

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

\$233 million, potentially eroding the intent of the bill that Senator GRASSLEY and I passed, along with Senator LEE, with overwhelming bipartisan support a little over a year ago.

Yesterday, Senator GRASSLEY and I, along with a bipartisan group that led the bill in the House, made clear that the bill's unambiguous intent was to allow the Antitrust Division to retain and use all fees generated from the new fee structure.

Just to clarify with my friend from the great State of New Hampshire, I ask her if she shares the understanding that it is the intent of the Merger Filing Fee Modernization Act to provide additional resources to the Antitrust Division by increasing merger filing fees.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. As someone who voted for that bill and who thinks it was a good bill, I certainly do agree with that; and I hope that, in fact, going forward, we will see the Antitrust Division produce more fees so that we can get over the amount in the future as we look at putting together the appropriations bill for 2025.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Well, thank you, Senator SHAHEEN.

I also understand that this year's appropriations bill, as I noted, was a product of negotiations in especially difficult circumstances. Given this situation, I thank you and Senator MURRAY for successfully fighting to secure an increase in funds compared to last year for the Antitrust Division.

But as we have noted, this year's compromise would restrict the Antitrust Division's access to merger filing fees in years when those filing fees exceed the appropriated amount should not and cannot set a precedent for future appropriations bills. This language is limited to this bill and this bill only. Moving forward, we must include language that allows the Antitrust Division to retain and use the additional fees it collects under our bill—the bill that was passed with 88 votes in this Chamber, signed into law by the President, and, of course, passed by the House, and was consistent with decades of precedent to empower the Antitrust Division to enforce our competition laws.

One last question of the Senator from New Hampshire, and that is: Will you commit to prioritizing and doing everything in your power to include language that will allow the Antitrust Division to retain and use all the fees it collects above the appropriated amount in future budgets consistent with the law's intent?

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Absolutely, and I hope in 2025, we are able to convince our Republican colleagues in the House that this is something that the original legislation that you and Senator GRASSLEY passed intended, and that they will support that. And if we start from now, hopefully, we can engage Senator GRASSLEY and Senator LEE to help us do that with the House Republicans.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Thank you very much, Senator SHAHEEN. And as we know, there are major, major investigations—some suits already have been filed. Actually, from the prior administration going forward into this administration, they have been bipartisan in that way, as well as ongoing investigations.

So I do thank you for your commitment and look forward to working closely with you and the Democratic and Republican Members of the Appropriations Committee on the fiscal year 2025 budget process to uphold this commitment.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Thank you, Senator KLOBUCHAR. As we know, we are about to start the 2025 appropriations process. So we will begin very soon, and I look forward to you and your staff working closely with us as we try to provide the desired outcome intended by the legislation.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Thank you, Senator SHAHEEN.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Mr. President, later this evening, we are going to hear the President of the United States tout the successes of his administration over the last year. He will say that our country is in a better place because of his leadership.

Are you ready?

Are you looking forward to hearing how grocery costs, energy costs, and the gas prices have all gone down over the last year? Maybe you are eager to hear about Joe Biden's solution to the historic border crisis—one which he created, by the way—that has crushed our rural hospitals, our schools, and other public resources.

So let me save you some time. Here is how President Biden's speech is going to go. The economy has never, ever been better.

This is a lie. Grocery prices are up 21 percent; gas prices are up 32 percent; inflation is up 18 percent; credit card debt for the average American is at an all-time high. Do those numbers sound like the economy is better than ever?

Well, I don't think so.

He will say America has never been safer.

This is a lie. Cities across the country are experiencing surges of homicides, muggings, and carjackings. New York City just deployed the National Guard to combat subway crime.

Let me read that one more time. New York City just deployed the National Guard to combat subway crime.

I never thought I would see it. This is obviously a Democratic city.

Washington, DC—right here, our Nation's Capital—saw, last year, its deadliest year in almost two decades.

That doesn't sound like this administration and its Democratic allies have prioritized the safety and security of Americans, which, by the way, is any—any—administration's top responsibility.

Joe Biden will turn to Ukraine next and say that, by continuing to send billions of dollars to secure their border, we will protect our country—billions more dollars. Yet that is another lie. We have already spent and sent over to Ukraine \$120 billion, only to watch their war descend into a yearslong stalemate, with hundreds of thousands of people killed and no end in sight.

We are \$34 trillion in debt and borrowing an additional \$80,000 per second. You heard me right. We are borrowing \$80,000 per second. That is \$4.6 million a minute. We are increasing the debt at a rate of \$2.5 trillion per year.

Our munitions are depleted because the President has continued to give it away to other countries. We are defenseless; we are broke; and we have little to show for it. Our streets should be made of gold. We should have fast trains across the country. Our airports should be immaculate. We have nothing to show for a \$34 trillion debt.

President Biden will also say the border crisis should have been solved with the Biden-Schumer border deal and complain that Republicans blocked the bill from moving forward. I was looking forward to this bill, but, surprisingly, this is another lie.

The Biden-Schumer border deal was a border giveaway. The bill did not stop the administration from paroling thousands of people per day into our country. To me, that was what a border bill was supposed to be about.

The bill did not authorize funding to complete the border wall. It is simple: Put up a wall. We just put one outside the Capitol here today to keep the mean people from coming to this speech tonight.

The bill will not stop funding sanctuary cities where criminal aliens are protected from deportations.

The President will claim he has done everything he can do to secure the border but that Republicans have tied his hands. That is what he will say. To clarify, the President of the United States will claim, at the end of the night, he cannot secure the Nation's border. How embarrassing. What a shameless dereliction of duty and a bold-faced lie. He thinks that Americans are either too stupid to see what is going on here or he might think they just don't care, but I think they do. He is wrong on both counts. Tuesday's primary race results proved just how wrong he is.

When I last spoke on the floor 1 week ago, I said I would be back the next time an American was killed by an illegal alien. Well, here I am, and it is far too soon.

This past weekend, 27-year-old Washington State Patrol Trooper Christopher Gadd was killed by an illegal alien. This is he right here. Raul Benitez Santana—a Mexican citizen, drunk and high behind the wheel—crashed his car into Trooper Gadd and killed him. Trooper Gadd was a husband, a father, a brother, and a son. Benitez Santana has been arrested