

To me, the future of the U.S.-Mexico relationship is important. It is one that we all ought to care about. I think the opportunities are there for us to engage in strategic partnerships with Mexico in a number of ways—for example, dealing with the asylum problem that Secretary Nielsen has already begun to negotiate.

Through our partnership, we can work together to solve this migrant crisis by improving the economy and the opportunities that people have to live and work in their home country, as well as to protect trade, which supports so many jobs here in the United States.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Justin George Muzinich, of New York, to be Deputy Secretary of the Treasury.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, the Senate will soon cast the first procedural vote on the nomination of Justin Muzinich to serve as the Deputy Secretary of the Treasury. I am going to oppose this nomination, and I would like to lay out exactly why, beginning with a basic rule that I intend to maintain going forward.

If a Treasury nominee says the Trump tax handouts will pay for themselves, I intend to oppose them. The reason why is that by sticking with this debunked claim, you are basically laying out the economic policy version of being a flat-earther. You are either peddling an idea you know is untrue, or you can't do math. Either way, you shouldn't have a pivotal, powerful job at the Treasury Department.

When Mr. Muzinich came before the Finance Committee for his nomination hearing, it was a titanic battle just to try to get him to offer any kind of substantive answer on pretty much anything. One question he finally answered straight up was whether he agreed that the Trump tax handouts would "pay for themselves and reduce our deficits." There he gave a one-word response, which was "yes."

Some call this trickle-down economics. Others call it voodoo economics. I call it, plain and simple, rainbow and unicorn math. No matter what you call it, it just isn't connected to reality. The Trump tax handout will not pay for itself, and even after independent, nonpartisan economic analyses demonstrated that was the case and even after months of data were released showing that the Trump tax law has failed to live up to the administration's fantasy land promises, Mr. Muzinich continues to cling to this false claim.

I will give him credit. He has what my relatives call—what Jewish people call—chutzpah, but that sure isn't going to win him my support.

In my judgment, it also raises a fundamental question of honesty. Before his nomination hearing, newspaper reports ran glowing quotes about him from several key officials at the Treasury Department. They praised Mr. Muzinich's financial expertise, and they talked about the expansive role he would play in a whole host of areas at the Treasury Department—not just tax policy but debt management. Republican committee members talked all about the work he had put into the development of the Trump tax law.

I was pretty interested in Mr. Muzinich's substantive views on these big questions because I had read these glowing tributes from his colleagues, and I thought, well, if we are going to have someone promoted to this important position, we really ought to get a sense of what he believes on the really important, substantive economic issues. So I began to ask the nominee about these questions, and he, as I indicated, just put any response sort of in the "well, I couldn't possibly get into that" category.

I wanted to know why because, eventually, we got around to his saying that he really wasn't going to get into these issues because he said if he was confirmed, he would just be, in his words, a "building manager."

A building manager is somebody who doesn't get praised by his colleagues as being an expert on debt management and tax policy. Building managers have important responsibilities. They are involved in things like acoustics and ventilation. They have responsibilities. That is what building managers do. They certainly don't have duties like those described by Mr. Muzinich's colleagues.

I had some real difficulty reconciling the way his own colleagues described him in these important publications and what he told me about his responsibilities as the building manager. I think he really is not reflecting what his job is all about, and the fact that he would misrepresent that to me in our discussions prior to his nomination—he misrepresented to the ranking Democrat on the Senate Finance Committee in charge of the nomination—is, in my view, very troubling.

I also have had very serious questions about the way Mr. Muzinich re-

sponded to my questions about the Trump administration's new policy—really, just a couple of months old—that would open the floodgates to more foreign dark money in American elections. We all know from this last election about what dark money means.

We had our airwaves and TV sets, from sea to shining sea, dominated by television commercials that had a tag line on it—something akin to "Americans for high school football" or "Americans who believe in our flag," or various other things that none of us would possibly disagree with but that would in no way reflect who actually paid for that commercial that found its way to our TV sets.

There were increased floods of dark money commercials through the past November election, and right before that, the Trump administration adopted a rule that would make it even easier for foreign dark money to make its way into our elections.

We will be talking about that rule later this week. There is going to be an effort with Senator TESTER and me to overturn that flawed policy, but the fact is that this is something that an individual who was nominated for the important position Mr. Muzinich seeks would have some views about and particularly because the rule change—the rule change made by the Trump administration to allow more dark money in American elections—was announced just hours after the American people learned about the illicit activities that an accused Russian spy Maria Butina had used to infiltrate conservative groups and undermine our democracy.

So if that were a coincidence, that the Trump administration announced this new rule to make it easier for foreign dark money to make its way into our elections—announced just a few hours after the American people learned about Maria Butina—I have to tell you that it is a coincidence for the ages.

The Trump administration and other officials, of course, say that Maria Butina was just an innocent college student attending American University. I don't know of many college students who go to South Dakota with an NRA political operative to set up a shell company. That is not common behavior for an American college student. Yet, given the fact that the Trump administration had made it easier to get foreign dark money into our elections—and a common vehicle for doing that would be one's using a shell company—it certainly, again, raises very troubling signs that a nominee for this key position will take no position whatsoever on something so important as that of protecting our elections.

The fact is, with this new policy, the President is essentially blinding law enforcement and telling foreigners and dark money groups that it is open season for election cash to flow.

I asked Mr. Muzinich about this. I asked: What do you think about this

problem in terms of preventing foreign influence and enforcing election law? I couldn't get a straight answer. Finally, he told me: "The intent was to further efficient tax administration."

I can tell you something. I don't think Maria Butina was interested in anything that had to do with efficient tax administration. I don't think she was interested in anything close to that when she went to South Dakota with an NRA operative to set up a shell company. Maybe this was just Mr. Muzinich's way of dodging the question. If not, then he is basically suggesting that it is just fine with him for special interests and foreign actors to buy American elections because they may be able to sell the American people on the proposition that makes tax reporting easier.

I have said before that I don't agree with every Treasury nominee on every issue from the Trump administration. I realize that. Then there have been individuals on key economic questions whose nominations I have supported. I thought Jerome Powell, who was Donald Trump's nominee, was a very wise choice to head the Federal Reserve. I have supported the President on important economic positions, and I voted for plenty of Republican nominees to the Treasury Department before. Yet I do expect nominees to be straight with me and with the committee. After all of the bobbing and weaving on issue after issue, this is a nominee who doesn't come close to passing that bar. In my view, he has not met the commonsense, basic test of giving some sense of where he stands on the important issues.

I see my good friend and seatmate on the Finance Committee who is here, and we talk often about these issues.

I will just say to my colleagues that the proposition that Mr. Muzinich is going to be the building manager for the Department of the Treasury is just a little bit much to swallow when you look at what his colleagues said he had talked about in the past with respect to tax management and tax reform and other important questions.

Finally, in Mr. Muzinich's claiming that the Trump tax handouts will pay for themselves, he has failed on that issue by \$1.5 trillion. I am not going to support a nominee for this position who is going to bring unicorn and rainbow fantasies to tax policy and to these key questions that are so important to the American people. I urge my colleagues to oppose the nomination of Mr. Muzinich.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

AMERICA'S SPACE PROGRAM

Mr. NELSON. Madam President, I rise to speak on a subject that our colleagues know is very dear to my heart—America's space program. Although this is the last of many, many floor speeches I have made on the subject, I stand before the Senate with a heart that is full of gratitude, joy, and

hope for the future of our space program.

I have been extremely privileged to have witnessed and in some cases to have participated in the extraordinary triumphs of our Nation's 60-year quest to explore the heavens. I flew to orbit and marveled at the beauty, fragility, and seemingly peacefulness of Mother Earth, our planet.

I had the honor of making that trip with one of the finest crews to have ever flown in America's space program. There was CAPT Robert "Hoot" Gibson, our commander, as well as Maj. Gen. Charlie Bolden, Retired, our pilot, who flew five missions—four as commander. Of course, General Bolden ultimately became the Administrator of NASA for the entire time of the Obama administration. There was Dr. George Nelson, otherwise known to all in the astronaut office as Pinky. There was Dr. Steve Hawley, Dr. Franklin Chang-Diaz—the first Hispanic-American astronaut—and Bob Cenker, who was an engineer at the time with RCA, which was the satellite that we launched while in orbit.

It was a profound and humbling experience that reinforced my belief that we needed to not only be good stewards of our planet but that we should always try to treat others with whom we may differ culturally, ethnically, or socially with dignity, compassion, and respect.

In looking back at Earth from the window of a spacecraft, you don't see political divisions, racial divisions, religious differences. You don't see the suffering or the injustice that face those back home on the planet. Instead, you quickly realize that we on this planet, our planet Earth, are all in this together.

I have been filled with wonder over some of the greatest scientific discoveries of our age—the discovery of the signs of water; the discovery of, perhaps, even life on Mars; the discovery that our galaxy is full of countless planets—many of them, very possibly, inhabitable; and the discovery that our universe is being driven apart by mysterious forces known as dark energy and is filled with a mysterious material known as dark matter.

Along with my fellow Americans, I grieved when, tragically, we lost two space shuttles and the brave astronauts aboard. I have grieved as we have lost astronauts along the way, even in the Apollo 1 fire. I grieved with America as we thought *Apollo 13* was lost and how, miraculously, in one of NASA's greatest success stories—with three humans on the way to the Moon when the explosion occurred and not having any idea how we could get them back—the whole NASA team came together. The engineers, the mathematicians, the astronauts on the ground, the controllers, and the contractors all devised a way to bring back Jim Lovell's crew.

As everyone in NASA's family is keenly aware, navigating the heavens is as dangerous now, if not more so, than the crossing of the oceans was 100,

200, 300 years ago. Leaving the relative safety and comfort of home to explore new frontiers is every bit as important now as it was then. We must proceed with caution lest we foolishly put the lives of the explorers at risk, but we must also proceed with courage lest we risk remaining stuck on the ground.

I have also had the honor of collaborating with heroes like John Glenn, Tom Stafford, and Neil Armstrong on the future of our space program. I have been very proud to have played a little part in the establishment of our thriving commercial space industry with the drafting and passage of the Commercial Space Launch Acts of 1984 and 1988, back when I was a young Congressman, and to have witnessed the rise of and contributions of present-day space entrepreneurs like Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos.

At the same time, I appreciate the steady hand and transformative contribution of the NASA leaders, like Charlie Bolden, Bill Gerstenmaier, and Bob Cabana. I can't help but remember the guiding hand of George Abbey—that was so strong—at the Johnson Space Center, and I have celebrated the long overdue emergence of female superstars, like Marilyn Hewson and Gwynne Shotwell, amongst the space industry leadership.

It has been a pleasure working in Congress with a number of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to advance the space ambitions of our country because, as I have said many times before, space is, and should always remain, a nonpartisan issue. NASA is a nonpartisan Agency.

I am also encouraged by NASA Administrator Bridenstine's leadership in his early tenure at the helm of this Agency, and I wish him much success. I applaud him for continuing to make good on his promises to keep NASA out of partisan politics and to heed the advice of the Agency's talented and experienced space professionals and scientists.

NASA is a unique Agency, the head of which is like the Department of Defense. The Secretary of Defense is not looked upon as partisan; neither is the Administrator of NASA.

I could not be more gracious and humbled to be here today and to tell you, as we celebrate NASA's 60th birthday this year, our space program has a spectacular and an exciting future. It is a future full of opportunity, and it is a future that will require everyone—industry, Congress, and the Agency, as well as our international partners—pulling in the same direction to make it a reality.

If you go back a few years to 2010, Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison and I recognized back then that we had set NASA's human space flight program on its current dual path, to build private sector capabilities in low-Earth orbit and a government-led program for deep space and, ultimately, Mars. We recognized some of the misdirection and lack of direction the space program