn	Graham	Kennedy