

Though in reviewing the incidents of my administration I am unconscious of intentional error, I am nevertheless too sensible of my defects not to think it probable that I may have committed many errors. Whatever they may be, I fervently beseech the Almighty to avert or mitigate the evils to which they may tend. I shall also carry with me the hope that my country will never cease to view them with indulgence and that, after forty-five years of my life dedicated to its service with an upright zeal, the faults of incompetent abilities will be consigned to oblivion, as myself must soon be to the mansions of rest.

Relying on its kindness in this as in other things, and actuated by that fervent love towards it which is so natural to a man who views in it the native soil of himself and his progenitors for several generations, I anticipate with pleasing expectation that retreat, in which I promise myself to realize without alloy the sweet enjoyment of partaking in the midst of my fellow citizens the benign influence of good laws under a free government—the ever favorite object of my heart, and the happy reward, as I trust, of our mutual cares, labors and dangers.

GEO. WASHINGTON.

UNITED STATES, 19th September 1796.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for debate only, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, until 5:30 p.m.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, before I begin, I want to note that this week marks the 500th day of captivity for those hostages still imprisoned by Hamas—500 days, well more than a year deprived of family, home, loved ones, freedom.

It is imperative that the rest of the hostages be returned as soon as possible and that the remains of those killed be returned with dignity so that their families may have closure, and I am grateful that the Trump administration is making this a priority.

My prayers today are with all those still suffering in captivity and with their families.

Mr. President, it only took 4 years—just 4 years for the Democrat leader to

become concerned about inflation. Shocking.

Last week, the Democratic leader came down to the floor multiple times to complain about January's inflation numbers—inflation numbers that he blamed on—get this—President Trump. That is right. I guess it didn't occur to the Democratic leader that it was actually President Biden who was President for most of January—up until January 20—and, by the way, for the past 4 years. So I guess, what are you going to do? You have to have something to talk about.

But it was fascinating to hear the leader complain about inflation being at 3 percent. Inflation was over 3 percent more than 2 straight years during the Biden administration. I might add, mostly way over 3 percent—like 7, 8, 9 percent. I am trying and failing to remember the Democratic leader even expressing half this outrage.

By the end of the Biden administration, a typical family had to pay—get this—\$13,000 more per year to maintain the same standard of living that they had enjoyed when President Biden took office—\$13,000 more per year as a result of Biden inflation. I would be very surprised if the Democratic leader came to the floor to highlight that fact even once. I think we all know the answer to that.

But I am forgetting the rules are different for Democrats. If you are a Democrat, it is perfectly fine and not at all hypocritical to plan to abolish the filibuster should you gain a majority in the Senate but to use it regularly when you do not.

It is perfectly fine and not at all hypocritical to convey outrage about a Republican President daring to use executive power, even if the prior Democrat administration used it profusely.

Apparently, it is perfectly fine and not at all hypocritical to condemn a Republican President for a 3-percent inflation number, even if he wasn't actually President over most of the month in question, the month of January, while ignoring the raging inflation crisis that characterized a large chunk of the prior administration.

One rule for me, another for thee. That, apparently, is the Democratic motto.

Mr. President, I guess I should have some sympathy. Recent headlines have described Democrats as “dejected” and in “disarray,” and I guess they have to make some kind of messaging attempt, however weak and ill-founded. But I have to say, the hypocrisy is really something to behold.

NOMINATION OF HOWARD LUTNICK

Mr. THUNE. Later today, the Senate will vote on the nomination of Howard Lutnick, President Trump's nominee to be Secretary of Commerce.

The Secretary of Commerce has an important job. He or she is charged with promoting American industry at home and abroad and keeping our econ-

omy competitive, both now and into the future. I am glad President Trump has chosen an outcome-driven leader like Howard Lutnick for such an important post.

Mr. Lutnick is a successful businessman who has spent four decades building up Cantor Fitzgerald, the firm that hired him after college. He is an inventor whose name appears on over 800 patents and patent applications around the world.

He is someone who is not only passionate about business but who cares deeply about people. Howard Lutnick's greatest business achievement is not building his own success or building up a company; it is rebuilding Cantor Fitzgerald over the last 24 years because Cantor Fitzgerald occupied the 101st through 105th floors of the World Trade Center North Tower.

On September 11, 2001, every single employee who was in the office died—658 people, including Howard's brother. It was unclear whether the firm could go on after losing two-thirds of its New York staff. So Howard Lutnick offered the surviving employees a choice. They could either go to 20 funerals a day for the next month or they could work harder than ever to rebuild a company to take care of the families of those who had died. They agreed to donate a quarter of their salaries to the 658 families of their colleagues with no limit and no expectation they would ever be paid back. Over the next 5 years, the firm and its employees gave those families \$180 million.

In 2008, Howard Lutnick made sure each employee got back double what they had given. To this day, each September 11 is Charity Day at Cantor Fitzgerald, meaning every dollar of revenue the firm makes that day is donated in memory of those that they lost on September 11, 2001.

Mr. President, Howard Lutnick's story is inspiring. It is a lesson in resilience and determination and the American spirit. And it demonstrates the type of person Howard Lutnick is and the type of public servant that he will be. I know Mr. Lutnick is looking forward to taking on the challenges and seizing the opportunities the next few years will bring. As he said in his hearing, he believes “America is in a place to teach the world and to show the world what leadership is like, what a great economy is like, what taking care of . . . Americans is like.”

I think we can all agree that we have the capacity to do these things. We can continue to lead the world in innovation. We can continue to unlock new economic possibilities and new opportunities. And we can make life better for the American people.

I am pleased that Mr. Lutnick will be bringing a get-it-done approach to the Department of Commerce.

As a member of the Senate Commerce Committee who has worked on technology issues for many years, I am particularly pleased that Mr. Lutnick

intends to leverage America's leadership in the technologies that are shaping the future. He has pledged to get his Department moving on spectrum again, which is critical for next-generation technologies and competing with adversaries like China.

In his first term, President Trump took spectrum seriously and opened up more megahertz for commercial use. But the Biden administration did little to nothing on spectrum. It merely released a National Spectrum Strategy that called for a number of studies but committed to freeing up zero megahertz of spectrum. I am glad the spectrum will get the attention it deserves in a Trump administration.

Broadband expansion is another priority that will require action. The \$42 billion BEAD program was created more than 3 years ago, yet it has still not connected a single household to the internet. Why? Because the Biden administration overloaded it with conditions that made it unworkable for a lot of telecoms. Things like climate conditions for subcontractors, rate regulation, and union labor requirements, none of which—none of which—I might add, were in the law. Mr. Lutnick has pledged to finally get this program off the ground and spend that money only on actual broadband infrastructure.

As we compete to be the leader in artificial intelligence, Mr. Lutnick agrees that we should use the tried-and-true light-touch approach that has enabled the United States to lead in the digital era.

Just last week, Vice President VANCE spoke in Paris about the great potential of AI and the importance of American leadership in this new technology. I am glad that the Trump administration has committed to American leadership in AI and the Commerce Department will have a critical role to play in balancing accountability with AI's great possibilities.

The job of the Commerce Secretary touches just about every industry in this country. Behind all those industries are Americans working hard to provide for their families, live their American dream, and make their contribution to America's future. Howard Lutnick understands this. I am confident that he will work every day to help American commerce thrive so that the American people can thrive.

Mr. President, America has tremendous potential. I look forward to working with President Trump and with Howard Lutnick to continue to unlock it.

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. 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 PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION AND DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, this week will mark 1 month since Donald Trump was sworn in as President. In his first month, Donald Trump has waged a scorched-earth campaign against the rule of law and against the very system of checks and balances that kept America together for two-and-a-half centuries. Why? Why are they doing this? Donald Trump, Elon Musk, and the Republicans are doing it all for one simple goal: They are trying to give their billionaire buddies a tax break and have you, the American people, pay the cost.

This week, Senate Republicans will take the next major step to achieving Donald Trump's agenda here on the Senate floor. Senate Democrats will expose Republicans' reconciliation budget bill for exactly what it is: a sinister front for clearing the way to cut taxes for Donald Trump's billionaire friends. This is going to be a long, drawn-out fight. This reconciliation budget bill is only the first step, albeit an important one.

Democrats are glad to have this debate with the Republicans. We will show the hollowness of Republicans' arguments on cutting waste. We will expose Republican attempts to cut healthcare, to cut Medicaid, to cut housing, to cut NIH, and to empower DOGE so it incinerates basic services that help tens of millions of people—all so Republicans can help their billionaire buddies with another tax break.

Of course, Republicans will deny all of this and try to change the subject just like when Donald Trump tries to change the subject by talking about the Gulf of Mexico or hotels in Gaza or annexing Canada. These are all distractions so people don't see the Republicans' real goal. And what is that goal? It is worth repeating again and again and again, and we will: Donald Trump and Republicans are trying to give their billionaires a tax break and have you pay the cost. They can do it in one bill. They can do it in two bills. They can do it in 50 bills. It doesn't matter. The endgame is exactly the same: tax cuts for billionaires paid for on the backs of working and middle-class Americans.

In fact, everything we have seen so far in Donald Trump's Presidency has been about rigging the game for the billionaire class, from firing independent government watchdogs to illegally freezing trillions for veterans' care and Head Start and community health centers, to giving Elon Musk Americans' Social Security numbers and even, potentially, private tax and health records, to defying court orders,

to demonizing judges. Everything Donald Trump has done so far is meant to dismantle the rule of law so that billionaires can run the show in Donald Trump's America.

If you don't believe me, Elon Musk is already holding court in the Oval Office and meeting one on one with heads of state all the while DOGE is taking a meat-ax to healthcare and education and aviation safety and so many other services without thinking about the consequences for American families and for America.

DOGE talks on and on about cutting wasteful spending, but look what is actually happening: FAA workers who keep our skies safe are being fired in droves even as accidents increase. Apparently, DOGE thinks that is government waste.

The VA, meanwhile, has fired over 1,000 staffers, including people who manage the Veterans Crisis Line. Apparently, DOGE thinks that is government waste.

The FDA, under Robert Kennedy, Jr., is firing staffers who keep our food safe and review medical devices. Apparently, again, DOGE thinks that is government waste. No one else does. They do.

Donald Trump and DOGE even tried to fire hundreds of staffers who safeguard America's nuclear stockpiles. Imagine firing people who guard our nuclear stockpiles all to help their billionaire buddies with another tax cut.

Can you believe how dangerous and foolish this is? Donald Trump and Elon Musk were willing to risk the safety of America all in the name of tax cuts.

This example shows clear as day that DOGE doesn't actually care about increasing efficiency. DOGE is simply taking a meat-ax at government in defiance of the law and without thinking of the consequences—all so that Donald Trump and Republicans can give their billionaire buddies a big tax break.

I want to close on a particularly profane example of how Donald Trump and DOGE are taking a meat-ax to public services—the 9/11 survivors' health program. I would have thought that some things would have been out of bounds for Donald Trump and DOGE, like axing services to 9/11 families. Sadly, I was wrong because last week Donald Trump slashed the workforce for the World Trade Center Health Program, which I helped to create years ago to support our 9/11 first responders, survivors, and families. Apparently, serving 9/11 families—those who have been hurt by 9/11, who have lost loved ones in 9/11—is just more wasteful spending in the eyes of Donald Trump and DOGE. It is utterly disgusting.

Because of these barbaric cuts, 9/11 families, including sick first responders and survivors, will now face longer wait times to receive often desperately needed care. Families will worry more about whether or not their loved ones will be able to afford lifesaving treatment. Donald Trump and DOGE's decision to cut funding for the heroes of 9/