

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to address their remarks to the Chair.

STRENGTHEN CONGRESS' OVERSIGHT OF THE FINANCIAL OVERSIGHT AND MANAGEMENT BOARD FOR PUERTO RICO

(Mr. HERNÁNDEZ asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HERNÁNDEZ. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I introduced an amendment during the House Natural Resources Committee markup to strengthen Congress' oversight of the Financial Oversight and Management Board for Puerto Rico, specifically addressing net metering policies and the PREPA bankruptcy.

Though the amendment didn't pass, it received bipartisan support from Representatives TOM MCCLINTOCK, NYDIA VELÁZQUEZ, DARREN SOTO, and others. It is critical that Congress ensures transparency and accountability in Puerto Rico's financial and energy decisions.

The FOMB's stance on net metering harms our people, and the PREPA bankruptcy remains unresolved. After 7 or 8 years of questionable Federal oversight, it is time to hold the overseers accountable.

I will continue to fight for fairness and transparency for Puerto Rico, and I urge my colleagues to join me.

FEDERAL WORKERS SAVE TAXPAYERS MONEY

(Mr. SUBRAMANYAM asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise because many people want to paint Federal workers and contractors as unskilled bureaucrats who waste taxpayer dollars. However, the reality is the opposite. I know this because Virginia is home to hundreds of thousands of our country's Federal workers and contractors, and I have heard from many of them.

These Federal workers actually save taxpayers money, and they keep all Americans safe and healthy, despite all the regulations imposed on them by Congress. That is the bureaucracy. In almost all cases, they bring critical skills or expertise that are hard to replace.

One GSA employees says firings in her department, which is focused on threats to America's crops, could cost us hundreds of millions of dollars down the road.

One contractor who supports anti-terrorism efforts overseas was fired despite his track record of success countering extremism.

These firings even threaten border security. A contractor who vets refugees has to lay off 100 security experts because of the cuts.

No one will want to serve our government if Federal workers and contractors are treated this way. The attacks on Federal civil servants will cost taxpayers money and make all Americans less safe and less healthy.

RIISING UTILITY BILLS

(Mr. RILEY of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. RILEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, working families are getting screwed. Last year, I met a young family in Sullivan County who was struggling to make ends meet.

Mr. Speaker, do you cut back on the groceries to pay the rent? Do you maybe pick up a couple of extra shifts at work? However, then you have to pay for more childcare.

They are the tough conversations families are having at kitchen tables across Upstate New York.

Then, as if that is not enough, they get a letter in the mail from the utility company saying they are going to jack up rates again. These corporations are raking in billions of dollars, bragging to their investors about it, and now they want to take even more money from families struggling to get by.

Hell no.

Today I am fighting back. I am introducing a bipartisan bill to create good union jobs making homes more efficient. My bill will save families up to \$400 per year on their utility bills.

Mr. Speaker, \$400 is a lot of money for daycare, groceries, and rent because that young family in Sullivan County needs that money a hell of a lot more than the utility monopolies do.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO TIM TOOTEN

(Mr. MFUME asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MFUME. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a friend, a great journalist, a humanitarian, and a man of faith, Rev. Dr. Tim Tooten.

Tim was an admired journalist having spent more than 35 years reporting at Baltimore's WBAL-TV. He was a distinguished pastor at Harvest Christian Ministries and an accomplished writer.

Tim was also an award-winning filmmaker, a documentary person who believed in reporting and sharing facts, as well as a cherished teacher to so many.

He confronted life with the courage of his convictions and confronted death with the conviction of his faith.

Our condolences across the Baltimore area go out to his wife, Charlene; his loving children; and his grandchildren during this time.

We will miss you, my friend, but we will never ever forget you.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CRANK) laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker of the House of Representatives:

WASHINGTON, DC,
February 13, 2025.

I hereby designate the period from Thursday, February 13, 2025, through Sunday, February 23, 2025, as a "district work period" under clause 13 of Rule 1.

MIKE JOHNSON,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S DISMANTLING OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2025, the gentleman from California (Mr. GARAMENDI) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. Speaker, I am a stand-in. This is actually MARCY KAPTUR's Special Order hour. She is tied up in a hearing, so I will try to do my best to lay it out.

She was going to speak for 7 minutes on the issues of the Trump administration's dismantling of the Federal Government and the hiring of, or I guess the acquiescence of, Elon Musk as the principle agent of destruction.

What has happened over the last 17 days is an extraordinary display of contempt for the American Government. If you think about this, Mr. Speaker, in its totality, right off the start, all funding stopped.

What does that mean to the programs that Americans depends upon?

Healthcare, education, research, infrastructure programs, for what purpose was that done?

Perhaps it was in order to set up the next step which is the dismantling of extraordinary important programs for me and for my wife. More than almost 58 years ago, we participated in a USAID program which at that time was just 4 years old set up by Kennedy.

It was a vaccination program, an effort of the United Nations, funded by the American Government through USAID, to eradicate smallpox. We spent 1 month in rural Ethiopia doing vaccinations.

As our life worked on, we continued working to provide the necessary services so that people could survive, the Food for Peace program. Patti actually ran that when she was at the USDA as an assistant administrator.

The famine camps, we were there. We saw the children who were dying of starvation. We saw the American grain arrive. I remember clearly one evening at the famine camp in Ethiopia in the mid-eighties, a woman literally in rags, was picking up individual grains of wheat that had spilled from the bags trying to fill a cup so that there would be enough food that she could take back to her children.

They died that night of starvation.

The richest man in the world invested over \$250 million in a Presidential campaign, and he was given the keys to the American Government and the opportunity to destroy things that he didn't like.

□ 1130

USAID not only providing the necessary food to allow people to continue to live, but also to thrive through agricultural programs and economic development programs around the world. People who didn't have the opportunity were given the opportunity through the generosity of the American people.

Mr. Speaker, when someone has the greatest wealth of any individual and seems to think they have the right to destroy lives, before our President gives someone the power to do that, I would ask the individual to get on their private jet or to get on Air Force One and go to one of the famine camps in southern Sudan and hold a starving child in their arms. The individual should look at the extended belly, the vacant stare, the fact that they are not even able to hold up their head and know that the American people have developed an emergency supplemental food program that can revive that child. After that, come back and decide whether to put USAID into the wood chipper. If anyone has just a modicum of humanity and a sense of compassion, they would never, never ever take USAID and destroy it.

There are other programs out there, and we will be talking about these other programs as my colleagues join us here on the floor. There is the Department of Education and the Labor Department.

Giving the richest man in the world the keys to the U.S. Treasury? What is going on here?

What information has been gathered?

Where did that information go?

What will it be used for?

Who owns that information now: the U.S. Government, or Elon Musk?

These are serious questions. My colleagues and I will raise these questions.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to Mr. CASTEN.

Mr. CASTEN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, last week, my colleague, HALEY STEVENS, and I introduced the Taxpayer Data Protection Act. I am going to get to that in a minute.

I woke up this morning to find that apparently this bill had gotten Mr. Musk's attention. I will read the tweet from that great statesman and special government employee, Elon Musk:

"Any given law will do the opposite of its name.

"The one this guy wants to pass is called 'Taxpayer Protection,' which means its real goal is giving taxpayers the shaft!

"What he really cares about is hiding the biggest scam in human history."

Those are his words, the great statesman, Elon Musk.

I would point out that we attack what we fear. As Teddy Roosevelt said: It is the man in the ring who matters.

I would like to give Mr. Musk a little view from inside this ring. A couple of weeks ago, Elon Musk and his goons hacked into the Treasury payment system. That is the system that controls \$5 trillion a year of payments. They came in with unsecured software, unsecured hardware, and unvetted individuals. They claimed they only had read-only access. It now turns out that they actually had write access, as well.

We don't know what information they extracted from that system, but it may make them targets of our foreign adversaries. They could have stolen data that affects the privacy of every single American taxpayer. They also potentially accessed data on the payment systems and identities of intelligence assets that we have embedded overseas in hostile foreign governments who are risking their lives to keep America safe.

What this bill does is exactly what it says it does, notwithstanding this childish tweet. It is the Taxpayer Data Protection Act.

I point out that the only reason Mr. Musk got into the system is because, when he asked Treasury Secretary Bessent to let him into the system, the civil servant and patriot, David Lebyrk, who was running the system, said: No, you cannot do this. At that point, Secretary Bessent fired Mr. Lebyrk, and the theft of data occurred.

What we did in this bill is said that, going forward, the Treasury Secretary cannot allow anybody to access the Treasury payment system unless: number one, they have a top secret clearance; number two, they have no economic conflicts of interest; number three, they are not a special government employee; and, number four, they have been employed by the Federal Government for at least 1 year.

That is a problem if one is a Nazi-saluting, economically conflicted, special government employee who is so desperately in need of validation that they bought a social media company and tweaked its algorithm to amplify their own tweets and fill their own sense of self-worth, who is currently cosplaying as a public servant.

It is not a problem for taxpayers. It is not a problem for data integrity.

I understand protecting personal data has never been Elon Musk's jam, but it is necessary. This bill does exactly what it says, which is why he fears it and why he attacks it.

Let me say what I fear. I fear what happens to our country if his conflicts of interest are allowed to run roughshod and trample over Americans' right to privacy and all that has ever truly made America great.

We are attacking what we fear, as well, and I hope that we can find three Republicans who are committed to the idea that that is something worth defending.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. CASTEN for his comments.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ).

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding and I thank my fellow appropriator and friend, MARCY KAPTUR, for initiating and hosting this Special Order hour.

I thank my friend, the gentleman from California (Mr. GARAMENDI), for standing in for the gentlewoman because it is incredibly disturbing that we must come together to condemn what should be inherently obvious.

Elon Musk was elected by no one, confirmed by no one, and is accountable to no one. Yet, President Trump allows this conflict-riddled billionaire to rifle through Americans' highly sensitive records and attack the public servants who look out for all of us. I have never witnessed such utter contempt for the Constitution and the rule of law.

It is clear who is running this White House. It is Elon Musk, whose nonstop lies would leave human rights groups in Cuba and Venezuela out to dry and victims of famine and natural disasters left to starve or die.

Donald Trump is allowing Musk to illegally slash our efforts to counter dictators and protect democracy, the man with billions on the line in China.

Trump and Musk are gutting agencies that are investigating Musk's companies. Is that coincidence?

All the while, Donald Trump ignores what he committed to prioritizing throughout his campaign: making everyday life more affordable for everyone.

Mr. Speaker, this chaos crew in the White House is rocking the faith of Americans. It is alienating allies and destabilizing our businesses. It is trashing our ability to honor our commitments and fulfill the basic functions of government.

My constituents are angry and afraid, and they should be. It is understandable. Musk and his minions will gut any program that doesn't line their own pockets.

These cruel, reckless cuts built on lies and illegal funding freezes will devastate the children, veterans, and seniors that we Democrats fight for every day, and worse. All that this chaotic Republican rip-off will do is raise grocery prices and healthcare costs for our families. While Musk steals children's Social Security numbers, Trump is busy enacting policies that will raise prices on everything from prescription drugs to affordable housing.

As Musk digs through mom and dad's tax returns, he and Trump are gutting consumer protections that keep scammers from ripping Americans off. All of this is designed for one thing: to pay for more millionaire and billionaire tax breaks and open the door to gut Medicaid, Medicare, and Social Security.

In fact, the Budget Committee is meeting right now, as we speak, to do

just that. They all get wealthier, and the lives of working families become even more unaffordable.

Mr. Speaker, we are not going to roll over and let this madness continue. Every dollar illegally stolen from our Federal agencies must be restored. We must continue to hold Trump and his billionaire friends accountable. We are going to continue to protect victims of scams and natural disasters, regardless of what Trump or his billionaire puppeteer proposes.

The Musk-Trump unchecked raid of taxpayer dollars must end. We must commit together to reduce people's everyday kitchen-table costs, and Democrats will stand up every single day to fight to put lowering people's costs at the top of the agenda.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) for her comments.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LANDSMAN).

Mr. LANDSMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to also talk about Elon Musk and to ask the Speaker and my colleagues to follow the money.

Elon owns six companies, two of which are Tesla and SpaceX. SpaceX alone has received something like \$20 billion in Federal contracts. That is Federal taxpayer dollars. Tesla, when it was struggling to get off of the ground, got a half-a-billion-dollar loan from the Department of Energy.

This is in addition to the billions that they have received in tax credits and other supplements from the Federal Government. He is not just the world's richest man, but Elon Musk is trying to become the first trillionaire in the history of the world.

Mr. Speaker, during the 2024 election, Musk gave over \$200 million to Trump and Republicans. That is a lot of money. Trump wins, and Elon, just weeks—not months—after the election, generates several hundred billion dollars in new wealth, making his way to that trillion-dollar number.

He generated all of that new wealth because the markets knew that, with Trump, he was going to have access to even more of our money. They knew he was going to get billions more in contracts, billions more in Federal subsidies, and he is well on his way.

To expedite these efforts, Trump empowers Musk, moments after he is inaugurated—Musk, an unelected tech billionaire. He empowers him to take access of our personal data, all of it. He gives him access to the Federal payment system. He gives him power to purge as many Federal workers as he possibly can, all in the name of waste, fraud, and abuse, which, in the end turns out to be somewhat accurate.

By the way, what happened with the data breach and the fact that he now has access to all of our data is arguably the greatest data breach in the history of the United States of America.

Mr. Musk has defunded Federal programs, purged public servants, and stripped resources away from government oversight, all while getting richer and richer at the expense of the rest of us.

Today, the State Department said they plan to spend \$400 million of our tax dollars to purchase Tesla Cybertrucks.

Why in the world would the Federal Government buy one Tesla Cybertruck, let alone \$400 million of Tesla Cybertrucks: waste, fraud, and abuse.

□ 1145

Every day, Elon Musk makes \$8 million from government contracts. That number just went up. In comparison, seniors on Social Security get \$65 a day.

The question that so many are asking is: How do you fight back against this waste, fraud, and abuse?

There is a playbook, Mr. Speaker. It is the Constitution of the United States. Article I does not lay out the powers of the Presidency or the Supreme Court, the Judiciary, Article I lays out the powers of the Congress of the United States.

This Congress is responsible for appropriating funds and oversight of the Federal Government and holding the President accountable. The Founders envisioned this moment. They didn't know that it would come with a billionaire tech donor, but they envisioned this moment. With Republicans in control of both the House and the Senate, they have to step up and deal with this waste, fraud, and abuse.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. Speaker, critical important issues have been raised in the last 20 minutes or so about the issues of conflicts of interest, of corruption, and of policy mistakes that the current administration has put in motion over the last 15, 16 days.

I will draw the attention of the House to this diagram, and this is just a display of some of the contracts that Elon Musk has with the government. In total, it is more than \$15 billion, but in each of these there are some very subtle and ominous opportunities for corruption.

I will point out just one. In the Inflation Reduction Act and in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, there is money for electric vehicle charging stations. In fact, there is a substantial amount of money. It turns out that Tesla has some 20,000 charging stations around the United States and has become the principal charging station connection to all electric vehicles.

If Elon Musk were to shut down the money for other companies to build charging stations, he would then have a monopoly. It is subtle but obvious to those of us who watch.

My colleague spoke to the issue of the State Department putting out on its website a very specific \$400 million purchase order of just one vehicle, a Tesla cybertruck.

Corruption, yes. Waste, probably. Yet, here we are with an unelected in-

dividual who has extraordinary power, in fact, the power of the Presidency, and the Presidency is misusing the power to shut down organizations around this country.

I will suggest that the Democrats have a different view of government and a different view of purpose.

Franklin Roosevelt once said: "The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little." That test is now before the Congress of the United States.

Hardworking families are struggling, dealing with inflation. Yet, it appears as though the Trump administration is going to focus on making the wealthier even more wealthy. We need to think about this.

In the days ahead, I am certain that our Democratic colleagues will put forth a rigorous defense of the programs that Americans and indeed people around the world depend upon. We will do that together with the men and women around this Nation who have seen the effect, in many cases, the tragic effect of the shutdown of government and the shutdown of agencies upon which we all rely.

Simultaneously, we will put forth a positive agenda about what we stand for and how we see America growing in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I notice the arrival of the esteemed gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) who had actually put together this 1 hour. It has been a privilege for me to stand as a substitute. She has now arrived, and I turn my attention back to MARCY KAPTUR and her 1 hour. I thank her for the opportunity to sub for a bit while she was tied up in committee. I know she had good work to do there.

Ms. KAPTUR, the floor is yours.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

ELON MUSK-DOGE THREATS TO GOVERNMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2025, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for the remainder of the hour as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, may I inquire as to the time remaining.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from Ohio has 35 minutes remaining.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congressman GARAMENDI, who is such a distinguished Member, for substituting for me while I was in our Budget Committee. I know what a phenomenal job he does and how deeply he loves our country and how hard he fights for her and for all the people that he represents and those include my constituents, too. His work is just phenomenal. I thank him for being here today.

Mr. Speaker, I will focus a little on Elon Musk and put some materials in