

the Putin regime by enriching its enablers. He was recognized and awarded on numerous occasions for his work fighting corruption and promoting democratic ideals. Those recognitions and awards include the 2015 Prize of the Platform of European Memory and Conscience, a nomination for the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize, the 2021 Boris Nemtsov Prize for Courage, the 2021 Moral Courage Award by the Geneva Summit for Human Rights and Democracy, the 2021 Knight of Freedom Award by the Casimir Pulaski Foundation, and the 2021 Sakharov Prize by the European Parliament.

(6) Alexei Navalny and fellow dissident Vladimir Kara-Murza endured several poisonings and other attempts on their lives carried out by Putin's government.

(7) Renaming the street near the official residence of the Russian Ambassador to the United States serves as a continuing expression of solidarity between the people of the United States and the people of the Russian Federation, who are engaged in a sustained, peaceful, and patriotic struggle for fundamental freedoms.

## SEC. 2. DESIGNATION OF ALEXEI NAVALNY WAY.

(a) DESIGNATION OF WAY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The area of Sumner Row Northwest between 16th Street Northwest and L Street Northwest in Washington, District of Columbia, shall be known and designated as “Alexei Navalny Way”.

(2) REFERENCES.—Any reference in a law, map, regulation, document, paper, or other record of the United States to the area referred to in paragraph (1) shall be deemed to be a reference to “Alexei Navalny Way”.

(b) SIGNS.—The District of Columbia shall construct 2 street signs—

(1) that contain the phrase “Alexei Navalny Way”;

(2) one of which shall be placed immediately above existing signs between 1135 16th Street Northwest and 1119–1125 16th Street Northwest;

(3) one of which shall be placed on a sign post at 1555 L Street Northwest; and

(4) that are similar in design to the signs used by the District of Columbia to designate the location of Metro stations.

By Mr. PADILLA (for himself,  
Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. SANDERS,  
Mrs. MURRAY, Ms. WARREN, Ms.  
BALDWIN, Mr. KING, Mr. SCHATZ,  
Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. KAINE,  
and Mr. FETTERMAN):

S. 624. A bill to amend title 5, United States Code, to achieve parity between the cost-of-living adjustment with respect to an annuity under the Federal Employees Retirement System and an annuity under the Civil Service Retirement System, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, I rise to speak in support of the Equal COLA Act, which I introduced today.

The Federal Government's workforce is central to protecting our national security and delivering critical services to hundreds of millions of Americans. As such, it is essential that the Federal Government attract and retain an effective workforce and, once their service is complete, ensure retirees receive the dignified retirement that they deserve. It is clear that now more than ever, Congress must step up and support our Federal workforce.

Unfortunately, in 1986, Congress created a two-tiered system that now pre-

vents nearly 800,000 retired Federal employees from receiving a full cost-of-living adjustment when consumer prices increase more than 2 percent from year to year.

In January, some Federal retirees received a 2.5-percent COLA. However, other Federal retirees received only a 2.0-percent increase due to this policy, which fails to protect retired employees living on a fixed income. I believe all Federal retirees who have worked in service to our country should receive a full adjustment to their benefits each year that is consistent with national economic trends.

That is why I am proud to reintroduce this legislation to fix this unfair system and ensure that all retired Federal employees receive full retirement benefits that keep up with the cost of living.

I hope my colleagues will join me in support of this bill to ensure that retired Federal employees no longer pay the price of a misguided law and that their benefits fully keep pace with the cost of living.

## AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I have one request for a committee to meet during today's session of the Senate. It has the approval of the Majority and Minority Leaders.

Pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 5(a), of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the following committee is authorized to meet during today's session of the Senate:

### COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, February 18, 2025, to conduct a business meeting.

## ORDERS FOR WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2025

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it stand adjourned until 10 a.m. on Wednesday, February 19; 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 then be closed, and the Senate resume consideration of Calendar No. 13, S. Con. Res. 7; further, that at 12 noon, the Senate execute the order of February 13 in relation to the Loeffler nomination and that following disposition of the Loeffler nomination, the Senate recess until 2:15 to allow for the weekly conference lunches; finally, that all time during recess and adjournment count equally towards Calendar No. 13, S. Con. Res. 7; and that if any nominations are confirmed during Wednesday's session, the motions to re-

consider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, is it Wednesday yet? It feels like it. I got over here to vote at 5.

## ORDERS FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. KENNEDY. 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 Senator MERKLEY.

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

Mr. KENNEDY. To whom I apologize for him having to wait so long because of our inefficiencies.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

## CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET FOR THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, this evening we had a vote on the motion to proceed to the Republican budget resolution, and that passed. It was a simple majority vote. And this budget resolution has a very simple, straightforward theme: Families lose, and billionaires win.

The plan is simple: Slash programs for families, give massive tax giveaways to millionaires and billionaires, and run the country deeper into debt.

That is not a plan that my constituents back home would vote for or support. They don't want to see the programs that enable families to stand on their feet be slashed or destroyed. They don't think that our megamillionaires and billionaires need more massive giveaways, and they certainly don't want to see the debt run up in the process. But that is where we are.

Now, my Republican colleagues might say: Well, not so fast. This bill is really about securing our border and national defense.

But don't let that fool you. Senate Democrats are happy to entertain an appropriations bill to address these issues. In fact, we had a strong, bipartisan defense spending bill in the Appropriations Committee last year. Senate Democrats also supported a bipartisan immigration bill, and that was just a year ago May; but the bill was killed. Bipartisan, negotiated bill was killed when then-Candidate Trump said: Senate Republicans, I don't want you to fix the problem. I want to have this as a campaign element, the chaos at the border, so don't fix it.

So it was killed. So you have Democrats ready to work on national defense, as we have in the past, and willing to work on security at the border.

So this bill is not about that. This bill is about this: Slashing programs

for families, giving massive tax giveaways to the richest Americans. That is the real soul of the Republican budget resolution.

Now, this resolution proposes over \$9 trillion in cuts to programs. Just look at the budget table that accompanies the resolution. You will see it in there. Basically, it has a line: unallocated cuts, \$9 trillion—and that includes cutting a trillion dollars out of the programs in the last 6 months of this year.

One of our colleagues on the Republican side did an amendment that showed what those cuts of a trillion dollars would do—let alone 9 trillion—and it would, basically, wipe out five major programs and cut another five major programs in half at the end of this year. So that vision of massive cuts to programs families depend on is right at the heart of this budget resolution.

And this really is the great betrayal because Candidate Trump campaigned on the vision of helping families. But now that he is in office, he is reverting to the same plan he had in the last year of his first administration, which is slashing programs for families and giving massive tax cuts to megamillionaires and billionaires. We have seen this movie before, and the movie's director is a man named Russell Vought. He was head of OMB in the Trump administration the first time around. And who has Trump nominated to put in place of the Director of OMB and now been confirmed by the Senate? The same man, Russell Vought.

And do we see the architecture of this plan anywhere else? Well, yes, we do. It is called Project 2025—that plan that President Trump said he didn't know anything about. But it was his Director of OMB who was the architect of the plan, and it is that plan that is being implemented right now. And what is that plan? That plan is the great betrayal: slash the programs for families, give tax giveaways to the richest Americans.

Now, in the Budget Committee, we had a chance to examine this plan and propose amendments to it. We proposed 44 amendments, and all of them were voted down on a party line. So that was quite disappointing because, really, what we were about was to say, Hey, to our Republican colleagues, if you want to protect families and this program isn't really about slashing programs for families, then vote with us to protect those programs.

Well, so we put up amendment after amendment to protect those programs. One was about the cost of groceries. Democrats said: Don't allow provisions into this bill that are going to drive up the cost of groceries. Democrats voted for protection; Republicans voted it down.

Democrats said: Don't put provisions into this bill that are going to cut Medicare or Medicaid or Social Security or, in any other way, make healthcare more expensive. Democrats voted for that protection. Republicans rejected it.

Democrats put forward an amendment for provisions that would—against provisions that would raise the cost of rent or raise the cost of buying a home. Republicans on the committee rejected it.

Democrats put forward an amendment to protect or hopefully lower the cost of drugs, and Republicans rejected it.

Democrats put forward an amendment that said: Don't make changes in the law when this bill comes back that will increase the cost of going to college. Republicans rejected it.

Protecting the National School Lunch Program? Republicans rejected it.

Protecting families against an increase in childcare? Republicans rejected it.

Protecting the investment in research for cancer, Alzheimer's, and other lifesaving major medical measures? Protect the funding for that? Republicans rejected it.

Now, if this bill wasn't about slashing all those programs, why would Republicans vote against all those things? If they actually wanted to protect families—the programs that provide the foundation for families to be on their feet, to thrive, to move in the middle class, to prosper—why would they vote to open the door to slashing all those programs?

Then we see that they are racing their House counterparts. At 10 a.m. last week, when we considered in committee the Republican Senate budget resolution, the House proceeded to put forward—they are just down the hallway through this door over here—the House—at the end of the hallway—put forward their own budget resolution, which is very, very similar except in magnitude. The House bill provides even more tax cuts for the richest Americans than does the Senate bill. So the stakes couldn't be higher.

Where are we headed? Are we headed towards a bill this year that is going to make the rich richer, increase income inequality, proceed to help the wealthy run this country by and for the powerful and undermine the vision of government by and for the people? That is exactly where the Republican budget resolution is headed.

If you kind of want to make sure that you really understand how true this is, think about the fact that the last budget presented by President Trump in his first term, his first 4 years, which was written by his current OMB Director, Office of Management and Budget Director Russell Vought—that had exactly the same architecture. It proposed slashing \$1 trillion over a decade from programs for families. It slashed healthcare and housing for seniors and veterans, slashed funding for hospitals and community health centers, slashed school meal programs and food pantries, slashed Head Start and police and firefighting grants, slashed tax relief for families and veterans and retirement—\$1 trillion in the last budget.

But that was \$1 trillion over 10 years. What Republicans are now proposing is \$1 trillion over 1 year—just 1 year. It is only actually half a year. There are only 6 months left in fiscal year 2025.

When President Trump ran, when he was Candidate Trump, he talked about reducing the costs for families, but everything he is doing now is sending costs upwards. It is Trumpflation. Trumpflation has arrived in the United States of America. Instead of slashing the price of groceries, he is proposing programs that will drive up costs for hard-working families. That is Trumpflation.

This budget resolution opens the door to making healthcare more expensive for families—not cheaper, more expensive. That is Trumpflation.

This budget opens the door to making college more expensive by changing how college loans are administered. That is Trumpflation.

This budget opens the door to unleashing carbon dioxide and methane pollution that drive climate chaos, that will drive up the cost of flood and fire insurance across America. In the West, it is fire insurance. In the gulf in Florida, the Southern States, it is flood insurance. That is Trumpflation.

This budget opens the door to increasing the cost of childcare—something working families really struggle with. It is Trumpflation.

It opens the door to increasing the cost of prescription drugs. Trumpflation has arrived.

In each of these areas, we said: Don't do it. We said: Don't proceed to put into this budget resolution opening these doors to these assaults on American families. Democrats said it in every way we could, and Republicans said: No. We want to cut those programs. We are not closing those doors.

I know American families don't agree with this vision. My office—the office of every Senator here, every Senator represented by their desk in this room—every office is receiving thousands of phone calls. I had a couple of days last week that I got over 2,000 phone calls from Oregon. That is an incredible number. And we had so many members of the team working, trying to answer every call live, but we couldn't keep up. Even though my team has a highly coordinated ability to expand the number of people answering the phone, we couldn't keep up because people are so disturbed about this vision for America, this vision of attacking families and gold-plating billionaires. That is not an American vision, but it is the vision of President Trump.

Then we have the second piece—the tax giveaways. The Senate budget resolution proposes \$3.7 trillion in tax giveaways. The megamillionaires and billionaires get most of that, just like in the first Trump tax cut proposal, tax giveaway proposal. It was something like 80 percent that went to the top 10 percent in America.

Well, I know that Elon Musk doesn't need more of our Treasury money. I

know that the richest Americans, the megabillionaires, don't need more of our Treasury and to run up our debt. But that is what this proposal does.

The House budget resolution goes further, proposing \$4.5 trillion in tax giveaways.

Over the weekend, there was article after article of Republicans saying: That is not enough. We have all these tax giveaways we want to do for the powerful, and we can't fit them all into \$4.5 trillion. We need more space.

If you think I am exaggerating, take a look at the budget put out by House Republicans last week. They included a mechanism to guarantee that they follow through on their tax cut programs to families—they linked the tax cuts directly to the program cuts for families. They said that for every additional dollar they cut from safety net programs, they will be able to give away an additional dollar to billionaires. They put that into their plan, that these two things are linked—cuts to programs for families—the more you cut it, the more you can do tax giveaways to the wealthy.

It doesn't stop there.

All of this is going to result in higher deficits here in the United States. My Republican colleagues are famous for campaigning on fiscal responsibility but not delivering.

This chart shows the difference between the first year of each Republican administration and the last year in terms of deficits. If you are looking at H.W. Bush, he had more deficits in his last year than he did in his first. Clinton went the other direction; Clinton dropped the deficit year after year. In fact, in the end, he produced a surplus at the end of his 8 years. Along comes the second Bush Presidency. He drives up the deficits from his first year to his last year, over those 8 years. In comes Obama. Obama decreases them. In comes Trump in his first Presidency, and he blows the lid off the whole thing—like a bomb to the deficit and a bomb to the debt. Then comes in Biden, and the deficits drop down again. This is the pattern. You have seen this movie before.

It is often said: Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me. Well, Americans, you have been fooled time and time again, and you are being fooled again, and it is all embedded in this budget resolution that is on the floor of the Senate right now.

I find it just so remarkable that Democrats deliver on decreasing deficits, but somehow, through the magic of marketing—selling the sizzle instead of the steak; giving the talk instead of doing the walk—Republicans somehow still present themselves as fiscally conservative.

I encourage my colleagues to say that we are going to keep putting a spotlight on the fact that deficits are going to go up under President Trump, just as they have under every previous Republican President going back decades.

I would like to think that we could come together as Democrats and Republicans and say: Yes, there are efficiencies to be found in programs, but it is also absurd to be giving away the Treasury to the richest Americans.

But if you want a symbol of where this administration is coming from, just take a look at the picture of President Trump doing his inaugural address—also just down this hallway in the Rotunda. All you see is him backed up by one billionaire after another, four in a row right behind him. They love this idea because, after all, there is never enough money for a billionaire.

Well, I can tell you, where I live, billionaires do not struggle. Where I live, families struggle. They struggle with healthcare. They struggle with housing—housing—that vision of home ownership for your children.

My father was a union mechanic. My mother, when she had children, stayed at home. She worked in the home, did all kinds of activities with her kids. On a single mechanic's income, you could easily buy a home, but not today, not a single income. No. The price of homes is through the roof. The dream of home ownership is dying. Why? Because hedge funds are buying up single-family housing across America and because we haven't invested enough in creating starter homes, incentivizing the building of starter homes.

In the Budget Committee, we had a proposal that said: Make it easier to put legislation forward that would discourage hedge funds from buying up single-family housing. They have been hard at it since 2009 when all those hundreds of thousands—millions—of homes went into foreclosure because of banking regulations creating a massive national fiasco.

Every Democrat said: Yes, make it easier to take on the issue of home ownership. Every Republican said no.

I don't like that this is a partisan outcome. I would love to see us partner to help out American families, partner across the aisle for families. But we have an administration that is all about the rich and making them richer, and it is all about slashing the programs families depend on.

We have yet another threat to families. That threat is the concentration of authoritarian power in the White House in a way we haven't seen in the entire history—almost 250 years—of our Republic. We have a President who has a thirst for authoritarian power, who admires Xi in China, admires Putin in Russia, sent his Vice President over to Munich just days ago to bad-mouth the democracies of Europe that share our values of freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and freedom of assembly. Wow.

But we not only have a President who admires authoritarian figures, admires dictators, he is acting like a dictator right here. He is breaking the law, and he is violating the Constitution.

He proceeded to say: I am going to cut all of these programs that I don't like.

Well, do you know what? He doesn't have that power. We have what is called a separation of powers in America. It means Congress sets the law, and then we have an Executive, the President, who implements it.

Now, President Nixon—you remember him. You remember Watergate. You remember the impeachment. You remember the conviction. You remember the resignation. Actually, it never got to a conviction because he resigned first.

What did he do?

He said: I am going to be a bit imperial, and I am going to not provide the funds that Congress told me had to be provided to various programs.

And do you know what? The courts said: Hell no. You can't do that. We have what is called a Republic. It is called a separation of powers. It is called what it says in the Constitution: that Congress writes the law and the President executes it.

Now, the President can request Congress to change a program that has already been authorized, that is already in the law. It is called a rescission. He sends a note over to Congress and says: You know, we don't need to spend as much money as you all appropriated for this program; or maybe that nuclear warhead we were going to refurbish has no longer got the right one for the right missile, so we can cancel that program.

He can send those over to us, but he doesn't get a line-item veto. He doesn't get a line-item reduction. In fact, in 1996, the Republican Congress provided a line-item veto power to the President, and the Supreme Court said: No, you can't delegate that authority. If you violate that line between Congress making the law and the President executing it, you have destroyed the separation of powers, which is the heart of every democracy.

It is that thin line of Congress making the laws that is the difference between a democracy and a dictatorship, and it is under assault. We are in the middle of a constitutional crisis.

If you look at the speech that President Trump gave at the inauguration in the Rotunda, down the hall, he didn't talk about a vision in which he was going to work with Congress to get it implemented—to pass laws to make it happen. He talked about Executive order after Executive order as to what he was going to do.

That is the mind of an autocrat. That is a king, not a President. That is a threat to our Constitution. It is a threat to our Republic.

He has issued more than 60 Executive orders—bypassing Congress entirely. He went further. He handed the keys to the data systems across America to Elon Musk.

Now, Elon Musk was not elected. He was not confirmed by the Senate. He has no independent oversight. Elon represents a concentration of power we

have rarely seen—first, his power by being the CEO of large companies, like SpaceX and Tesla and Starlink. Now, those companies have lots of lobbyists here on Capitol Hill. So that is a lot of power that Elon Musk has right there. And do you know? Here is something you might not know: He gets about \$8 million a day in Federal subsidies for his companies. I would say that is a conflict of interest. Yes, \$8 million a day is, roughly, \$2.5 billion over the course of a year.

So here is a man—the richest man in the world. So he has that massive personal wealth; he has that power—that power to run media campaigns or to hire lobbyists and hire lawyers. He has got his three companies, and they have that ability to do media campaigns and hire lobbyists and hire lawyers. So you have tremendous power there, but now he has been given the keys to Agency after Agency all across the U.S. Government.

What kind of a threat is that?

Well, it is huge—it is huge—because those databases contain the most private information on every American—the private healthcare records of people who are on Medicaid or Medicare, the financial records of every family who files a tax return. His minions are now the foxes in the henhouse—so his corporate wealth, his personal wealth and power, and now his team—controlling databases all across the government, including the payment systems as to what gets paid and what doesn't get paid.

I don't want this man to have my Social Security information or yours, my tax information or yours, my address or my bank account numbers or my records or yours.

Then he put the CFPB on the chopping block, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. He posted a message that said: "CFPB," rest in peace, "RIP."

Now, why does the richest man in the world want to get rid of an Agency that has delivered \$21 billion in checks back to consumers who were ripped off by illegal practices?

I would say that is something where one could say: Hey, the CFPB is a hero for working families, a hero for families in returning \$21 billion to families who were ripped off by illegal practices. And because they shut down those illegal practices, they probably saved consumers across this country and saved families across this country

some other enormous sum. Maybe it is five times that \$21 billion.

I know that, when I worked on payday loans in Oregon and we got rid of those 500-percent, 400-percent, 300-percent interest rates, millions—not millions—but tens of thousands of Oregonians who were victims of the 300-, 400-, 500-percent loan-sharking benefited enormously.

Well, who is the similar watchdog here for the Nation? It is the CFPB, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. The rich hate it because they are the ones who have engaged in illegal practices to rip off consumers, and so they hate it that there is a watchdog.

So here is Trump and Musk getting rid of the watchdogs, getting rid of the inspectors general, and breaking the law while they do so. The law says you have to give 30 days' notice to dismiss an inspector general, and you have to do it for cause, because we need watchdogs to make sure that the executive branch is playing by the rules. He fired them. He fired the FBI agents who are specialists in executive branch behavior, watching to make sure they follow the law. He fired them and now the CFPB.

What else?

Well, I can tell you this: Musk and his minions could create a lot of damage with the access, and it is not just privacy to your records and my records. It could also be by accidentally screwing up the computer code because they don't fully understand the details on what they are playing with.

Let's be clear: Seniors living on fixed incomes cannot afford a single missed payment. They won't be able to buy their groceries or pay their rent or pay their mortgage.

This chaos unleashed by Trump and unleashed by Musk is illegal, unconstitutional, and just plain corrupt.

Here is another piece of the puzzle that should disturb you all: In budget resolutions, deficits cannot be maintained for more than 10 years. It is bad enough that Republicans want to increase the deficit over the 10-year period, but they have come up with a plan where they change the baseline so that they can actually project those deficits beyond 10 years—basically indefinitely into the future. That is not fiscal responsibility. Not only are they planning to run up the debt for 10 years, but they want to be able to run it up forever more, until you get a Congress that has the spine to change it.

Why does the party that has claimed fiscal responsibility want to change the baseline so they can run up debts far into the future? They have gotten off this game. They have sold this game—this scam—time after time. They sold it under Bush 1. They sold it under Bush 2. They sold it under Trump. They are going to do it again. They think they can get away with it again.

So that is our job, to shine the spotlight on it and say: No. The American people see what is happening and say, "No."

Say you want programs of healthcare, housing, education, support for childcare, and for nutrition. You want to help families thrive so they can move into the middle class or move beyond the middle class. American families, speak up, because it is very true that, in our Republic, the one thing that can move this Chamber is citizens back home telling us what they think about what is happening.

Families lose. Billionaires win. That is what is at stake in this budget resolution. The plan is simple: Slash programs for families. Give massive tax giveaways to megamillionaires and billionaires. Run up the deficit in the process, and let Elon Musk and the minions dismantle the Federal Agencies that protect families from getting ripped off and exploited.

This Republican budget is not a government of, by, and for the people. This Republican budget is a government of, by, and for the powerful. And Democrats will fight day and night against this diabolical plan to attack America's families.

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#### ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10 A.M. TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 8:26 p.m., adjourned until Wednesday, February 19, 2025, at 10 a.m.

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#### CONFIRMATION

Executive nomination confirmed by the Senate February 18, 2025:

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

HOWARD LUTNICK, OF NEW YORK, TO BE SECRETARY OF COMMERCE.