

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.