

How in the world can you think this is an OK thing to do to the brave Americans who wore the uniform?

Project 2025 would lay the groundwork for the nightmare scenario of a national abortion ban. It would effectively clear the way for States to monitor women's pregnancies and threaten Federal health funding if they don't comply.

This is all outlandishly sinister. Yet it is precisely what the hard right is promising the American people if Donald Trump returns to office. And make no mistake, there is no better opportunity for Republicans to ram these cruel policies down Americans' throats than in a government funding fight early next March.

A 6-month CR, particularly one that fails to fund important programs, some of which I have outlined a few minutes ago, is therefore not the answer for avoiding a shutdown later this month.

Speaker JOHNSON ought not bother with merely delaying his vote; he should scrap it, scrap his plan and start over. Speaker JOHNSON, scrap your plan. Don't just delay the vote, find a better one that can pass in a bipartisan way.

Leader JEFFRIES, the President, and I will gladly and readily work with the Speaker to keep the government open, just as we worked with him earlier this year on funding levels that honored our agreement from the debt ceiling debate.

I hope, I pray, Speaker JOHNSON will soon acknowledge the inevitable: We need a bipartisan plan to keep the government open.

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.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

The Senator from Vermont.

DISASTER RELIEF FUNDING

Mr. WELCH. Madam President, I have come to the Senate floor time and again and said to my colleagues that disaster relief funding is absolutely urgently needed. Today, the future of government funding is imperiled right now in the House, and the future of disaster funding is still unknown in the Senate.

And let me be clear, there are families across America, in Vermont, and in communities impacted by natural disasters all across our country that need us to help, and they can't recover without us. FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund is running out of money, forcing FEMA to function on what is essentially reserve funding.

This is no fault of FEMA's. It is all a result of the catastrophic weather events that have been occurring rapidly, frequently, throughout our country and in Vermont.

This past year and a half has brought brutal floods in Vermont and terrible fires, hurricanes, and tornadoes across our country.

Louisiana right now is bracing for the worst as Hurricane Francine moves onshore, and our prayers in Vermont are with the people of Louisiana. We know their heartbreak and their pain right now.

These communities—and it is especially the case with rural communities—cannot weather these storms alone. Some of those that are hardest hit are being financially destroyed. It is a function of the effects of climate change, and those communities don't have the resources to dig out, make repairs, and rebuild in the resilient way required for the future.

They can't handle a 100-year flood, and many in Vermont have had two 100-year floods in a year, in some towns even three in 12 or 13 months.

It is very important that disaster aid be flexible. We can't expect our communities—and it is from Vermont to Mississippi to Hawaii—we can't expect that those who are ravaged by disaster to fight this fight alone. The entire country has been hammered by climate change and by these weather events.

We need, in addition to the supplemental funding for the Disaster Relief Fund for FEMA, we need flexible funding which is available through the Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery Program. The CDBGDR Program is a great example of how aid can be controlled by communities because there is so much more flexibility with that fund.

Our Senator SCHATZ of Hawaii, as chair of our Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, is leading the push for this funding, and I join him in that effort.

Also, the experience I have had visiting communities, visiting farms, visiting businesses, and visiting Vermont homeowners immediately following our State's flooding has given me, No. 1, enormous respect for Administrator Criswell. She was right there after the flood along with her wonderful FEMA staff doing everything they could to help communities.

But once the immediate event has come and gone and the repair and recovery has to start, it is going to take, oftentimes, a year or more for communities to repair bridges, for families to get an answer on whether they do or don't get a buyout, for farms to get what meager relief may be available. And what we have seen is that at that point, the centralization of decision-making authority and responsibility with various FEMA offices located around the country and the FEMA office in charge of Vermont that has to make these decisions about yes or no on moving forward on a bridge or a buyout—things that are really crucially important to Vermonters, to our local governments, to our homeowners—is in Puerto Rico.

And what I have seen is that the energy and the effort and the resources and the talent is at the local level. So if you are on the selectboard in Lyndonville, you have got the responsibility to your voters to get that bridge fixed. You actually know who the best contractors are. You know how to get it done. But the way it works right now, those decisions about moving forward on a recovery project are made in a distant location.

I have talked to many of my colleagues about a similar aftermath of the original event: The immediate aid is provided, but then when you are talking about a contract, you are talking about implementation, the reality is we have to have, in my view, much more local control, much more local responsibility, and much more local capacity with the resources that are available through FEMA. It means the decisions will be made sooner, the work will be done in a more cost-effective and efficient way.

I raise that because I am talking to colleagues who have had similar experiences, some in States that are Republican-led, some Democratic-led. It really doesn't matter. It is about trying to get that authority at the local level so that the local people—whether it is Mississippi or Vermont—have much more authority, responsibility, and capacity to carry out those very, very needed repairs.

So that will be something I will be inviting my colleagues to work with me on.

This last summer, I spent a good deal of time traveling to the flooded communities—and there are too many of them in Vermont—to see what has happened to our homes, our small businesses and farms, to roads and bridges that were washed out. And folks across Vermont—in places like Moretown and Plainfield and Barre and Barnet, St. Johnsbury, Peacham, Lyndonville, and Hardwick—are all reeling from what has happened. They are pulling together; they are coming back. Neighbors are helping neighbors, but it is not going to get done unless we provide the supplemental funding with the disaster relief fund that is essential to the well-being of Vermonters, as well as the well-being of folks who have suffered from these catastrophic weather events across the country.

Vermont will hang in, but we do need help. And we are ready, as we always have been, to help others.

NOMINATION OF MARY KAY LANTHIER

Madam President, before I conclude, I just would like to make a remark about a word of support for the judicial nominee for the Vermont district Federal court whose nomination the Senate will be voting on shortly. And I am going to be—we are going to be hearing from my senior Senator colleague Senator SANDERS, but I just briefly wanted to add my own acknowledgment of the extraordinary person that Mary Kay Lanthier is.

She has got a lifetime commitment to public service. She comes from a

very small town in Fair Haven, VT. Her dad was a roofer—slate, worked in a slate quarry, did slate on roofs. Her mom has been a lifelong head of—she is the Postmaster in Fair Haven. And Mary Kay grew up in this small town and has smalltown values of service, modesty, humility, and she is incredibly accomplished as a person.

I believe she will be an excellent judge serving the State of Vermont.

With that, 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.

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

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

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, I am proud and excited to say a few words to urge my colleagues to support Mary Kay Lanthier as the next district court judge for the District of Vermont.

Ms. Lanthier is a native Vermonter who has spent her entire career in her home State, including working as a public defender in Rutland for 15 years. She grew up in a hard-working Vermont family, where the parents emphasized the importance of serving her community.

Ms. Lanthier learned that lesson well and has dedicated her career to being a public defender. In that role, she has fought for her clients to have a fair chance at justice in her courtroom. And if she is confirmed, I am confident that she will make sure that all of the people who appear in front of her are treated fairly and get the justice that they are due.

Ms. Lanthier began her legal career as a judicial law clerk for the trial courts in Chittenden and Addison Counties, where she developed a deep love and dedication for the work taking place in Vermont courtrooms.

Early in her career, Ms. Lanthier worked in private practice and public defense, working on family law, workers' compensation, and criminal cases. Since 2007, she has served as the supervising attorney at the Rutland County Public Defender's Office.

In that role and throughout her career, she has developed a reputation as a respectful and skilled attorney. Judges have praised her preparation, and opposing lawyers have written letters in support of her nomination. As one of those letters says, "Ms. Lanthier's compassion is a virtue that improved the administration of justice."

Last November, I was pleased to be joined by Senator WELCH, with input from Congresswoman BALINT, in forming a nonpartisan judicial nomination advisory panel to fill this vacancy on the Federal bench in Vermont. The panel was impressed by Mary Kay's career in public defense, her stellar reputation in the legal community, and her warmth and empathy.

I was also impressed after interviewing her. One thing that struck me was not only her deep love of the law but her deep love of Rutland, VT, where this judgeship is based.

For Mary Kay, I know that there is particular pride in doing this very important work in her hometown and for being a role model for the young people growing up there today about what is possible.

Along with Senator WELCH, I was pleased to recommend that President Biden nominate her for this position. She will be an excellent district court judge for Rutland and for the State of Vermont. I am confident that she will treat everyone in her courtroom with the compassion, respect, and dignity that they deserve. I urge my colleagues to support her confirmation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

NOMINATION OF LAURA MARGARETE PROVINZINO

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Madam President, I rise in support of Laura Provinzino's nomination to serve as the next U.S. district court judge for the District of Minnesota.

I want to thank Senators Durbin and Graham for working with me and both of them for supporting her and to move her nomination through the Judiciary Committee. I want to thank Leader SCHUMER for making the time and Leader MCCONNELL for the Senate to consider her nomination and also to thank my friend and colleague Senator SMITH for her work in support of this nomination.

We jointly had a committee made up of esteemed members of the bar that made recommendations to the White House. Ms. Provinzino is a distinguished public servant who has served the people of Minnesota as a Federal prosecutor. As an assistant U.S. attorney, she has led efforts to prosecute violent crime, human trafficking, child trafficking, and crimes against Native American women.

Through her devotion to justice and the rule of law, she has earned the respect and support of attorneys and law enforcement across our State. That is why she received a bipartisan vote in the Judiciary Committee and why I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will support her.

Public service runs deep in her family, and her family roots stretch across all corners of our State, from the Iron Range up north to the small rural town of Melrose, where her great-grandparents ran the local paper, to the Twin Cities metro area.

Like her father, she was born and raised in St. Cloud, MN. After graduating from St. Cloud Technical High School, she earned her B.A. at Lewis & Clark College and was a Rhodes Scholar. She then went on to receive her J.D. at Yale.

She then returned home to Minnesota to clerk for Judge Diana Murphy on the Eighth Circuit and joined the U.S. Attorney's Office in 2010.

As an assistant U.S. attorney, she has prosecuted over 500 cases and has

served as the Deputy Chief of Violent and Major Crimes. Her work has earned the respect and support of law enforcement. The largest police organization in Minnesota wrote in strong support of her confirmation and praised her "exceptional legal skills, unwavering integrity, and commitment to upholding the rule of law."

She has also received support from former law enforcement officials who worked closely with her. These officers and case agents wrote that she "is highly respected in the law enforcement community."

And 19 former colleagues at the U.S. Attorney's Office, including President Trump's U.S. attorney, Erica MacDonald, have likewise praised her for her "sharp legal mind, integrity, professionalism, dedication to service, and devotion to enforcing the law."

Given her extensive experience, it is no surprise that she has received commendations and awards from groups such as the Duluth Police Department to Women in Federal Law Enforcement, who honored her with the 2023 Top Prosecutor Award.

The U.S. Department of Justice honored her with the David Margolis Award for Exceptional Service. This is the Justice Department's highest recognition for service, and she earned it for her work dismantling a massive international sex trafficking criminal organization that forced hundreds of women to engage in commercial sex across the United States.

Her efforts in this case are considered a model for prosecutors across the country and are used to train Federal and State law enforcement on how to pursue international sex trafficking and money laundering investigations. Given her leadership on this issue, human trafficking prevention groups have strongly supported her confirmation.

Her work goes beyond women and children and her nationally recognized human trafficking work. She has also led the work of our State's U.S. Attorney's Office on the Project Safe Childhood Program, which is the Justice Department's effort to combat child sexual exploitation and abuse.

And, today, she serves as one of only five "missing and murdered indigenous persons" U.S. attorneys nationwide as part of the Justice Department's efforts to prevent the kidnapping, murder, and trafficking of indigenous people. Her area of responsibility covers 22 States. She is ready to serve on the bench. The ABA served her with its highest ranking of "well qualified." I know she will make an outstanding Federal district court judge for the District of Minnesota.

I ask my colleagues to support her confirmation. Again, I thank Senator DURBIN for his leadership of the committee and all who worked to support her.

I yield the floor.

NOMINATION OF MARY KAY LANTHIER

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, today, the Senate will vote to confirm