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Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.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.

Eternal God, we pause to thank You for life and health and love. Faced with challenges that demand greater than human wisdom, we find comfort in the knowledge that You really care. Free us from guilt through the power of Your limitless forgiveness.

Today, O Lord, keep our lawmakers faithful in the performance of their duties. Remind them of their total dependence on You. Open their minds to opportunities to do Your work on Earth. Lord, give them wisdom for the crucial decisions that affect our Nation and world.

Today, as we recall George Washington's Address to the American people, inspire us all to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with You.

We pray in Your merciful 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.

READING OF WASHINGTON'S FAREWELL ADDRESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the Senate of January 24, 1901, as modified by the order of February 11, 2025, the Senator from Mississippi, Mr. WICKER, will now read Washington's Farewell Address.

(Mr. BANKS assumed the Chair.)

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, my fellow Americans

and guests, on September 19, 1796, President George Washington published an open letter to the American people. The immediate purpose of this message was to notify his fellow citizens that he would not seek a third term as President. Beyond that, George Washington chose the occasion to provide profound parting advice to his countrymen. In what has become known as George Washington's acclaimed Farewell Address, our first President gave advice and counsel regarding a wide range of issues: foreign policy, accumulation of debt, excessive partisanship, the separation of powers, and the role of religion and morality in public life.

Of course, this was not the first time President Washington had let go of power. Just down the hall from where I stand right now, in the Capitol Rotunda, hangs a painting by John Trumbull. It depicts George Washington resigning from his commission as general of the Continental Army. This took place on December 23, 1783. In the painting, General Washington is dressed in full military garb. He is an image of strength and commanding presence. He had led a small army to victory against a powerful empire. If he had wanted to, the American people, no doubt, would have given him power for life. Instead, the painting shows Washington with a hand outstretched, giving his resignation letter to the Continental Congress, relinquishing power.

Almost 250 years later, Trumbull's painting remains in the Rotunda. Presidents, Senators, Representatives, Justices, and Cabinet officials have passed it as they have gone about the business of the country. Generations of families and school groups have craned their necks to gaze at this 12- by 18-foot depiction of humility.

Today, it might strike viewers as odd that we devote an entire painting to that moment. But in the late 1700s and certainly in the history of the world at that time, this was rare. Most leaders

did not voluntarily relinquish power. The Senate's annual reading of this letter can keep us from taking Washington's decision to step down from the Presidency for granted.

I am a huge fan of Lin-Manuel Miranda's famous musical "Hamilton." Miranda put it well when he wrote that George Washington was to "teach them how to say goodbye." By his actions and his words, he did teach Americans how to relinquish power. He also charged us to stay the course in this great experiment of self-government.

I am grateful to my colleagues for giving me the opportunity to read these words to you today. Pursuant to their invitation, I do read the words of George Washington.

Mr. WICKER, at the rostrum, read the Farewell Address, as follows:

To the people of the United States:

FRIENDS AND FELLOW-CITIZENS: The period for a new election of a citizen to administer the executive government of the United States being not far distant, and the time actually arrived when your thoughts must be employed in designating the person who is to be clothed with that important trust, it appears to me proper, especially as it may conduce to a more distinct expression of the public voice, that I should now apprise you of the resolution I have formed, to decline being considered among the number of those out of whom a choice is to be made.

I beg you at the same time to do me the justice to be assured that this resolution has not been taken without a strict regard to all the considerations appertaining to the relation which binds a dutiful citizen to his country—and that, in withdrawing the tender of service which silence in my situation might imply, I am influenced by no diminution of zeal for your future interest, no deficiency of grateful respect for your past kindness, but am supported by a full conviction that the step is compatible with both.

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



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The acceptance of, and continuance hitherto in, the office to which your suffrages have twice called me have been a uniform sacrifice of inclination to the opinion of duty and to a deference for what appeared to be your desire. I constantly hoped that it would have been much earlier in my power, consistently with motives which I was not at liberty to disregard, to return to that retirement from which I had been reluctantly drawn. The strength of my inclination to do this, previous to the last election, had even led to the preparation of an address to declare it to you; but mature reflection on the then perplexed and critical posture of our affairs with foreign nations, and the unanimous advice of persons entitled to my confidence, impelled me to abandon the idea.

I rejoice that the state of your concerns, external as well as internal, no longer renders the pursuit of inclination incompatible with the sentiment of duty or propriety and am persuaded, whatever partiality may be retained for my services, that in the present circumstances of our country you will not disapprove my determination to retire.

The impressions with which I first undertook the arduous trust were explained on the proper occasion. In the discharge of this trust, I will only say that I have, with good intentions, contributed towards the organization and administration of the government the best exertions of which a very fallible judgment was capable. Not unconscious in the outset of the inferiority of my qualifications, experience in my own eyes, perhaps still more in the eyes of others, has strengthened the motives to diffidence of myself, and every day the increasing weight of years admonishes me more and more that the shade of retirement is as necessary to me as it will be welcome. Satisfied that if any circumstances have given peculiar value to my services, they were temporary, I have the consolation to believe that, while choice and prudence invite me to quit the political scene, patriotism does not forbid it.

In looking forward to the moment which is intended to terminate the career of my public life, my feelings do not permit me to suspend the deep acknowledgment of that debt of gratitude which I owe to my beloved country for the many honors it has conferred upon me, still more for the steadfast confidence with which it has supported me and for the opportunities I have thence enjoyed of manifesting my inviolable attachment by services faithful and persevering, though in usefulness unequal to my zeal. If benefits have resulted to our country from these services, let it always be remembered to your praise and as an instructive example in our annals that, under circumstances in which the passions agitated in every direction were liable to mislead, amidst appearances sometimes dubious, vicissitudes of fortune often discouraging, in situations in which not unfrequently want of success

has countenanced the spirit of criticism, the constancy of your support was the essential prop of the efforts and a guarantee of the plans by which they were effected. Profoundly penetrated with this idea, I shall carry it with me to my grave as a strong incitement to unceasing vows that Heaven may continue to you the choicest tokens of its beneficence; that your union and brotherly affection may be perpetual; that the free constitution, which is the work of your hands, may be sacredly maintained; that its administration in every department may be stamped with wisdom and virtue; that, in fine, the happiness of the people of these states, under the auspices of liberty, may be made complete by so careful a preservation and so prudent a use of this blessing as will acquire to them the glory of recommending it to the applause, the affection, and adoption of every nation which is yet a stranger to it.

Here, perhaps, I ought to stop. But a solicitude for your welfare, which cannot end but with my life, and the apprehension of danger natural to that solicitude, urge me on an occasion like the present to offer to your solemn contemplation, and to recommend to your frequent review, some sentiments which are the result of much reflection, of no inconsiderable observation, and which appear to me all important to the permanency of your felicity as a people. These will be offered to you with the more freedom as you can only see in them the disinterested warnings of a parting friend, who can possibly have no personal motive to bias his counsel. Nor can I forget, as an encouragement to it, your indulgent reception of my sentiments on a former and not dissimilar occasion.

Interwoven as is the love of liberty with every ligament of your hearts, no recommendation of mine is necessary to fortify or confirm the attachment.

The unity of government which constitutes you one people is also now dear to you. It is justly so; for it is a main pillar in the edifice of your real independence, the support of your tranquility at home, your peace abroad, of your safety, of your prosperity, of that very liberty which you so highly prize. But as it is easy to foresee that, from different causes and from different quarters, much pains will be taken, many artifices employed, to weaken in your minds the conviction of this truth; as this is the point in your political fortress against which the batteries of internal and external enemies will be most constantly and actively (though often covertly and insidiously) directed, it is of infinite moment that you should properly estimate the immense value of your national Union to your collective and individual happiness; that you should cherish a cordial, habitual, and immovable attachment to it; accustoming yourselves to think and speak of it as of the palladium of your political safety and prosperity; watching for its preservation with jeal-

ous anxiety; discountenancing whatever may suggest even a suspicion that it can in any event be abandoned; and indignantly frowning upon the first dawning of every attempt to alienate any portion of our country from the rest, or to enfeeble the sacred ties which now link together the various parts.

For this you have every inducement of sympathy and interest. Citizens by birth or choice of a common country, that country has a right to concentrate your affections. The name of American, which belongs to you in your national capacity, must always exalt the just pride of patriotism more than any appellation derived from local discriminations. With slight shades of difference, you have the same religion, manners, habits, and political principles. You have in a common cause fought and triumphed together. The independence and liberty you possess are the work of joint councils and joint efforts—of common dangers, sufferings, and successes.

But these considerations, however powerfully they address themselves to your sensibility, are greatly outweighed by those which apply more immediately to your interest. Here every portion of our country finds the most commanding motives for carefully guarding and preserving the Union of the whole.

The North, in an unrestrained intercourse with the South, protected by the equal laws of a common government, finds in the productions of the latter great additional resources of maritime and commercial enterprise and precious materials of manufacturing industry. The South in the same intercourse, benefitting by the agency of the North, sees its agriculture grow and its commerce expand. Turning partly into its own channels the seamen of the North, it finds its particular navigation invigorated; and while it contributes, in different ways, to nourish and increase the general mass of the national navigation, it looks forward to the protection of a maritime strength to which itself is unequally adapted. The East, in a like intercourse with the West, already finds, and in the progressive improvement of interior communications by land and water will more and more find a valuable vent for the commodities which it brings from abroad or manufactures at home. The West derives from the East supplies requisite to its growth and comfort—and what is perhaps of still greater consequence, it must of necessity owe the secure enjoyment of indispensable outlets for its own productions to the weight, influence, and the future maritime strength of the Atlantic side of the Union, directed by an indissoluble community of interest as one nation. Any other tenure by which the West can hold this essential advantage, whether derived from its own separate strength or from an apostate and unnatural connection with any foreign power, must be intrinsically precarious.

While then every part of our country thus feels an immediate and particular interest in union, all the parts combined cannot fail to find in the united mass of means and efforts greater strength, greater resource, proportionably greater security from external danger, a less frequent interruption of their peace by foreign nations; and, what is of inestimable value! They must derive from union an exemption from those broils and wars between themselves which so frequently afflict neighboring countries not tied together by the same government, which their own rivalships alone would be sufficient to produce, but which opposite foreign alliances, attachments, and intrigues would stimulate and embitter. Hence likewise they will avoid the necessity of those overgrown military establishments, which under any form of government are inauspicious to liberty, and which are to be regarded as particularly hostile to republican liberty. In this sense it is, that your Union ought to be considered as a main prop of your liberty, and that the love of the one ought to endear to you the preservation of the other.

These considerations speak a persuasive language to every reflecting and virtuous mind and exhibit the continuance of the Union as a primary object of patriotic desire. Is there a doubt whether a common government can embrace so large a sphere? Let experience solve it. To listen to mere speculation in such a case were criminal. We are authorized to hope that a proper organization of the whole, with the auxiliary agency of governments for the respective subdivisions, will afford a happy issue to the experiment. It is well worth a fair and full experiment. With such powerful and obvious motives to union affecting all parts of our country, while experience shall not have demonstrated its impracticability, there will always be reason to distrust the patriotism of those who in any quarter may endeavor to weaken its bands.

In contemplating the causes which may disturb our Union, it occurs as matter of serious concern that any ground should have been furnished for characterizing parties by geographical discriminations—northern and southern—Atlantic and western; whence designing men may endeavor to excite a belief that there is a real difference of local interests and views. One of the expedients of party to acquire influence within particular districts is to misrepresent the opinions and aims of other districts. You cannot shield yourselves too much against the jealousies and heart burnings which spring from these misrepresentations. They tend to render alien to each other those who ought to be bound together by fraternal affection. The inhabitants of our western country have lately had a useful lesson on this head. They have seen in the negotiation by the executive—and in the unanimous ratification by the Senate—of the treaty with

Spain, and in the universal satisfaction at that event throughout the United States, a decisive proof how unfounded were the suspicions propagated among them of a policy in the general government and in the Atlantic states unfriendly to their interests in regard to the Mississippi. They have been witnesses to the formation of two treaties, that with Great Britain and that with Spain, which secure to them everything they could desire, in respect to our foreign relations, towards confirming their prosperity. Will it not be their wisdom to rely for the preservation of these advantages on the Union by which they were procured? Will they not henceforth be deaf to those advisers, if such there are, who would sever them from their brethren and connect them with aliens?

To the efficacy and permanency of your Union, a government for the whole is indispensable. No alliances, however strict, between the parts can be an adequate substitute. They must inevitably experience the infractions and interruptions which all alliances in all times have experienced. Sensible of this momentous truth, you have improved upon your first essay by the adoption of a Constitution of government better calculated than your former for an intimate Union and for the efficacious management of your common concerns. This government, the offspring of our own choice uninfluenced and unawed, adopted upon full investigation and mature deliberation, completely free in its principles, in the distribution of its powers uniting security with energy, and containing within itself a provision for its own amendment, has a just claim to your confidence and your support. Respect for its authority, compliance with its laws, acquiescence in its measures, are duties enjoined by the fundamental maxims of true liberty. The basis of our political systems is the right of the people to make and to alter their constitutions of government. But the Constitution which at any time exists, until changed by an explicit and authentic act of the whole people, is sacredly obligatory upon all. The very idea of the power and the right of the people to establish government presupposes the duty of every individual to obey the established government.

All obstructions to the execution of the laws, all combinations and associations under whatever plausible character with the real design to direct, control, counteract, or awe the regular deliberation and action of the constituted authorities, are destructive of this fundamental principle and of fatal tendency. They serve to organize faction; to give it an artificial and extraordinary force; to put in the place of the delegated will of the nation the will of a party, often a small but artful and enterprising minority of the community; and, according to the alternate triumphs of different parties, to make the public administration the

mirror of the ill concerted and incongruous projects of faction, rather than the organ of consistent and wholesome plans digested by common councils and modified by mutual interests. However combinations or associations of the above description may now and then answer popular ends, they are likely, in the course of time and things, to become potent engines by which cunning, ambitious, and unprincipled men will be enabled to subvert the power of the people and to usurp for themselves the reins of government, destroying afterwards the very engines which have lifted them to unjust dominion.

Towards the preservation of your government and the permanency of your present happy state, it is requisite not only that you steadily discountenance irregular oppositions to its acknowledged authority but also that you resist with care the spirit of innovation upon its principles, however specious the pretexts. One method of assault may be to effect in the forms of the Constitution alterations which will impair the energy of the system and thus to undermine what cannot be directly overthrown. In all the changes to which you may be invited, remember that time and habit are at least as necessary to fix the true character of governments as of other human institutions, that experience is the surest standard by which to test the real tendency of the existing constitution of a country, that facility in changes upon the credit of mere hypotheses and opinion exposes to perpetual change from the endless variety of hypotheses and opinion; and remember, especially, that for the efficient management of your common interests in a country so extensive as ours, a government of as much vigor as is consistent with the perfect security of liberty is indispensable; liberty itself will find in such a government, with powers properly distributed and adjusted, its surest guardian. It is indeed little else than a name, where the government is too feeble to withstand the enterprises of faction, to confine each member of the society within the limits prescribed by the laws, and to maintain all in the secure and tranquil enjoyment of the rights of person and property.

I have already intimated to you the danger of parties in the state, with particular reference to the founding of them on geographical discriminations. Let me now take a more comprehensive view and warn you in the most solemn manner against the baneful effects of the spirit of party, generally.

This spirit, unfortunately, is inseparable from our nature, having its root in the strongest passions of the human mind. It exists under different shapes in all governments, more or less stifled, controlled, or repressed; but in those of the popular form it is seen in its greatest rankness and is truly their worst enemy.

The alternate domination of one faction over another, sharpened by the spirit of revenge natural to party dissension, which in different ages and

countries has perpetrated the most horrid enormities, is itself a frightful despotism. But this leads at length to a more formal and permanent despotism. The disorders and miseries which result gradually incline the minds of men to seek security and repose in the absolute power of an individual; and sooner or later the chief of some prevailing faction, more able or more fortunate than his competitors, turns this disposition to the purposes of his own elevation on the ruins of public liberty.

Without looking forward to an extremity of this kind (which nevertheless ought not to be entirely out of sight) the common and continual mischiefs of the spirit of party are sufficient to make it the interest and the duty of a wise people to discourage and restrain it.

It serves always to distract the public councils and enfeeble the public administration. It agitates the community with ill founded jealousies and false alarms, kindles the animosity of one part against another, foment occasionally riot and insurrection. It opens the door to foreign influence and corruption, which find a facilitated access to the government itself through the channels of party passions. Thus the policy and the will of one country are subjected to the policy and will of another.

There is an opinion that parties in free countries are useful checks upon the administration of the government and serve to keep alive the spirit of liberty. This within certain limits is probably true—and in governments of a monarchical cast patriotism may look with indulgence, if not with favor, upon the spirit of party. But in those of the popular character, in governments purely elective, it is a spirit not to be encouraged. From their natural tendency, it is certain there will always be enough of that spirit for every salutary purpose. And there being constant danger of excess, the effort ought to be by force of public opinion to mitigate and assuage it. A fire not to be quenched, it demands a uniform vigilance to prevent its bursting into a flame, lest instead of warming it should consume.

It is important, likewise, that the habits of thinking in a free country should inspire caution in those entrusted with its administration to confine themselves within their respective constitutional spheres, avoiding in the exercise of the powers of one department to encroach upon another. The spirit of encroachment tends to consolidate the powers of all the departments in one and thus to create, whatever the form of government, a real despotism. A just estimate of that love of power and proneness to abuse it which predominates in the human heart is sufficient to satisfy us of the truth of this position. The necessity of reciprocal checks in the exercise of political power, by dividing and distributing it into different depositories and constituting each the guardian of the public weal against invasions by the

others, has been evinced by experiments ancient and modern, some of them in our country and under our own eyes. To preserve them must be as necessary as to institute them. If in the opinion of the people the distribution or modification of the constitutional powers be in any particular wrong, let it be corrected by an amendment in the way which the Constitution designates. But let there be no change by usurpation; for though this, in one instance, may be the instrument of good, it is the customary weapon by which free governments are destroyed. The precedent must always greatly overbalance in permanent evil any partial or transient benefit which the use can at any time yield.

Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths, which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.

It is substantially true that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government. The rule indeed extends with more or less force to every species of free government. Who that is a sincere friend to it can look with indifference upon attempts to shake the foundation of the fabric?

Promote then, as an object of primary importance, institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge. In proportion as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened.

As a very important source of strength and security, cherish public credit. One method of preserving it is to use it as sparingly as possible, avoiding occasions of expense by cultivating peace, but remembering also that timely disbursements to prepare for danger frequently prevent much greater disbursements to repel it; avoiding likewise the accumulation of debt, not only by shunning occasions of expense, but by vigorous exertions in time of peace to discharge the debts which unavoidable wars may have occasioned, not ungenerously throwing upon posterity the burden which we ourselves ought to bear. The execution of these maxims belongs to your rep-

resentatives, but it is necessary that public opinion should cooperate. To facilitate to them the performance of their duty, it is essential that you should practically bear in mind that towards the payment of debts there must be revenue; that to have revenue there must be taxes; that no taxes can be devised which are not more or less inconvenient and unpleasant; that the intrinsic embarrassment inseparable from the selection of the proper objects (which is always a choice of difficulties) ought to be a decisive motive for a candid construction of the conduct of the government in making it, and for a spirit of acquiescence in the measures for obtaining revenue which the public exigencies may at any time dictate.

Observe good faith and justice towards all nations; cultivate peace and harmony with all; religion and morality enjoin this conduct, and can it be that good policy does not equally enjoin it? It will be worthy of a free, enlightened, and, at no distant period, a great nation, to give to mankind the magnanimous and too novel example of a people always guided by an exalted justice and benevolence. Who can doubt that in the course of time and things the fruits of such a plan would richly repay any temporary advantages which might be lost by a steady adherence to it? Can it be, that Providence has not connected the permanent felicity of a nation with its virtue? The experiment, at least, is recommended by every sentiment which ennobles human nature. Alas! is it rendered impossible by its vices?

In the execution of such a plan nothing is more essential than that permanent, inveterate antipathies against particular nations and passionate attachments for others should be excluded and that in place of them just and amicable feelings towards all should be cultivated. The nation which indulges towards another an habitual hatred, or an habitual fondness, is in some degree a slave. It is a slave to its animosity or to its affection, either of which is sufficient to lead it astray from its duty and its interest. Antipathy in one nation against another disposes each more readily to offer insult and injury, to lay hold of slight causes of umbrage, and to be haughty and intractable when accidental or trifling occasions of dispute occur. Hence frequent collisions, obstinate, envenomed, and bloody contests. The nation, prompted by ill will and resentment, sometimes impels to war the government, contrary to the best calculations of policy. The government sometimes participates in the national propensity and adopts through passion what reason would reject; at other times, it makes the animosity of the nation subservient to projects of hostility instigated by pride, ambition and other sinister and pernicious motives. The peace often, sometimes perhaps the liberty, of nations has been the victim.

So likewise, a passionate attachment of one nation for another produces a

variety of evils. Sympathy for the favorite nation, facilitating the illusion of an imaginary common interest in cases where no real common interest exists and infusing into one the enmities of the other, betrays the former into a participation in the quarrels and wars of the latter, without adequate inducement or justification. It leads also to concessions to the favorite nation of privileges denied to others, which is apt doubly to injure the nation making the concessions, by unnecessarily parting with what ought to have been retained and by exciting jealousy, ill will, and a disposition to retaliate in the parties from whom equal privileges are withheld. And it gives to ambitious, corrupted, or deluded citizens (who devote themselves to the favorite nation) facility to betray or sacrifice the interests of their own country without odium, sometimes even with popularity, gilding with the appearances of a virtuous sense of obligation, a commendable deference for public opinion, or a laudable zeal for public good, the base or foolish compliances of ambition, corruption, or infatuation.

As avenues to foreign influence in innumerable ways, such attachments are particularly alarming to the truly enlightened and independent patriot. How many opportunities do they afford to tamper with domestic factions, to practice the arts of seduction, to mislead public opinion, to influence or awe the public councils! Such an attachment of a small or weak towards a great and powerful nation dooms the former to be the satellite of the latter.

Against the insidious wiles of foreign influence (I conjure you to believe me, fellow citizens) the jealousy of a free people ought to be constantly awake, since history and experience prove that foreign influence is one of the most baneful foes of republican government. But that jealousy to be useful must be impartial; else it becomes the instrument of the very influence to be avoided, instead of a defense against it. Excessive partiality for one foreign nation and excessive dislike of another cause those whom they actuate to see danger only on one side, and serve to veil and even second the arts of influence on the other. Real patriots, who may resist the intrigues of the favorite, are liable to become suspected and odious, while its tools and dupes usurp the applause and confidence of the people to surrender their interests.

The great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is, in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little political connection as possible. So far as we have already formed engagements, let them be fulfilled with perfect good faith. Here let us stop.

Europe has a set of primary interests, which to us have none or a very remote relation. Hence she must be engaged in frequent controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns. Hence therefore it must be unwise in us to implicate our-

selves, by artificial ties, in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics or the ordinary combinations and collisions of her friendships or enmities.

Our detached and distant situation invites and enables us to pursue a different course. If we remain one people under an efficient government, the period is not far off when we may defy material injury from external annoyance; when we may take such an attitude as will cause the neutrality we may at any time resolve upon to be scrupulously respected; when belligerent nations, under the impossibility of making acquisitions upon us, will not lightly hazard the giving us provocation; when we may choose peace or war, as our interest guided by justice shall counsel.

Why forgo the advantages of so peculiar a situation? Why quit our own to stand upon foreign ground? Why, by interweaving our destiny with that of any part of Europe, entangle our peace and prosperity in the toils of European ambition, rivalship, interest, humor, or caprice?

It is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world—so far, I mean, as we are now at liberty to do it, for let me not be understood as capable of patronizing infidelity to existing engagements (I hold the maxim no less applicable to public than to private affairs, that honesty is always the best policy)—I repeat it therefore, let those engagements be observed in their genuine sense. But in my opinion it is unnecessary and would be unwise to extend them.

Taking care always to keep ourselves, by suitable establishments, on a respectably defensive posture, we may safely trust to temporary alliances for extraordinary emergencies.

Harmony, liberal intercourse with all nations, are recommended by policy, humanity, and interest. But even our commercial policy should hold an equal and impartial hand; neither seeking nor granting exclusive favors or preferences; consulting the natural course of things; diffusing and diversifying by gentle means the streams of commerce but forcing nothing; establishing with powers so disposed—in order to give to trade a stable course, to define the rights of our merchants, and to enable the government to support them—conventional rules of intercourse, the best that present circumstances and mutual opinion will permit, but temporary, and liable to be from time to time abandoned or varied, as experience and circumstances shall dictate; constantly keeping in view, that it is folly in one nation to look for disinterested favors from another—that it must pay with a portion of its independence for whatever it may accept under that character—that by such acceptance it may place itself in the condition of having given equivalents for nominal favors and yet of being reproached with ingratitude for not giving more. There can be no great-

er error than to expect or calculate upon real favors from nation to nation. It is an illusion which experience must cure, which a just pride ought to discard.

In offering to you, my countrymen, these counsels of an old and affectionate friend, I dare not hope they will make the strong and lasting impression I could wish—that they will control the usual current of the passions or prevent our nation from running the course which has hitherto marked the destiny of nations. But if I may even flatter myself that they may be productive of some partial benefit, some occasional good, that they may now and then recur to moderate the fury of party spirit, to warn against the mischiefs of foreign intrigue, to guard against the impostures of pretended patriotism—this hope will be a full recompense for the solicitude for your welfare by which they have been dictated.

How far in the discharge of my official duties I have been guided by the principles which have been delineated, the public records and other evidences of my conduct must witness to you and to the world. To myself, the assurance of my own conscience is that I have at least believed myself to be guided by them.

In relation to the still subsisting war in Europe, my proclamation of the 22d of April 1793 is the index to my plan. Sanctioned by your approving voice and by that of your representatives in both houses of Congress, the spirit of that measure has continually governed me, uninfluenced by any attempts to deter or divert me from it.

After deliberate examination with the aid of the best lights I could obtain, I was well satisfied that our country, under all the circumstances of the case, had a right to take—and was bound in duty and interest to take—a neutral position. Having taken it, I determined, as far as should depend upon me, to maintain it with moderation, perseverance, and firmness.

The considerations which respect the right to hold this conduct it is not necessary on this occasion to detail. I will only observe that, according to my understanding of the matter, that right, so far from being denied by any of the belligerent powers, has been virtually admitted by all.

The duty of holding a neutral conduct may be inferred, without anything more, from the obligation which justice and humanity impose on every nation, in cases in which it is free to act, to maintain inviolate the relations of peace and amity towards other nations.

The inducements of interest for observing that conduct will best be referred to your own reflections and experience. With me, a predominant motive has been to endeavor to gain time to our country to settle and mature its yet recent institutions and to progress without interruption to that degree of strength and consistency which is necessary to give it, humanly speaking, the command of its own fortunes.

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/

11 is outrageous; it is un-American; it is insulting to every 9/11 first responder, survivor, and family.

So, today, I sent a letter, with Senator GILLIBRAND, to Secretary Kennedy, urging him to immediately reverse the cuts that impacted the World Trade Center Health Program. Donald Trump, Secretary Kennedy, and DOGE have betrayed our sacred promise to never, never forget.

And what is the point of these cruel cuts? So Donald Trump and DOGE can give their billionaire buddies a tax break and have the 9/11 families pay the cost.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, in 1938, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain touted the now-infamous Munich Agreement as a way to stave off Hitler's Nazi Germany. Prime Minister Chamberlain claimed it would "secure peace in our time." A year later, Hitler invaded Poland and triggered World War II, a devastating conflict that left Europe in ruins and millions dead and displaced.

Over time, Chamberlain's name became synonymous with the word "appeasement" for good reason. You see, while Chamberlain's goal of peace may have been honorable, he was dangerously naive about the human nature of a tyrant in Germany who was bent on territorial ambition, pursuits that could only be thwarted with a show of strength. Well, President Trump's "Art of the Deal" opening negotiation with Vladimir Putin has the same odor of appeasement.

Last week, Donald Trump announced he was ready to make a deal with Russian President Putin over Ukraine while, apparently, ignoring Ukraine's key demands for peace. In fact, Trump and his fledgling Defense Secretary publicly gave away huge concessions at the start, signaling they would not insist on a return to Ukraine's sovereign 2014 borders or future NATO membership. It is also not clear from the administration's bewildering Munich Security Conference's remarks if President Trump plans to even include Ukraine or our European allies in the negotiations for the future of Ukraine.

It is no wonder that, in the United Kingdom, where they remember Chamberlain's folly all too well, Donald Trump's early pronouncements were lambasted for their misreading of history by leaders across the political spectrum. Let me share some of the things that have been said by our ally United Kingdom about Trump's opening bid to end the war in Ukraine.

One member of Parliament lamented that the West now "might be facing the worst betrayal of a European ally since Poland in 1945."

And another said:

Surely, in Europe, we understand that no matter what we give Vladimir Putin, he is always going to want more.

And one final member of Parliament, in a refrain, I think, that best summarizes the situation, said:

[There] is less the Art of the Deal and more a charter for appeasement.

President Trump has always had a strange affinity for autocrats and dictators, a troubling character weakness for the leader of the free world to have. He almost seems to want their adoration and admiration, especially compared to the clear-eyed leadership of previous leaders even on the Republican side, like Ronald Reagan, who knew how to deal with the Soviets. But there are real consequences to Trump's autocratic liaisons for America and allied security, ones that Republicans in the Senate ought to take pretty seriously. His crazy rants about Greenland, Canada as the 51st State, Panama, and the so-called Gulf of Mexico may be amusing to some, including himself, but it certainly does not portend well for a foreign policy of the United States. Simply caving in to Putin and walking away from Ukraine—just as Chamberlain did to Hitler—is an invitation for more confrontations in the future.

Before I was elected to the House of Representatives in the 1970s, I was a guest of an organization known as the American Council of Young Political Leaders, ACYPL. They take young men and women who are aspiring to public office on trips to various parts of the world where you spend an extra amount of time to come to understand the situation. I was lucky. I had an opportunity to visit the Soviet Union in the worst Cold War atmosphere and environment—more than 2½ weeks in the Soviet Union moving from one city to the other and seeing what Soviet communism looked like.

During the course of that trip, we visited what was then the Soviet Republic of Lithuania. It had a personal appeal to me for family reasons. My mother was born in Lithuania and was an immigrant to the United States at the age of 2. I had never been there before, and I was shocked by what I saw. This once great country had become a vassal of the Soviet state, and the poor people there were struggling to maintain the most basic of freedoms. Lucky for me, a few years later, I was elected to Congress, serving first in the House and now in the Senate, and I have been able to see a dramatic rebirth of Lithuania.

Of course, at the end of the Soviet Union, they had their chance and fought for democracy. They gave lives and blood for that purpose, but it worked. They won their freedom, their independence.

Lithuania is not a big country with a big military budget. It is a small nation with a good military but certainly no match for anyone like Russia today. They have been concerned ever since that the day would come when Russia would reassert its ownership of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. So that is why they became members of NATO.

And what a celebration that brought on to realize, finally, that they were allies of the United States and had a NATO treaty to back them up, to protect them.

The same is true of Poland. Of course, Poland means a lot to Chicago and Illinois, and they are worried about the same fate: Now having won their independence, will they see it threatened by Russia in the future?

And so this decision by President Trump to reach out directly to Putin and negotiate is worrisome to me in many respects. First, what does it say if the NATO alliance, an alliance which used to bring together some of the greatest nations in the world to stand by their side one by one and protect the future of their country—President Trump is not even engaging the NATO alliance in this conversation about the future of Ukraine. In fact, he is hardly engaging Ukraine in this conversation.

I worry about where this is going to lead. I hope it leads to peace in Ukraine, the right kind of peace that we can count on. And I hope that the people of that country, who have shown such extraordinary courage with the support of the United States and NATO up until now, realize that we are still committed to the values that they value as well. That is in our future.

But I worry the opposite will occur, that President Trump will give in to Putin and his demands and Putin will then target the Baltics, Poland—and I don't know where—in his next assault on sovereignty. That is the reality of the moment.

NOMINATION OF KASHYAP PATEL

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, on a separate topic, later this week, Senate Republicans have scheduled a vote on the confirmation of Kash Patel, President Trump's nominee for FBI Director. It is a 10-year appointment, unusual by Senate standards, but it was designed to be 10 years so it would be depoliticized.

It is unfortunate that the Republicans are moving ahead despite the many problems with Mr. Patel's record. Mr. Patel has no experience—none—in administration and management, particularly of an organization like the FBI that has 38,000 agents in place—38,000. It is the premier criminal investigative Agency in our country, perhaps the world.

After meeting with Mr. Patel and reviewing his record and questioning him under oath at his hearing, I am deeply concerned about his fitness to serve as FBI Director. He has neither the experience, the judgment, nor the temperament to lead the FBI.

My Senate Republican colleagues, sadly, are willfully ignoring myriad red flags about Mr. Patel, especially his recurring instinct to threaten retribution against his political enemies and President Trump's perceived enemies. This is an extremely dangerous characteristic for someone who seeks to

lead the Nation's most powerful domestic investigative Agency for the next 10 years.

Mr. Patel, on day one, plans to—I quote him directly. He said this, now. On day one, as Director of the FBI, he plans to “shut down the FBI Hoover Building and reopen it the next day as a museum of the deep State.”

He even wrote a book on the subject that I punished myself by requiring that I read it from cover to cover to understand exactly what this man believed. He has peddled outrageous conspiracy theories that benefit President Trump, claiming that January 6, the assault on the Capitol, the insurrectionist assault, was “never an insurrection” and that the FBI—get this; this is Kash Patel—the FBI was “planning January 6 for a year.”

Where is this man coming up with these wild theories? And, incidentally, he compiled an enemies list and published it in the back of his book—60 names—“members of the . . . deep State,” which includes distinguished public servants from both political parties. Patel named former Attorneys General Bill Barr and Merrick Garland, former FBI Directors Robert Mueller and Chris Wray as the so-called members of the deep State, whatever that may be.

And he has even produced and sold recordings of a song—understand this for a moment: 1,600 people prosecuted for assaulting law enforcement officials here in this Capitol Building, who were working, as they are at this very moment, to keep us safe and our visitors safe.

What did Patel decide to do? He decided to assemble a choir of the January 6 individuals who were prosecuted. Then he was involved in making a recording of a patriotic song that these prisoners were singing, and then he was selling this recording and playing it at the rallies for President Trump.

I am not making this up, ladies and gentlemen. This is exactly what this man, who wants to head the Federal Bureau of Investigation, was doing and which he denied before our hearing under oath.

He has even produced these recordings and called the choir, the January 6 prisoners, political prisoners.

Let me take one example of a so-called political prisoner. Guy Reffitt was sentenced to 87 months in prison for his role in the January 6 assault on the Capitol. His 19-year-old son Jackson turned him in to law enforcement after the attack on the Capitol, despite Reffitt's threats to shoot his son and his son's sister if they reported him to authorities—a father threatening to kill his son and daughter if they turned him in.

After being pardoned, Guy Reffitt decided to come back to the Capitol and attend Kash Patel's confirmation hearing. He posted on social media afterward:

Present and in support of @Kash_Patel as the leftist commies continue to spew lies,

misinformation and disinformation. My man Klean House Kash.

This man, who brought a weapon into the Capitol, was prosecuted for that, serving time, given a complete pardon by President Trump, then comes back to the Capitol to attend the hearings and cheer on Kash Patel's nomination for Director of the FBI.

Before even being confirmed as FBI Director, Mr. Patel is already seeking retribution on behalf of President Trump, despite Patel's status as a private citizen. Multiple whistleblowers have disclosed highly credible information to my staff indicating that Mr. Patel has personally directed the ongoing purge of senior law enforcement officials at the FBI. Senior leaders with, collectively, hundreds of years of experience have been forced out at the FBI, creating a leadership vacuum.

Mr. President, this has never happened in the history of the United States and the history of the FBI, that a new President would come into office and decide to clean the ranks of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. This has been an apolitical Agency. There is only one political appointee to the FBI: the Director. All the others are professionals who have been dedicating their lives to law enforcement for years.

Senior leaders who have shown their dedication to the United States are now being accused of suspect. Suspect for what? They were engaged in the investigation of the January 6 assault on the U.S. Capitol, an assault which I witnessed at this desk as I watched the Secret Service agents pull the Vice President from that chair and take him out of the Chamber as this mob assaulted the Capitol. It was real. In the FBI's long history, this has never happened before. Never.

Keep in mind: The Director, the only appointee of the FBI, and the leaders have been forced out despite their career commitment to law enforcement. This purge has dramatically weakened the FBI's ability to protect the country from national security threats, and it has made America less safe.

If these whistleblower allegations are true, that Kash Patel, as a private citizen, has been orchestrating the purging of the ranks at the FBI because of political loyalty questions, I will tell you that he came dangerously close to perjuring himself during his nomination hearing when asked about the possible firings of the FBI officials and he answered under oath “I don't know what's going on right now” at the FBI.

Mr. President, we are told that is not true; he was personally involved in it, despite the fact that he said the opposite under oath before our committee.

Mr. Patel has been open about his plans to dismantle the FBI and seek retribution against his and President Trump's enemies. His directives as a private citizen have already thrown the Bureau into absolute chaos.

Mr. Patel's recent actions and testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee confirm my belief that he

is dangerous, inexperienced, and he has been dishonest in portraying his role in what is happening at the FBI. It will be a political and national security disaster if he is confirmed.

And let me take it to a personal level. The FBI Agents Association came to me with this and talked about the very real personal and family concerns of dedicated FBI agents. They are fearful that an environment and climate has been created which puts their own safety in question.

Let me give you an example of another one of these 1,600 people who were prosecuted for the assault on the Capitol: Edward Kelley, convicted of assaulting law enforcement and other felony and misdemeanor offenses related to his conduct on January 6. The men and women who came in and were beating on the law enforcement officials who protect this Capitol, Kelley was one of them.

As I said, he was convicted, scheduled to be sentenced this April, until he was pardoned by President Trump last month. While awaiting trial on his January 6-related charges, Kelley was separately charged and convicted in his home State of Tennessee of conspiracy to murder law enforcement, including FBI agents and employees who participated in the investigation of his insurrectionist conduct.

Kelley's Tennessee murder conspiracy case remains pending sentencing, but Kelley argues that the case is related to his Washington, DC, charges and thus covered by President Trump's blanket pardon.

Kelley is a perfect example of the danger of publicly releasing the names of FBI agents who worked on January 6 cases, and there were some 5,000 employees of the FBI and the Department of Justice who were engaged in that. If we value these men and women who risk their lives every day for the safety of the United States, we cannot allow Kash Patel to become Director of that Agency, and we cannot run the risk that he will use their names publicly, as he has in his book, identifying his enemies list to the detriment of these agents and their families. We owe it to them to stand by them, as they have stood by us.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to talk about the nomination of the President's nominee to run the Department of Commerce, an Agency that is charged with a broad mission and a lot of complex issues that affect many sectors of our economy.

The next Secretary of Commerce will have to deal with a wide-ranging, growing list of issues, from trade and export controls, expanding broadband, weather forecasting, patent issues, export controls on AI, and figuring out some of the most thorny issues related to how we move our country forward, generally, in commerce.

So it is fair to say that if the Commerce Secretary doesn't get it right, the American people and our American economy pay the price. Unfortunately, I believe that Howard Lutnick, the President's nominee, isn't the right person for this job at this point in time.

Now, Mr. Lutnick and the President have made it very clear that one of Mr. Lutnick's key responsibilities will be for trade policy and the tariff policies that the President supports.

In my conversations with Mr. Lutnick and before his Commerce Committee hearing, he made it very clear that he intends to be very enthusiastic about the President's plans for tariffs.

When he talked about tariffs, I don't know if he knew how much the U.S. economy was going to start paying the price. Talking to people throughout my State, I can tell you it is not lost on us, being a border State with Canada, how much this might affect us in oil and gas, in lumber, electric power, and many other issues of economic activity.

Mr. Lutnick was for, as the President said, the expanded taxes on imported steel and aluminum and across the board tariffs on China. As a result, China announced retaliatory tariffs, and other countries also promised to retaliate, too.

That is why, when the Seattle Times ran just recently this story about the tariffs, I really understood exactly how Washington businesses were feeling. That they know that one, this creates uncertainty, and they know that it raises costs.

Now, I come from one of the most trade dependent States in the Nation. That is because we grow a lot of agriculture products that go to overseas markets, we make airplanes that go to a lot of overseas markets, we have a lot of software and software development. So the majority of companies and the majority of employees in our State basically are involved in things related to making and growing U.S. products that are shipped to overseas markets.

My constituents want to see inflation come down, and they want us to lower costs, not increase them. Now that President Trump is teasing out even more tariffs in the coming days on autos, pharmaceuticals, and semiconductors, it is going to drive up costs for consumers.

Another newspaper in my State, the Spokesman-Review, hardly a liberal bastion in the State of Washington, also did a pretty big story about the trade and tariffs, and what they put in a headline: "Trump and Inflation."

I can tell you this, we can't afford inflation. We want prices to come down. Whether that is on housing or whether that is on pharmaceuticals or whether that is on food prices, we know that tariffs can increase prices.

So the Commerce Secretary, who is going to be involved in driving and responsible for this tariff impact, is not someone I want to see in this job. The

Secretary of Commerce's job is to expand exports. I think with 95 percent of consumers living outside the United States, it is time to try to reach a process where we can get more products into those markets.

I am also very concerned about how America maintains our competitiveness in an international marketplace if things are more expensive, particularly manufacturing. My State has been a great beneficiary of a renaissance in manufacturing for a whole lot of reasons, but because of the CHIPS and Science Act, the infrastructure bill, and the IRA bill. And all of those gave people a chance to bring supply chains back to the United States, start growing middle-class jobs in the United States of America again, and lowering costs.

That is why we worked so hard on the CHIPS and Science Act, something that was voted on here in a bipartisan fashion, led by then-Commerce Secretary Raimondo, in a process that ultimately awarded billions of dollars to advance the domestic semiconductor manufacturing industry here—in total, negotiating 32 deals across 22 States.

So I know that the Presiding Officer knows all about this as a member of the Commerce Committee, but there are many States that were the beneficiaries of these investments and are helping us bring even more of the domestic supply chain back to the United States.

We learned during the chips crisis that even the cost of a used car went up \$2,000. That is because chips were at a shortage, car industries, trucking industries couldn't even get enough chips to make and ship cars, and then the consequence was even used cars went up \$2,000.

So we don't want to recreate that again. We want a Commerce Secretary who is going to fight for the CHIPS and Science investment that has already been made in the electronic manufacturing process in the United States and keep the semiconductor industry right here.

But unfortunately, Mr. Lutnick, before the committee, would not commit to standing by the commitments of the term sheets the Department of Commerce has already signed.

In fact, before he has even been confirmed, Reuters last week said the administration started telling companies that they might even revisit these agreements that have been signed. So let me be clear, these are awards to critical States like Texas, New York, Ohio, Arizona, and Pennsylvania, and now, the President is saying he is going to revisit those signed contracts.

Delaying these projects also means we are delaying bringing the supply chain back to the United States, that we are making it harder for the United States to be competitive in an industry that is critical for us to lead, not just on the most advanced chips, but continuing in the manufacturing of semiconductors overall.

In his Commerce Committee nomination, Mr. Lutnick also heard from members of both sides of the aisle about their support for the science part of the CHIPS and Science Act. These are amazing initiatives that brought coalitions of people together to catalyze new economic engines, in some cases in the most rural parts of the United States. Why? Because it is so expensive to do innovation in Silicon Valley, in Boston, and even in some parts of my State.

So the whole point was to continue to make investments in test bedding and scaling technology, so the United States would not lose out. And these awards have been made, but Mr. Lutnick also refused to commit to honoring those agreements and putting many of those issues at question.

I know my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will continue to push for these investments. But today's nominee, if he is confirmed, is also going to be overseeing the Bureau of Industry and Security, which implements export controls and dual-use technology, and have both commercial and military proliferation applications.

That means you couldn't find a person whose day job is going to be more serious on export controls than Mr. Lutnick's. And yet, Mr. Lutnick, in the conversations that we had before the committee, I don't believe gave the committee a full understanding of what he was going to do to protect these interests.

In fact, the administration has already almost abandoned something called the AI Safety Institute, which is widely supported, literally by practicably everybody in the AI sector, and would help us remain a leader. This is the kind of standards that we would expect to be set and the kind of controls that we would hope would help the United States not have some vital technology exported outside the United States.

But we also questioned Mr. Lutnick on his background with stablecoin. Mr. Lutnick and the stablecoin that he has been involved in has been considered a very good tool for the cryptocurrency system, but a target of very illicit funds. Some estimates are that Tether accounts for as much as 60 percent of billions of dollars of illicit activities, by people like North Korea, Southeast Asia, Mexican fentanyl pushers, cybercriminals—and all because of stablecoin.

Now, Mr. Lutnick has an incredible personal story, losing his parents at a very young age and also the tragedy that befell Cantor Fitzgerald when terrorists struck.

So I know that Mr. Lutnick knows about terrorist organizations and has probably been affected for the rest of his life over that tragedy. But in the committee, when we were trying to get him to understand why we in the Federal Government put on sanctions against countries and we want to hear a Commerce Secretary say, "We agree

with those sanctions, we are going to fight for those sanctions, we are going to fight anybody who tries to get around those sanctions.”

We asked Mr. Lutnick about ways to address that fact that maybe some large amount, \$19 billion of Tether's funds, might be illegal, illicit transactions, he said he thought that in the future, a software AI solution would help stop that.

Well, I was hoping that Mr. Lutnick would be more aggressive than that. I would hope that he would help the United States in moving on something today that would help give more transparency in the cryptocurrency market. I support, as the Presiding Officer does, moving forward on cryptocurrencies. But I also believe that there should be some transparency and certainly should be a fight against people who use that for illicit activities.

I also asked Mr. Lutnick something about the U.S. sovereign debt futures, something that I know that he was involved in as it related to the Chicago Mercantile Exchange and putting up a competitive bid. It was a notion of, how do we settle futures? How do we in the United States—if Mr. Lutnick's future company was doing business with the London Exchange, settle any kind of—let's say we don't raise the debt ceiling and we had a crisis here, what would the United States do? Not unsimilar to what we did in 2009 after the 2008, basically, recession of our economy.

These similar questions came up in the Finance Committee, and I found that the Treasury nominee before the committee answered those questions correctly. But Mr. Lutnick said that he still thought that his idea of settling with a foreign country, which I think puts the United States second, above England, is not something I would be willing to do, but I think he was willing to continue to move forward.

So those things, an answer about how we will catch up with the money laundering in the future with an AI solution, and how the settling on the foreign exchange, also left me with some concerns. But when we come to NOAA, which is 60 percent of the Commerce budget, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, when asked for the record, “Should NOAA be dismantled, as called for in Project 2025?” Mr. Lutnick would only say he will figure it out once he is confirmed.

We needed a bigger commitment to NOAA. NOAA already supplies a big, important aspect of what we deal with, with weather forecasting, tracking extreme weather, hurricanes, wildfires, managing our fisheries, operating ships that conduct important charting for national security. Mr. Lutnick gave very tepid support for NOAA.

With 60 percent of the budget and so much now at stake, as the White House every day says they are going to cut staffing and cut programs, Congress wants to be assured that a nominee is going to fight for the Agency that he is

there to represent, that he is there to fight for their core mission that they provide in important services.

So I am urging my colleagues to not support this nominee and hope that we all can work together to continue to say how important NOAA's management of our fisheries are, how important it is to protect U.S. fishermen from Russian and Chinese illegal fishing and deception and trade practices that are hurting our consumers, and protect accurate weather forecasting for all Americans.

Now is our chance to stand up for these essential services; your constituents depend on it.

I thank the President and—oh, I would, just one more thing.

The aviation news that continues to roll out, I want to give my thoughts and prayers to those who have been affected by the Minneapolis to Canada flight for Delta Airlines.

We have now had the DCA incident and this incident and obviously one in Philadelphia. I would just say this: Now is not the time to cut FAA staffing. Now is the time to ask questions about what can we do to further enhance aviation safety. What can we all do, knowing that we have suffered from a door plug accident and from two MAX plane crashes.

And while we passed legislation to address those MAX crashes, we still have work to do. And we passed an FAA 5-year reauthorization that helped us get more air traffic controllers.

It is critically clear to me that we need these air traffic controllers, and so we have to make these investments. We should be working together, right now, on aviation. The most important thing? Let's work together for the benefit of the flying public to come up with the best solutions that we can implement in aviation safety.

Taking a broad brush and just cutting people out of the FAA, when oftentimes they are the people that are helping you get that safety, is not what we should be doing right now.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. LUMMIS). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam 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 KASHYAP PATEL

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, today, we are going to take a procedural vote on Kash Patel's nomination to be Director of the FBI. I want to take a few minutes to express my support for his nomination and to urge my Democratic colleagues to consider voting for this nomination.

Mr. Patel's resume doesn't look like a normal one for an FBI Director, but

everybody knows in this Congress and maybe in the United States that we are not living in normal times. As I have exposed through my oversight work, the FBI has been infected by politicalization, and this storied Agency has been weaponized against political opponents.

Mr. Patel is the right man at the right time. His career has been a study in fighting for unpopular but righteous causes, exposing corruption, and putting America first. Mr. Patel has served as a public defender, a counterterrorism prosecutor under President Obama, and a House staffer.

In the House, he worked to expose Crossfire Hurricane as a political hit job that was based on discredited information paid for—would you believe it?—by the Democratic National Committee and the Clinton campaign.

After exposing the Russiagate scandal in Congress, Mr. Patel then went on to serve as Senior Director of Counterterrorism at the National Security Council, Deputy Director of National Intelligence, and Chief of Staff to the Acting Secretary of Defense.

He has fought for transparency and accountability in government. I have fought for this in Congress for decades. That is the right approach because everybody knows that more transparency in government brings accountability by those of us serving in the government. In other words, the public business should be public.

Because of his efforts in exposing corruption, Mr. Patel has been relentlessly attacked, as we have seen over the last 2 months. These smears began long before his confirmation hearing. I understand why he has been targeted in this way. He exposed a threat to the existing system—a system that has retaliated against whistleblowers, engaged in unprecedented lawfare against the President and the American people, and obstructed congressional oversight. Mr. Patel will end these abuses. He will restore the FBI to its essential mission of keeping Americans safe.

Mr. Patel's vision for a new FBI is why he has been endorsed by organizations representing more than 680,000 law enforcement officers and by dozens of former and current FBI agents, State attorneys general, and U.S. attorneys. They trust Mr. Patel, and we should as well.

I urge all of my colleagues to support Mr. Patel's nomination.

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

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION—Motion to Proceed

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 23.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

VOTE ON MOTION

Mr. DURBIN. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER), the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN), the Senator from Mississippi (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), and the Senator from Alaska (Mr. SULLIVAN).

Further, if present and voting: the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER) and the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) are necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 48, nays 45, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 56 Leg.]

YEAS—48

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

NAYS—45

Alsobrooks	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Baldwin	Hirono	Sanders
Bennet	Kaine	Schatz
Blumenthal	Kelly	Schiff
Blunt Rochester	Kim	Schumer
Cantwell	King	Shaheen
Coons	Klobuchar	Slotkin
Cortez Masto	Luján	Smith
Duckworth	Markey	Van Hollen
Durbin	Merkley	Warner
Fetterman	Murphy	Warnock
Gallo	Murray	Warren
Gillibrand	Ossoff	Welch
Hassan	Padilla	Whitehouse
Heinrich	Reed	Wyden

NOT VOTING—7

Booker	Hyde-Smith	Sullivan
Cramer	Moran	
Hoeven	Peters	

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Kashyap Patel, of Nevada, to be Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation for a term of ten years.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. THUNE. I send a cloture motion to the desk.

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

The senior assistant 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. 23, Kashyap Patel, of Nevada, to be Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation for a term of ten years.

John Thune, John R. Curtis, Steve Daines, Tim Sheehy, Marsha Blackburn, Eric Schmitt, John Boozman, James E. Risch, Mike Crapo, Tommy Tuberville, Mike Rounds, Roger F. Wicker, Jim Justice, Markwayne Mullin, John Barrasso, Cindy Hyde-Smith, James Lankford.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I ask that the Senate execute the order of February 13 in relation to the Lutnick nomination.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Howard Lutnick, of New York, to be Secretary of Commerce.

VOTE ON LUTNICK NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Lutnick nomination?

Ms. SMITH. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) and the Senator from Alaska (Mr. SULLIVAN).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER) and the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) are necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 51, nays 45, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 57 Ex.]

YEAS—51

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

NAYS—45

Alsobrooks	Duckworth	Hirono
Baldwin	Durbin	Kaine
Bennet	Fetterman	Kelly
Blumenthal	Gallo	Kim
Blunt Rochester	Gillibrand	King
Cantwell	Hassan	Klobuchar
Coons	Heinrich	Luján
Cortez Masto	Hickenlooper	Markey

Merkley
Murphy
Murray
Ossoff
Padilla
Reed
Rosen

Sanders
Schatz
Schiff
Schumer
Shaheen
Slotkin
Smith

Van Hollen
Warner
Warnock
Warren
Welch
Whitehouse
Wyden

NOT VOTING—4

Booker	Peters
Moran	Sullivan

The nomination was confirmed.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that with respect to the Lutnick nomination, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion to proceed.

The motion was agreed to.

SETTING FORTH THE CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET FOR THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025 AND SETTING FORTH THE APPROPRIATE BUDGETARY LEVELS FOR FISCAL YEARS 2026 THROUGH 2034—Motion to Proceed

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 13, S. Con Res. 7.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

Mr. DURBIN. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

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 Kansas (Mr. MORAN) and the Senator from Alaska (Mr. SULLIVAN).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER) is necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 50, nays 47, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 58 Leg.]

YEAS—50

Banks	Cruz	Justice
Barrasso	Curtis	Kennedy
Blackburn	Daines	Lankford
Boozman	Ernst	Lee
Britt	Fischer	Lummis
Budd	Graham	Marshall
Capito	Grassley	McConnell
Cassidy	Hagerty	McCormick
Collins	Hawley	Moody
Cornyn	Hoeven	Moreno
Cotton	Husted	Mullin
Cramer	Hyde-Smith	Murkowski
Crapo	Johnson	Ricketts

Risch	Scott (SC)	Tuberville
Rounds	Sheehy	Wicker
Schmitt	Thune	Young
Scott (FL)	Tillis	

NAYS—47

Alsobrooks	Hirono	Rosen
Baldwin	Kaine	Sanders
Bennet	Kelly	Schatz
Blumenthal	Kim	Schiff
Blunt Rochester	King	Schumer
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Coons	Lujan	Slotkin
Cortez Masto	Markey	Smith
Duckworth	Merkley	Van Hollen
Durbin	Murphy	Warner
Fetterman	Murray	Warnock
Gallago	Ossoff	Warren
Gillibrand	Padilla	Welch
Hassan	Paul	Whitehouse
Heinrich	Peters	Wyden
Hickenlooper	Reed	

NOT VOTING—3

Booker	Moran	Sullivan
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The motion was agreed to.

SETTING FORTH THE CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET FOR THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025 AND SETTING FORTH THE APPROPRIATE BUDGETARY LEVELS FOR FISCAL YEARS 2026 THROUGH 2034

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the concurrent resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 7) setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2025 and setting forth the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2026 through 2034.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

PUBLIC BROADCASTING

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, with me today is my colleague from my office Mr. John Lowery, and I appreciate his help.

Last week, I spoke a few minutes about the Corporation for Public Broadcasting—we called it the CPB—and the Public Broadcasting Service—most people know what that is, PBS—and the National Public Radio, which most people know is NPR.

And I am not going to repeat everything I said last week, but I do want to revise and extend my remarks.

The U.S. Congress created the Corporation for Public Broadcasting back in the sixties, 1967, I think. Those were very different times. There was no internet. There was no Facebook. There was no Twitter. There was no cable TV. There were no podcasts. There were basically a handful, maybe a few more, of radio stations throughout America. And the television was still pretty new. There were three main television stations with local affiliates.

And many Americans, particularly in rural areas, didn't have access to radio and television for their news because that is all there was. I remember those days.

And so Congress decided to start providing money for what it called, at that time, public broadcasting, to make sure that everybody had access to news, radio, and television, even if they didn't live near a big city.

And Congress intended that that news be news, factually based. Now, those were the days in America of true journalism. I remember them, perhaps the Presiding Officer does too.

Those were not the days that we experience today, opinion journalism, where young journalists are taught to report on who, what, when, where, how, and their opinion. Those were days when the news was really the news, and it was fair and balanced.

So the U.S. Congress created the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. CPB still exists, and here is its relationship—CPB's relationship—to NPR and PBS. We give CPB, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, about half a billion dollars a year, a lot of money.

And the Corporation for Public Broadcasting turns around and picks certain local television and radio stations and gives most of that money to them.

And then those local television and radio stations, the chosen few that get money from the American taxpayer through the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, buy programming and content from two other organizations. If they are a radio station, they buy that from NPR, and if they are a television station, they buy that content from PBS.

So up here you have got Corporation for Public Broadcasting. The American taxpayer, through Congress, gives them a half a billion dollars a year. That money flows down to certain select local television and radio stations, and those local television and radio stations then buy content from NPR, if they are a radio station, or PBS, if they are a TV station, which were loosely affiliated with the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Since this scheme was established, the American taxpayer has given all of these entities about—oh, I don't know—\$14.5 billion, \$14.5 billion. That would be enough to build 2,700 miles of paved roads throughout America. And I based that on—the roads I am talking about are not gavel roads—regular paved roads, 10 feet each lane, actually 12 feet each lane, with a 3-foot shoulder on each side.

But instead of building 2,700 miles of roads in our rural areas and in urban areas that need infrastructure, we have decided to give this money to CPB, which gives it to the local stations, which gives it to PBS and NPR.

I mentioned the local stations. Only a select few local stations get this taxpayer money. And in my State, we have over 500 radio stations. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting, in its unfettered discretion, only picks seven to give the money to. The other 493 get nothing.

We have over 150 TV stations in Louisiana. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting only gives the taxpayer money for 3 of them, so 147 get nothing.

Now, I probably wouldn't object to this if the Corporation for Public

Broadcasting and NPR—National Public Radio is what I am referring to, of course—and PBS had been consistent with its original mission, which is to report factually the news to the American people.

The government doesn't need to subsidize the media anymore because the world has changed. Ninety-seven percent of the people in America have the internet, but I still probably wouldn't object that much if the reporting by these entities were fair and balanced. But it is not.

No fairminded person in America can look at this programming and believe that it is unbiased. It is decidedly prejudiced in favor of one point of view. That is not just my opinion. I think most Americans would agree with that because most Americans see the headlines that are produced by these three entities.

I talked about some last week. This is what Americans' taxpayer money is going to, to provide.

Here are just some headlines from NPR. I mentioned these last week. I won't belabor them.

"Michael Avenatti: A Profile Of The Media-Savvy Attorney."

This is NPR. They love Michael Avenatti, who of course is in jail today. He is a crook. But NPR loved him because he was anti-Republican, and he was anti-President Trump.

NPR published another article:

"How racism became a marketing tool for country music."

Now, you don't have to be Euclid to see the implication here that country music is racist, according to NPR. I don't think any fairminded person would call that factual or fair and balanced.

Here is another headline from NPR:

"Donald Trump's Long Embrace of Vladimir Putin."

I also talked last week about a few other headlines from NPR.

Here is one:

"Monuments And Teams Have Changed Names As America Reckons With Racism. Birds Are Next."

That is what your tax dollars paid for.

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

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

No fairminded person with an IQ above a single-cell organism would conclude that this is anything but biased to certain points of view.

And there are more. I could do this all night, but I am not.

Here are some more headlines from NPR:

"'There is no neutral': 'Nice White People' Can Still Be Complicit In A Racist Society."

That is what your tax dollars paid for.

Another one:

"Ibram X. Kendi Says No One is 'Not Racist'. So What Should We Do?'"

Another one:

"How [artificial intelligence] could perpetuate racism, sexism, and other biases in society."

Another:

"Scientists Debunk Lab Accident Theory of Pandemic Emergence."

Here is another one:

"As Trump Pushes Theory of Virus Origins, Some See Parallels In Lead-Up to Iraq War."

Your tax dollars at work.

"As U.S. Confronts Russia, Trump's Admiration Of Putin Is Consistent."

Another headline from NPR:

"The History of Policing And Race In The U.S. Are Deeply Intertwined."

Another:

"After Biden's debate performance, the presidential race is unchanged."

This was the debate performance that President Biden gave after which he got out of the race.

If you believe that headline, you believe in the tooth fairy and the Easter Bunny and that Jimmy Hoffa died of natural causes, but that is what NPR reported with your tax dollars.

Here is more:

"Democracy on Trial, Part One: A Blueprint For the Case Against Trump."

Is that fair and balanced? That is from PBS.

"Racism in the Era of Trump: An Oral History."

Another headline, January 13, 2020.

Another, this one is really special:

"'A Serial Liar': How Sarah Palin Ushered in the 'Post-Truth' Political Era in Which Trump Has Thrived."

Now, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and NPR and PBS have the right, whether I like it or not or whether you like it or not or whether Americans like it or not to publish these articles and to broadcast this news. That is the First Amendment, but they don't have the right to do it with taxpayer money.

At least half of America would look at these headlines and be offended. They would be offended, first, because they would—really for three reasons: No. 1, they disagree with opinion journalism; No. 2, they would disagree with the headline; and, No. 3, they would disagree with the fact that these headlines are not fair. They are not objective. They are obviously slanted to one point of view, and they are using taxpayer money.

If someone introduced a bill tomorrow—I will just pick a publication—to prohibit the New York Times, I would vote against that bill and argue against it. If someone introduced a bill to get rid of FOX News, I would have the same position. If someone introduced a bill to get rid of the Washington Post, that would be my position as well. Whether I agree with those media outlets or not, we have a First Amendment that we cherish, and I am rather fond of the Constitution.

But if somebody introduced a bill to give money to CNN, taxpayer money to CNN or to the New York Times or to FOX News, I would oppose that as well.

This is simply wrong, and we are spending half a billion dollars a year, \$14.5 billion over time, to give to people at the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and NPR and NPS to participate in opinion journalism, which they are entitled to do. But they can't do it on the taxpayer dime. They are doing it on the taxpayer dime, but they shouldn't be able to.

I would also point out that the folks at PBS and NPR and PBS are doing pretty well for themselves. NPR just bought a \$201 million office space just up the road from the Capitol—\$200 million. It came from the American taxpayers so they could publish this stuff.

NPR pays its hosts as much as \$532,000 a year, taxpayer money. It pays its chief diversity officer about \$320,000 a year.

And you know what? Despite all this money that the American taxpayers are giving to these left-of-center entities, their viewership has declined because people don't need them anymore. So why are we giving them money?

I have introduced legislation, not to eliminate the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, not to eliminate the Public Broadcasting Service, and not to eliminate the National Public Radio—they can go exist on their own if they want to, but I do want to defund them.

We are running \$36 trillion in debt. This is disgraceful in 2025. It is disgraceful whether it is left-of-center opinion journalism or right-of-center opinion journalism. It is disgraceful to the American people to have to fund this rot. It doesn't mean the rot doesn't have a right to exist, but they don't have a right to taxpayer money.

It is late. So I am not going to go to my second topic.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—S.J. Res. 10

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, at a time to be determined by the majority leader in consultation with the Democratic leader, but no later than Friday, February 28, the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources be discharged from further consideration of S.J. Res. 10, and the Senate proceed to its consideration; further, that there be 6 hours for debate only, with the time equally divided between the leaders or their designees on the joint resolution; and that following the use or yielding back of that time, the joint resolution be read a third time, and the Senate vote on the joint resolution with no further intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF RIVA RIDGE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize a momentous occasion for the U.S. Army and for the North Country. Today, February 18, 2025, marks the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Riva Ridge during World War II.

During this battle, on the slopes of the northern Apennine Mountains in Italy, the 10th Mountain Division first "Climbed to Glory" and delivered one of the most amazing and decisive victories in U.S. military history.

In the face of grave danger and extreme adversity, the 10th Mountain Division broke through German positions and paved the way for Italy's liberation. Each soldier of the 10th Mountain Division demonstrated extraordinary courage, resilience, and tactical brilliance, forcing the German Army to retreat and providing a major boost to Allied efforts in Europe.

This anniversary comes only days after the 40th anniversary of the reactivation of the 10th Mountain Division at Fort Drum on February 13, 1985.

Since 1943, the 10th Mountain Division has stood as a pillar of strength, resilience, and readiness, answering the call to serve in nearly every major conflict our Nation has faced.

From the battlefields of World War II to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and now in support of Operation Atlantic Resolve and our NATO allies, the soldiers of the 10th Mountain Division have been at the forefront of protecting our national security.

For more than two decades, they have been the most deployed unit in the U.S. Army, demonstrating unparalleled commitment and courage in defending our country and supporting our partners abroad.

But their contributions go beyond their battlefield successes. The 10th Mountain Division is shaping the future of our military—pioneering advancements in mobility, rapid deployment, counter-UAS, and the integration of cross-domain capabilities into training for large-scale combat operations to build the Army of the future and will strengthen our armed forces for years to come. With the activation of elements of the 2nd Multi-Domain Task Force at Fort Drum this summer, the installation's role in our national defense will continue to grow.

Fort Drum is more than a military base; it is a cornerstone of our national security, and I am proud to have fought for the funding and resources necessary to ensure its continued success. As we mark this anniversary, let us reaffirm our commitment to the brave men and women who serve at Fort Drum, ensuring they have the tools, training, and support they need to defend our Nation.

"Climb to Glory!"

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO ESTELLA D. PATTERSON

• Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, today I rise to recognize the remarkable career of Raleigh chief of police Estella D. Patterson, a law enforcement officer who has dedicated nearly 30 years of her life to protecting and serving her communities.

Her journey in law enforcement began in 1996, following her graduation from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Since August 2021, Chief Patterson has been the Raleigh chief of police, leading a team of over 900 sworn and civilian employees who share her unwavering commitment to the safety and security of Raleigh's residents.

During her renowned tenure in law enforcement, Chief Patterson led the implementation of the Greenway Unit and leveraged technology to develop the Raleigh Intelligence Center into a Real Time Crime Center. Her advocacy for safe communities also led to the city of Raleigh being selected to join the Public Safety Partnership City, a national designation which brings a wealth of resources and technical assistance for crime prevention.

From 1996 to 2005, Chief Patterson honorably served in the U.S. Army Reserve. Her service included combat tours to Kosovo in support of Operation Joint Guardian and to Iraq as part of Operation Enduring Freedom. Furthermore, Chief Patterson also served for 25 years with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department in multiple positions prior to joining the Raleigh Police Department.

Chief Patterson's career has been marked by a deep love for public service and her community. I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to Chief Patterson for her ultimate dedication to law enforcement and our country. I wish Chief Patterson and her family the very best as she retires and begins this new chapter of her life. Chief Patterson embodies the very best of law enforcement. The city of Raleigh is proud of her and forever grateful for her service. ●

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 3:02 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives delivered by Mrs. Alli, one of its reading clerks, announced that pursuant to section 2(b)(4) of Public Law 117-140, the Minority Leader appoints the following individual to the Commission to Study the Potential Creation of a National Museum of Asian Pacific History and Culture: Mr. Dennis Cheng of New York, New York.

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. BLUMENTHAL (for himself, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Ms. ROSEN, Mr. PADILLA, Mr. SANDERS, Mrs. MURRAY, and Mr. DURBIN):

S. 605. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to increase the maximum age for children eligible for medical care under the CHAMPVA program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. KAINE (for himself and Mr. WARNER):

S. 606. A bill to authorize the Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration to reimburse the Town of Chincoteague, Virginia, for costs directly associated with the removal and replacement of certain drinking water wells; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Ms. HASSAN (for herself and Mr. BOOZMAN):

S. 607. A bill to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish an integrated project team to improve the process for scheduling appointments for health care from the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Ms. WARREN (for herself and Mr. CASSIDY):

S. 608. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to require additional information on math and clerical error notices; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. BLUMENTHAL:

S. 609. A bill to improve mental health services of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. BLUMENTHAL (for himself and Mr. ROUNDS):

S. 610. A bill to expand the VetSuccess on Campus program of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. BLUMENTHAL (for himself and Mr. BOOZMAN):

S. 611. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve and to expand eligibility for dependency and indemnity compensation paid to certain survivors of certain veterans, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. SCHATZ (for himself and Ms. MURKOWSKI):

S. 612. A bill to amend the Native American Tourism and Improving Visitor Experience Act to authorize grants to Indian tribes, tribal organizations, and Native Hawaiian organizations, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

By Mr. SCHATZ (for himself and Mr. MARSHALL):

S. 613. A bill to require the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere to maintain the National Mesonet Program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Mr. CASSIDY, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. COONS, Mr. SCOTT of Florida, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. KAINE, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, and Ms. CORTEZ MASTO):

S. 614. A bill to designate the area of Sumner Row between 16th Street and Northwest and L Street Northwest in Washington, District of Columbia, as "Alexi Navalny Way"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. CRUZ (for himself, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. BARRASSO, and Mr. LEE):

S. 615. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to repeal the excise taxes

on taxable chemicals and taxable substances; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. KENNEDY (for himself and Mr. WHITEHOUSE):

S. 616. A bill to amend title 36, United States Code, to revise the Federal charter for the Foundation of the Federal Bar Association; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. SCOTT of Florida (for himself and Mr. WELCH):

S. 617. A bill to permit the Attorney General to award grants for accurate data on opioid-related overdoses, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. TUBERVILLE (for himself and Mr. BANKS):

S. 618. A bill to prohibit the purchase or lease of agricultural land in the United States by persons associated with certain foreign governments, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

By Ms. HASSAN (for herself and Mr. CORNYN):

S. 619. A bill to amend the Fair Credit Reporting Act to address the placement of security freezes for protected consumers, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Ms. MURKOWSKI (for herself, Mr. HEINRICH, Mr. PETERS, and Mr. SCHATZ):

S. 620. A bill to provide public health veterinary services to Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations for rabies prevention, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

By Ms. SMITH (for herself and Ms. KLOBUCHAR):

S. 621. A bill to accept the request to revoke the charter of incorporation of the Lower Sioux Indian Community in the State of Minnesota at the request of that Community, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

By Ms. SMITH (for herself and Ms. KLOBUCHAR):

S. 622. A bill to amend the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Reservation Restoration Act to provide for the transfer of additional Federal land to the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

By Mr. KENNEDY:

S. 623. A bill to prohibit the Environmental Protection Agency from using assessments generated by the Integrated Risk Information System as a tier 1 data source in rulemakings and other regulatory, enforcement, or permitting actions, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

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.

By Mr. BLUMENTHAL (for himself and Mr. LANKFORD):

S. 625. A bill to direct the Secretary of Homeland Security to establish a pilot program to hire transitioning servicemembers to be Border Patrol agents; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 107

At the request of Mr. TILLIS, the names of the Senator from Oklahoma

(Mr. MULLIN), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL) and the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) were added as cosponsors of S. 107, a bill to amend the Lumber Act of 1956.

S. 127

At the request of Mr. FETTERMAN, the names of the Senator from Montana (Mr. SHEEHY) and the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR) were added as cosponsors of S. 127, a bill to establish a whole-home repairs program for eligible homeowners and eligible landlords, and for other purposes.

S. 137

At the request of Mr. DAINES, the name of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. MORENO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 137, a bill to amend title 41, United States Code, to prohibit the Federal Government from entering into contracts with an entity that discriminates against firearm or ammunition industries, and for other purposes.

S. 143

At the request of Mr. CRUZ, the name of the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. LANKFORD) was added as a cosponsor of S. 143, a bill to amend the Clean Air Act to repeal the natural gas tax.

S. 158

At the request of Mrs. BLACKBURN, the name of the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. 158, a bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to provide that aliens who have been convicted of, or who have committed, sex offenses or domestic violence are inadmissible and deportable.

S. 237

At the request of Ms. KLOBUCHAR, the name of the Senator from Washington (Ms. CANTWELL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 237, a bill to amend the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to provide public safety officer benefits for exposure-related cancers, and for other purposes.

S. 310

At the request of Mr. WYDEN, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. LUJÁN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 310, a bill to establish a grant program to address the crisis in accessing affordable housing and child care through the co-location of housing and child care, and for other purposes.

S. 315

At the request of Mr. MARKEY, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. MCCORMICK) was added as a cosponsor of S. 315, a bill to require the Secretary of Transportation to issue a rule requiring access to AM broadcast stations in passenger motor vehicles, and for other purposes.

S. 339

At the request of Mr. CRAPO, the name of the Senator from Georgia (Mr. OSSOFF) 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. 424

At the request of Mrs. BRITT, the names of the Senator from Nevada (Ms. ROSEN) and the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS) were added as cosponsors of S. 424, a bill to amend the Federal securities laws to enhance 403(b) plans, and for other purposes.

S. 526

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) was added as a cosponsor of 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.

S. 540

At the request of Mr. TUBERVILLE, the names of the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ), the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BUDD) and the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS) were added as cosponsors of S. 540, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to require the consideration of continuity of health care in determining best medical interest under the Veterans Community Care Program, and for other purposes.

S. 545

At the request of Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, the name of the Senator from Arizona (Mr. GALLEGOS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 545, a bill to prohibit certain uses of xylazine, and for other purposes.

S. 557

At the request of Mr. KENNEDY, the name of the Senator from Alabama (Mrs. BRITT) was added as a cosponsor of S. 557, a bill to repeal the small business loan data collection requirements under the Equal Credit Opportunity Act.

S. 558

At the request of Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina, the names of the Senator from Wyoming (Ms. LUMMIS), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. KELLY), the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. MCCORMICK) and the Senator from California (Mr. PADILLA) were added as cosponsors of S. 558, a bill to provide for the consideration of a definition of antisemitism set forth by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance for the enforcement of Federal antidiscrimination laws concerning education programs or activities, and for other purposes.

S. 561

At the request of Mr. LEE, the name of the Senator from Utah (Mr. CURTIS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 561, a bill to amend the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to require the Secretary to designate food and food products to be made available under the supplemental nutrition assistance program, and for other purposes.

S. 573

At the request of Ms. MURKOWSKI, the names of the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY) and the Senator from

Vermont (Mr. WELCH) were added as cosponsors of S. 573, a bill to designate a mountain in the State of Alaska as Denali.

S.J. RES. 10

At the request of Mr. KAINE, the names of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN) and the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER) were added as cosponsors of S.J. Res. 10, a joint resolution terminating the national emergency declared with respect to energy.

S. RES. 53

At the request of Mr. YOUNG, the names of the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN), the Senator from Alabama (Mr. TUBERVILLE) and the Senator from Montana (Mr. DAINES) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 53, a resolution recognizing the 80th anniversary of the amphibious landing on the Japanese island of Iwo Jima during World War II and the raisings of the flag of the United States on Mount Suribachi.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Mr. CASSIDY, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. COONS, Mr. SCOTT of Florida, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. KAINE, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, and Ms. CORTEZ MASTO):

S. 614. A bill to designate the area of Sumner Row between 16th Street and Northwest and L Street Northwest in Washington, District of Columbia, as “Alexei Navalny Way”; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

Mr. DURBIN. 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. 614

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) The administration of President Vladimir V. Putin of the Russian Federation has engaged in transnational repression, assassinations of political opponents, poisoning and other attempted murders of political opponents, journalists, and human rights defenders, systemic human rights abuses, and unprovoked military attacks against and deployments to neighboring countries.

(2) The administration of President Vladimir V. Putin of the Russian Federation has carried out arrests and detentions of individuals who peacefully seek democratic freedoms or oppose his repression, corruption, and invasion of Ukraine.

(3) Alexei Navalny was a Russian political dissident and activist dedicated to promoting democratic freedoms and fighting corruption in Russia.

(4) On February 16, 2024, the Russian prison where Alexei Navalny was being held after his conviction on fabricated charges in February 2021 announced that he had died a day after he was seen in good health.

(5) Alexei Navalny had a history of exposing the widespread corruption that sustained

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.

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.

CONFIRMATION

Executive nomination confirmed by the Senate February 18, 2025:

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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