

are fantastic throughout the State of Vermont. They work under very difficult circumstances. They are understaffed, overworked, and they do everything they can to get the mail delivered.

So they are doing what they can, but they don't have a place for postal boxes. They don't have a place where they can sort the mail. They don't have a place—actually, Montpelier residences and businesses don't have a Postal Service they can come to, to pick up their mail. And it is going on and on and on. And despite the efforts of Governor Scott, who has made suggestions on where we could put a replacement location, despite the entreaties of Senator SANDERS and Congresswoman BALINT and me, we get literally no response, and that is the part that is so astonishing to me.

We try to get a meeting with Postmaster General DeJoy. We send letters, we make phone calls, and there is no response.

Montpelier, right now, has the distinction of being the only capital city in the country that doesn't have a post office. We don't have a McDonald's either. We are OK with that. But we are not OK with not having a post office where people can pick up their medications, their Social Security checks, where businesses can drop off their mail going out to customers.

And what is so aggravating to all of us is there is no response from the management. That is their job. They just blow us off.

And can you imagine what it is like if you are a citizen and you are trying to get some response on the basic right that you have to get your mail on time, the basic right and the confidence you should have that you will get your prescription medication on time, when, not only do they get ignored when they are making a reasonable request—hey, where is our post office?—the Members of Congress don't even get a response.

And, you know, for a while I thought: Maybe DeJoy doesn't like me. He doesn't like SANDERS. He doesn't like BALINT. Maybe he doesn't like our government.

But do you know what? That isn't what it is about. I wish it was personal. But what I am finding out from talking to my colleagues is that this problem of postal mismanagement and disregard—and disregard—for the legitimate concerns of our citizens is widespread.

So, for instance, in Tennessee, my colleague—my former colleague in the House, TIM BURCHETT, is trying to figure out how to get stuff delivered. His folks need medications. They need the checks—the Social Security checks. He tried to get the Postal Service to respond. I am talking, again, about the management, because Tim, like me, is really admiring of the work of the postal workers. They were concerned that he couldn't get a meeting.

Finally, the Postal Service sent some people a couple hundred miles to his

district. They sat there for 15 minutes and made no response whatsoever to the entreaties of the people who had asked for that meeting. And then they vanished—no response, no action.

My colleague Senator SMITH is in Minnesota. There is a rural post office there where people have been told to prioritize the delivery of Amazon packages—that is a private company having the Postal Service doing the last bit of work to get that package to the home—but to prioritize that for Amazon over the delivery of everyday mail for people who are citizens of that small town.

And then, in Colorado, small ski towns in Colorado are waiting weeks or months at a time to get their mail. The Wall Street Journal did a story about this, and I want to quote it.

A citizen there said: "Christmas cards began arriving in February. But what's not funny at all"—he was kind of philosophical about it—"is [that] driver's licenses, disability payments, election ballots, [and] prescriptions" were not arriving for months as well.

I mean, this is the United States of America. The Postal Service is older than the Constitution itself. The original infrastructure that we began building were roads to connect one postal service to another. That is what it was about, and it is getting wrecked.

And the wreckage by Postmaster General DeJoy is reflected in his unresponsive attitude toward everyday Americans in every district of this country, and it has got to end.

There is independence with the Postal Service. That is to avoid Congressional meddling. But do you know what? Is it Congressional meddling when we are sticking up for the businesses in our communities, for the senior citizens in our communities, for the kids who, in fact, do like getting cards from their grandfather and their grandmother? No. I don't think that is meddling. That is demanding service.

What is unacceptable is a postal management service that won't even pick up the phone and meet with Members of Congress on behalf of their citizens or, more importantly, get the job done on behalf of all of the people we represent.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I come to the floor to discuss with my colleagues the fact that Agencies of the Federal Government aren't very insightful to make sure that taxpayers' money is spent properly and also to say how they are not cooperating with the constitutional responsibility of Congress to make sure the money is spent in a legal way.

In this case, I am here to talk about the Environmental Protection Agency.

On April 13, I began an investigation into an EPA program called the Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Cooperative Agreement

Program. Now that is quite a name, isn't it?

On February 22 of this year, I issued a preliminary report on my investigation. That EPA program dishes out millions of taxpayer dollars to left-leaning nonprofits. The funding is from President Biden's American Rescue Plan, which was opposed by Senate Republicans.

According to the EPA, the purpose of this environmental justice program is to address environmental and public health issues in underserved communities.

As part of that program, the EPA sent 34 individual nonprofits a combined \$4.3 million, with each receiving up to \$200,000.

I think the money was meant to be spent for the purpose of improving the environment—and I don't have any trouble with that—but I think you will see that the grantees didn't use the money for what it was intended for.

Now, I wrote to all 34 grantees because I wanted to know how they spent that taxpayer money. I wrote to the EPA because I wanted to know how it was conducting oversight of that spending. You see, it isn't only Congress that has a responsibility to see that the money is spent responsibly and according to Congress's will, but it is also up to these Agencies to make sure that they spend the money accordingly.

It is a pretty simple request. I want EPA to show their work, how the taxpayers' money is being spent. Well, this EPA, apparently, to them that question is just too much for them to handle.

So guess what happened after I sent the oversight letters. The EPA interfered and told these 34 grantees that they—meaning the EPA—would handle the Grassley request. This led many grantees to refuse compliance with any congressional oversight request and also obstruct my efforts of getting answers for the taxpayers.

Some grantees were so emboldened by EPA's obstructive conduct that they sent my staff emails. And this is just one example of the emails:

We report to EPA and they're responding on our behalf. You can make your request to them. We won't be responding further. Don't contact us any further.

That is how they treat this Senator doing his constitutional responsibilities, and, obviously, you can tell by that quote that this is very much obstruction.

What the Biden EPA has done is to obstruct a core constitutional requirement of the Congress; that is, knowing how appropriated taxpayer money is being used by the executive branch. Moreover, the EPA couldn't even respond on behalf of grantees, and it is pretty simple because the EPA doesn't even possess the records that I was requesting from the nonprofits. That is a whole different problem for the EPA.

Specifically I asked grantees—and this is a quote from my letter:

Provide all records showing how the taxpayer money your organization received was spent. In your production, please provide a financial summary showing what the taxpayer money was spent on.

Amazingly, the EPA can't fulfill this request for grantees because, at this point in the life cycle of the grant, it doesn't possess the records that show how taxpayer money has been spent.

Accordingly, except for my asking these questions, the EPA wouldn't have possessed these records at this point in the grant program. The EPA only has financial records showing how much money the grantees had drawn down from the overall grant.

The EPA emailed my staff this:

At the current stage in the grant process, this is the only document detailing financial progress that grantees are required to submit to the Agency.

For context, the "only document" referred to by the EPA doesn't show how, and on what, taxpayer money was being spent by each grantee.

Now, that is beyond embarrassing. It is a disgrace and a slap in the face to the taxpayers who worked so hard for their money that the EPA has failed to track their money. The EPA is throwing taxpayers' money around without a care in the world.

My preliminary oversight report also found that some of the projects didn't even pass the smell test. For example, grantees that did respond to us reported projects like empathetic listening training, tree walk-and-talks, making musical presentations to their communities, and buying clothing. And it turns out the lion's share of the money, so far, is being used for more salaries of the people who are on the nonprofit payroll and also other employee benefits.

Many of the 34 grantees were unable to provide records showing how much money their projects could cost. Some were able to provide those records I asked for. Then why didn't all of the grantees? Well, I think, going back to what I previously said, the EPA said you didn't have to answer.

I think the taxpayers have a right to know these financial details. With America suffering from record inflation and being forced to make difficult financial decisions, the EPA's obstructive conduct toward the Congress and the EPA's weak and incompetent oversight all are insults to the American taxpayer.

To make it worse, the EPA program I have talked about is just getting started. The EPA plans to spend tens of millions of dollars more in coming years on similar programs and has spent, according to what I have been able to assess at this point—that means for more salaries and benefits probably for the employees of the organizations as opposed to helping solve our environmental problems.

I imagine one would be hard-pressed to find any American taxpayer who would be satisfied with the EPA's conduct in how this money is being spent.

It is time for the EPA to do real oversight of how all this money is spent.

The American taxpayers deserve better from its government, so, as usual, the Grassley oversight will continue.

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.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

ANTITRUST APPROPRIATIONS

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I am pleased to join Senator KLOBUCHAR on the floor today. Senator KLOBUCHAR is the chair of the Subcommittee on Competition Policy, Antitrust, and Consumer Rights of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary. I chair the Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations Subcommittee, and we are here to do a colloquy about the work of the Department of Justice's Antitrust Division and its funding.

First of all, I would like to thank my friend from Minnesota for her tireless work to strengthen competition policy and protect consumers. In particular, I want to commend her for her leadership on the Merger Fee Modernization Act, her bipartisan bill that was signed into law at the end of 2022. That bill modernized the merger fee filing structure for the first time in decades, resulting in more funding for the antitrust enforcers at the Justice Department.

Today, we are considering fiscal year 2024 funding for the CJS bill as part of the six-bill minibus that is before the Senate. I can state with certainty that as a direct result of Senator KLOBUCHAR's leadership, the bipartisan, bicameral appropriations package that the Senate is considering provides the highest ever appropriation for the Antitrust Division in the Agency's 121-year history.

The Antitrust Division plays a vital role in promoting competition and cracking down on monopolistic practices that hurt U.S. consumers. That is why despite the extremely tight fiscal constraints for this year's budget, we fought off the House Republicans' attempts to gut funding for the Division and to impede its vital work. I am proud that we managed to secure increased funding for the Division in extremely tough bipartisan negotiations. And I want to thank the staff of the Commerce, Science and Justice Appropriations Subcommittee for their good work.

House Republicans wanted to cut antitrust by \$32 million or 14 percent. We ended up providing antitrust with a 3.6 percent increase compared to last year. It is one of the only Agencies within the bill to receive an increase, and we fought for this increase because the Antitrust mission is as critical as ever.

Decades of consolidation have left Americans with less choice and less innovation, and the effects of that consolidation can be felt in all facets of American life. So this funding will further the Agency's critical mission to promote competition and level the playing field for the American people.

Now, the Antitrust Division is funded primarily through fees that are paid by companies seeking to merge. My colleague's legislation increases fees that are paid by large corporations and big mergers and decreases those on small businesses and smaller mergers. And for the first time, it adjusts the filing fee amounts each year based on changes in the Consumer Price Index.

Hopefully, I got that right, Senator KLOBUCHAR.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Thank you, Senator SHAHEEN. I am pleased to be here with my colleague from New Hampshire.

Mr. President, as I said when I came to the floor earlier this week, I appreciate the tough negotiations that my colleagues on the Appropriations Committee, including Senator SHAHEEN with her very important subcommittee, had to go through in crafting this bill. There are many good things in it; and, crucially, it keeps the Federal Government open and working for the American people.

However, as I noted last week, the technical language released by the Appropriations Committee on Sunday restricts the Antitrust Division from using funds generated from merger filing fees that exceed the appropriated amount collected in fiscal year 2024 to enforce our competition laws without a separate act of Congress.

So the reason this has become a major deal for many of us that are simply interested in allowing the Department of Justice to do its work on some very important cases, which are well-publicized that are pending now, is that it conflicts with the intent of Senator GRASSLEY's and my bill that passed last Congress by an 88-to-8 vote. This law provides enforcers with the resources necessary to take on the anticompetitive practices by the biggest companies the world has ever known, an acknowledgment that the world has changed.

Prior to Sunday, appropriators had, for decades, allowed the Antitrust Division to retain and use all merger filing fees it collected without limit. This makes sense. If the fees collected are high, that means the mergers are rampant; and if mergers are rampant, the Antitrust Division needs additional funding to review and challenge anticompetitive mergers when they are anticompetitive, while simultaneously maintaining its non-fee-generating work of prosecuting price-fixing conspiracies and opposing monopolistic behavior.

Unfortunately, the language in the current appropriations bill could divert fees away from the Antitrust Division in fiscal year 2024 if those fees exceeded