

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Ms. ALSOBROOKS. Mr. President, I would like to use my time to highlight the attacks currently being thrown at our Federal workers and the unconscionable firings that are taking place.

We have heard baseless and callous criticisms of our Federal workers from this administration for weeks now. They are wrong, and much of what they are built on is a lie. And they are dehumanizing.

This is, in fact, a witch hunt. Our civil servants are among the best of what our Nation has to offer. They serve with no political motivation. Many have served for years under Democratic administrations and Republican administrations. They have one dedication: to their fellow Americans. It is a patriotic calling that they have all answered. They are not faceless villains. They are real people with real stories.

People like a woman I spoke with who has served at the Department of Health and Human Services for over 35 years, she has been put on leave as a part of the President's Executive orders. For her and people like her, to be caught up in these partisan attacks is infuriating.

The administration claims to be doing this in the name of efficiency. There is nothing efficient about gaining unauthorized access to private data and then blindly firing 5,200 employees across multiple Agencies. There is nothing competent about cutting the workforce without any thought about how it would impact operations.

This is not efficient. This is senseless, and this is heartless.

NIH is based in my State of Maryland, and many of the workers there are among the 150,000 civil servants who call Maryland home. Each one of them has made a commitment to public service. Each one of them is a civil servant that I am proud to represent. These abrupt and improper firings have shaken up the lives of thousands of dedicated workers who do not deserve this treatment. And what makes this even worse is that attacking our Federal workers doesn't just hurt them; it hurts all Americans, the people who rely on government programs to keep them healthy and safe.

These aren't hypothetical concerns. These firings will have real-world consequences. Eliminating staff at NIH will delay the development and approval of lifesaving treatments. Cancer patients will have to wait longer for promising new treatments as clinical trials still stall due to staffing shortages. This will slowly eliminate research and medical intervention and weaken our standing in global biomedical science.

Cuts to an already understaffed CMS workforce will hurt patient care. We

will see disruptions in medically necessary care and delays in payments to hospitals and other healthcare providers. Firing staff at HHS will cripple our ability to quickly identify and respond to public health threats. And right now, we are experiencing the worst flu season in over 15 years, resulting in school closures in at least 10 States. We are monitoring an outbreak of Ebola in Uganda. We are keeping track of the growing threat of avian influenza.

Without a strong workforce, we will not be able to react effectively. It is impossible to forget the significant role that NIH plays in developing and deploying vaccines and treatments. We are just beyond the clutches of the last major public health crisis. And without a strong workforce, we will not be prepared to face the next pandemic.

In the clearest terms possible, these cuts aren't about efficiency. To the American people, it quite literally could be the difference between life and death. They are as direct a contradiction as you can have of the priorities this administration claimed to set when they took control—to ease burdens on families. Instead, these firings could add enormous strain to a nation that is already in need of relief. They are irresponsible, they are inefficient, and they are undeserved.

What our civil servants deserve is a recognition of the work they do every day to make us stronger. What the American people deserve is for us to keep our obligation to ensure their health and their safety. I will continue to defend them and apply pressure to this administration until it happens.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. President, I rise today to sound the alarm about what is happening to our Nation's ability to advance lifesaving medical research in the first month of the Trump administration.

As many of you know, I am a proud graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Law School. In many ways, I grew up at the university, where both of my grandparents, who raised me, worked. My grandmother ran the costume lab at the theater department, and my grandfather was a scientist. He was a biochemist who spent four decades unlocking the key to how our metabolism works—in large part thanks to funding from the National Institutes of Health. My grandfather and his colleagues pioneered breakthroughs that impacted biochemistry around the world, leading to all kinds of developments to keep our bodies healthy, from nutrition and diet to advanced drugs, to, really, so much more.

I share my grandfather's story because it demonstrates why the NIH is

so essential. As the world's premier biomedical research institution, the NIH invests in our health, our national security, our economy, and our future. These investments influence our Nation's competitive edge, patients' treatment options, and, simply put, American lives for generations to come.

Research supported by the NIH has helped us find breakthroughs for treating diabetes, Alzheimer's disease, and substance use disorders. It is supporting clinical trials right now for patients battling terminal diagnoses for cancer. In fiscal year 2023, the NIH generated almost \$93 billion in economic activity—nearly twice the Agency's budget.

The engine behind all of it is, of course, researchers and scientists. They are dedicated scientists like my grandfather who right now are worried that their life's work—the work of keeping our loved ones healthy and saving lives—is in danger, all because Elon Musk and President Trump are firing nearly 1,200 critical staff across NIH Institutes and Centers, halting lifesaving research in its tracks, and indiscriminately and illegally freezing funding from going out the door to academic and research institutions across the country.

Across the Department of Health and Human Services, Trump and Elon Musk have fired more than 5,000 public servants. We are talking about scientists, doctors, researchers, and so many others who are doing this critical work to keep us healthy.

Musk and Trump are going so much deeper than firing the HHS workforce, which is damaging enough to research programs and puts Americans' lives at risk; they are throwing sand in the gears of the NIH—their basic grant-making operations—to prevent scientists from getting the resources they need to conduct lifesaving biomedical research in the first place.

For instance, the President has unilaterally fired more than 130 employees at the National Cancer Institute—many of them scientists. Across the NIH, Trump and Musk have fired 160 program officers, grant management specialists, and other key administrators whose job it is to get grant funding out the door to universities and other research institutions across the country.

Since President Trump took office, his administration has canceled more than 70 NIH study sections and advisory council meetings that are the final step in grant approval. This means that more than \$1.5 billion in funding has been withheld so far—illegally and in blatant defiance of court orders—by this administration. The impact is already having ripple effects across the research community.

Take, for instance, Alzheimer's disease research. The Trump administration has stopped tens of millions of dollars from going out the door for Alzheimer's research, halting studies, clinical trials, and moving us further from a cure.

The Trump administration is also terminating entire NIH training programs focused on supporting early career scientists from diverse backgrounds and folks who are underrepresented today in biomedical research. In its endless quest to cancel any program that even uses the word "diversity," the Trump administration has even paused research involving women.

Make no mistake, we will be feeling the impact of these cuts for decades to come. Universities are pausing graduate student admissions because they aren't sure they will have the funding to support the students they currently have enrolled.

What is at stake is not just a generation of talent and our Nation's competitive edge; it is also the next breakthrough that could cure cancer or Alzheimer's disease. Thanks to Donald Trump's actions, the United States may lose its global competitive edge in biomedical research and cede it to China.

In Wisconsin, our universities follow a long-held tradition known as the Wisconsin Idea. It is a pretty simple philosophy that says the work done at our universities should make an impact far beyond the classroom itself, and it does. From vitamin D, to human embryonic stem cells, to blood thinners and new treatments for Alzheimer's disease, Wisconsin universities and dedicated scientists like my grandfather have discovered breakthroughs that revolutionize the world of medicine and, more importantly, revolutionize how we keep our loved ones safe and well.

So when President Trump and Elon Musk come after this funding and come after these public servants, they aren't just coming after scientists in classrooms and laboratories; the impact will spread far beyond those institutions. When they come after the NIH, they are coming after patients with terminal illnesses, who are right now being turned away from potentially lifesaving clinical trials because of these cuts. They are coming after the next breakthrough that could have helped your loved one battling Alzheimer's. They are coming after a young scientist who is living paycheck to paycheck who will not be able to pursue a research career developing treatments to help others get better.

Now, you may be asking yourself: Why are Donald Trump and Elon Musk doing this? Well, the answer is pretty simple—so they can give tax breaks to billionaires. Why are they cutting off clinical trials and cancer research? So that people like Elon Musk don't have to pay their fair share. Why are they withholding funding to find a cure for Alzheimer's disease? So big corpora-

tions can pay less in taxes than the average American family. The cuts we are seeing right now will damage Americans' lives for the next generation—all so the wealthiest Americans can get wealthier.

We must stand up to this illegal freeze on funding, this assault on the Federal workforce, and these billions of dollars in cuts that will take decades to undo. Our health and the health of our loved ones depend upon it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to make a simple point: The law cannot be in the eye of the beholder. The law is the law. But yet again, we are seeing the Trump administration break the law.

Many of us have been closely following the Trump administration's illegal freeze of congressionally appropriated funding, including of foreign aid not just from the State Department but also from USAID, the African Development Foundation, the Inter-American Foundation, and other independent Agencies. Each of those Agencies' existence as an independent entity has long been enshrined in statute and reaffirmed by bipartisan majorities in both Chambers year after year in annual appropriations.

Our appropriations law also explicitly requires the administration to notify and consult with Congress before undertaking any efforts to reorganize, realign, or downsize foreign affairs Agencies, as the sweeping reductions in force issued last week and many other brazen actions we have seen clearly seek to do.

The administration's actions, including firing the USAID inspector general and the State IG, will make waste and fraud more likely, will prevent even foreign assistance programs allegedly supported by the administration from being effectively implemented, and will also effectively block hundreds of millions of dollars for other programs enacted into law by bipartisan majorities. Needless to say, the Trump administration has not consulted or notified Congress about these changes. That is in violation of the law.

This week, they took a further step. The Trump administration has chosen to spit in the face of the law and Congress, expressing total disdain for a court order mandating they release the foreign aid funding they had illegally withheld. When finally told they must comply, Secretary Rubio personally approved the termination of 90 percent of the USAID programs and 60 percent of State Department programs virtually overnight. They terminated more than \$58 billion in multiyear programs and have told us they have no intention of utilizing those funds.

The termination of those awards is absolutely not what Congress intended.

Congress appropriated the funding on a bipartisan basis with the express intent to see those dollars spent. This is not trivial stuff. We are talking about resources that often mean the difference between life and death, resources that are imperative not just because they are lifesaving but because they are an investment in our own national security and in U.S. businesses.

Let's take Ebola, for example. USAID helps other countries around the world respond to and contain Ebola outbreaks. That is pretty darn important because there is no known cure for Ebola.

Thanks to the good work of USAID, along with our international partners—often supported by USAID awards—we have never had an Ebola outbreak here at home.

Yesterday, at President Trump's Cabinet meeting, Elon Musk even admitted that, yes, we want to fight Ebola. Of course, then he said they "accidentally" cut USAID's Ebola prevention efforts but that it had been "restored" with no "interruption."

Yet we know for a fact that is a lie. U.S.-based companies implementing these programs received termination notices yesterday. Any basic accounting of USAID's capacity to stop outbreaks abroad shows quite plainly any disease prevention efforts supported by the United States at this point are merely symbolic. You cannot break the foundation of public health systems overseas and expect that it won't have a damaging impact here at home.

This makes America less safe. If Ebola, Marburg, or any other infectious disease makes it to our shores, it will be thanks to Elon and Trump—two billionaires without a clue who are positively smug about their own ignorance.

But it is not just our infectious disease response that has now been gutted—everything from resources to help prevent kids from getting malaria to aid for refugees in war-torn places like Syria, where it is directly in our national security interests to foster stability.

It is not just resources from faraway places. This will hit home in blue and red States. U.S. universities in my home State, in Indiana, in Florida, in Texas, and other States have had their partnerships terminated.

American students from across our country who are now participating in exchange programs overseas are impacted by this. To put it into perspective for my colleagues, 5,800 of 6,300 USAID grants and contracts are being terminated. That is 9 out of 10. That is not to mention 4,100 of 6,800 State Department grants and contracts.

The only detail we have is from the NGO's faith-based organizations and U.S. contractors sending these termination notices to our committee. We do not have one shred of detail from the State Department, not one shred.

The scale is staggering, and it shows you that this administration's scheme