

FBI, an Agency that he claims organized a secret plot to invade the Capitol?

He wrote a book called “Government Gangsters,” and at the end, he added an appendix entitled “Enemies List”—like straight out of the McCarthy era. He has a list—he wrote it down—of people he believes are enemies of America, and—shocker—they are all Democrats or Republicans who dared speak out and criticize Donald Trump.

You are going to put at the head of the FBI—the Agency that can arrest anyone they want, put people in jail—a man who thinks that anyone who disagrees with Donald Trump politically is an enemy of the United States?

Patel has further suggested that anybody who administered the 2020 election could be subject to arrest. Why? Because he believes in his heart that the election was rigged, despite the fact that Joe Biden won by 7 million votes—far, far more than Trump won by in 2024. So anybody that helped “rig” the 2020 election is, in his mind, a potential criminal.

This is off-the-wall stuff. Of course it is. Because while he believes this, he also knows that there is a money-making opportunity in all of this. This is his logo: “K\$H.” He is a brand. He says all of these things because he believes them but also because it makes him a hero to the gullible conspiracy theorists inside MAGA. He uses them. He sells stuff to them—sweatshirts, T-shirts, lapel pins. K\$H.

Now, if you buy this sweatshirt for \$55, it says: “All net profits go to the Kash Foundation.” But you know what we found out, unsurprisingly, is that in 2023, by selling all these sweatshirts and merch, the K\$H foundation had \$1.3 million in revenues. Now, it purports to support heroic conservative whistleblowers with legal services and other support services. Do you know what percentage of that \$1.3 million went to actual services? Less than 15 percent. Kash Patel pocketed almost all the money he made from selling these T-shirts.

He even hocks a COVID vaccine-reversal pill. Let me say that again. The incoming Director of the FBI, in addition to selling T-shirts and pocketing most of the proceeds, also sells a vaccine-reversal pill that is just, like, pure snake oil. But if there are enough people loyal to Donald Trump to buy anything Trump’s lieutenants sell on the internet, then fair game.

To top it all off, just recently, after his confirmation hearing, we also found out that Kash Patel has been a fashion consultant to a shadowy holding company controlled, it seems, by members of the Chinese Communist Party—like, honestly. Honestly. How on Earth are we going to let someone lead the world’s most important, most revered law enforcement Agency who is secretly in business with the Chinese Communist Party, who believes that the FBI organized the invasion of the Capitol, who runs a fake charity, and

who has a brand in order to make money off of his affiliation with Donald Trump? He has an enemies list. He thinks that people who helped elect Joe Biden are criminals.

This is a really dangerous moment. It is a really dangerous moment. This deal that Donald Trump just cut with the mayor of New York—it is a big deal. It is a big deal.

I admit that prior Presidents have made decisions that compromise the rule of law, but we have never seen anything like this so brazen and out in the open, that the mayor of New York and a Trump official would go on national TV to announce that they had made an arrangement in which Mayor Adams could continue his corruption as long as he was politically loyal to Donald Trump. They did that out in the open on TV because it is a signal to everybody else out there that the law will be applied differently to you if you are loyal to the President and that the law will be zealously applied to you, maybe in excess of the letter of the law, if you are a critic of the President. That is why they went on TV, to show the world the corruption as a signal that things are different now, that the law is not the law; the law is what President Trump decides the law is.

The law loses all meaning when it becomes simply what the President, what the leader on any given day decides.

This is the worst possible moment to put a person like Kash Patel in charge of the FBI. It is heartbreaking to see so many of my Republican colleagues—many of whom I admire—put loyalty to Donald Trump ahead of loyalty to this country and, more specifically, loyalty to that sacred principle, the rule of law.

My prediction is that if you vote for Kash Patel, more than any other confirmation vote you make, you will come to regret this one to your grave.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

BUDGET RECONCILIATION

Mr. LUJÁN. Mr. President, over the past week, Elon Musk and Donald Trump have fired thousands of Federal workers, many of them in New Mexico, without warning. The calls that I get to my office from constituents all across New Mexico are expressing concern, surprise, alarm, not knowing what is going to happen next, worried about a project. A professional whom I spoke to who works for the Bureau of Indian Education, who has a responsibility to help diagnose and support students with disabilities, asked: Do I stay and help these kids? What is going to happen with this stuff?

Whether it is our neighbors who work to support the National Labs to keep us safe or our friends who work at the U.S. Department of Agriculture helping our farmers and ranchers feed our Nation—these illegal mass firings are impacting communities across every corner of New Mexico.

To sum this up, what I keep hearing from New Mexicans every day is:

Please help me. Speak up. Say something. Do something. Bring attention to what is happening to the harm that is being caused in our communities, for all of our constituents.

This isn’t about Democrats or Republicans; it is about right or wrong. It is about real people.

Now, instead of protecting these jobs and helping our fellow Americans, Senate Republicans are pursuing a partisan budget resolution that will make it even harder for families to afford their healthcare, put food on the table, or get an education for their students, for their kids.

This is, quite frankly, chaos. And it is chaos that the American people cannot afford. New Mexicans and Americans from all walks of life rely on the programs that Republicans are now attacking. These are programs that feed seniors, veterans, children, the disabled. These are programs that house our veterans, that keep folks warm during these winter months.

And why are Republicans ripping these services away from people who need them? To fund this Trump tax scam. Now, it is 2.0. The American people and constituents across New Mexico are the ones who told me back in 2017: This really feels like a scam.

What Republicans are saying is middle-class families are going to get everything in here when it comes to a tax cut. But what we saw play out is: If you are making millions of dollars, you did OK, you got the brunt of everything that was in this tax scam.

Lying to the face of the American people is what happened in 2017, and it certainly feels the same now.

Let’s talk about one possible outcome of this budget resolution. In New Mexico, Medicaid covers 75 percent of births, supports around 92,000 children in my home State. Across the country, nearly 40 percent of babies are born with the help of Medicaid. For these babies and pregnant women, this program is vital, offering a chance to grow up healthier and have the best opportunity to succeed. We should all want that for our constituents. That is not partisan.

Unfortunately, Republicans have made it clear that they are determined to slash Medicaid. They tried it in 2017. What I hear from my Republican colleagues when they are being interviewed and being asked the question “are you going to cut Medicaid,” they certainly attempt to try in every form and fashion to say: No, no, no. We are not going to touch it. We are just going to leave it up to the States.

Let me translate what that means. What Republicans in Congress are going to do is work to eliminate every Federal dollar with Medicaid. There is this acronym FMAP. It is a Federal matching program to make Medicaid work across America. That is what they are going after. And if you visit with anyone across America who knows anything about how this program works, they will all tell you,

without these Federal dollars, this program goes away.

This Republican budget resolution sets the stage for dismantling Medicaid, which could result in pregnant moms and babies losing healthcare. That is just one possible outcome.

As I said earlier, the American people deserve honesty and transparency. Look, I understand if my Republican colleagues want to do this. Just own up to it. Tell the American people what you want to do. Let them know. Just be honest with them. That is the least that the American people deserve.

Last week in the Budget Committee, I offered a number of commonsense amendments to help lower costs for families, to strengthen border security, safeguard healthcare, promote American manufacturing and businesses, and invest in public safety. And top of mind for many Americans, I offered an amendment to ensure that Elon Musk and his companies are not profiting off the same government that he is dismantling. Elon Musk, who was not elected by the American people, is pursuing an extreme agenda to serve his own interests and greed. All while the American people are paying the price for it.

If Republicans are serious about tackling the issues and lowering costs, let's work together. You have partners here ready to do this for the American people.

But my Republican colleagues know better than I that what is happening under this President and Elon Musk is the cost of goods continues to go up. I don't know how many of you were at the grocery store this weekend in this Chamber, but if you haven't been, go by it. Go by and try to buy some eggs. You are going to see a sign that limits you to maybe a dozen, maybe 2. And you are going to see the costs going up and up and up—milk, butter. You look at it, you see it, you name it—it is all increasing in price.

What happened to President Trump saying on day one he was going to lower the cost of these goods for the American people? It is not happening.

Look, to sum this up, Americans will not be able to make ends meet if Senate Republicans dismantle the programs that make our country strong and secure to advance yet another tax scam.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, we may not be in a quorum call, but I can tell you this, we are in the midst of a 1,200-year drought in the American West that challenges us in extraordinary ways—from vast new insect and disease outbreaks to catastrophic wildfires. Instead of having fire seasons, there are many people now who observe that it has become trite, I would say, to observe, as the fire season lasts all year.

Our national forests in Colorado and throughout the Rocky Mountain West are the headwaters of America. In

those forests is the origin of the streams and rivers that flow to the rest of the Western United States. In the case of just the Colorado River Basin alone, 40 million people rely on it. It is the lifeblood of the American West, the lifeblood of the Western United States, and of every town and every community no matter how big and no matter how small. In Colorado and on every farm and ranch across the American West, they depend on this water, and they depend on the forests where this water stops. The critical aspect of this, I think, is that everybody who is downstream from us needs to care about the health of our forests and also our public lands.

As many people know, since COVID ripped through the United States of America, our public lands have become a place for the American people to find refuge, for the American people to be able to get away from each other, for families to have the time to also be together on America's public lands. And as many people now say, our public lands are being loved to death. We have had Americans from all over the world come and discover the public lands in Colorado and throughout the West, but it has created new pressures on our communities, new pressures on the lands themselves and also on the communities that are surrounding them.

Now, when we find ourselves in a place where we are facing these challenges and where we have done a little bit of work just over the last few years because of the money we were able to get into the bipartisan infrastructure bill, it is not the forests that we are thinning; it is the Forest Service staff that has been clearcut by what the Trump administration is doing and has proposed to do.

Even before the Trump administration began their across-the-board cuts on the Forest Service, the Forest Service had 30 percent less of a workforce than it had 30 years ago. Think about that. While the stresses and strains have grown, while the effect of that 1,200-year drought and climate change has grown, now we find ourselves in a place where the Forest Service is getting whacked by the administration.

Last year, even before the Trump administration came back to town, I met with Forest Service employees in Colorado—actually, not just the Forest Service but the other western public land Agencies from the Western Slope of Colorado to the Eastern Plains of our State—who told me that they can't hire anybody to work for these Agencies because Federal pay has not kept up with the cost of housing.

They were the best jobs in our communities years ago. You could live on one person's salary. You could have a household. You could raise kids in a community. You never had to leave the community you grew up in if you had one of these jobs. Today, nobody can afford housing in Colorado. That is a huge problem for America, not just for my State, but it is certainly true of the

public employees in the Forest Service. To add insult to injury, it takes months and months and months of bureaucratic nightmares to hire people.

Now, Donald Trump has come here without any understanding of the needs on the ground of the American people and of our States and of our watersheds, and he has decided to impose across-the-board cuts that, I suppose, he is going to use in the end to try to justify the \$4.6 trillion in tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans. You heard that right. At a time when we have had the worst income inequality than we have had since the 1920s, Donald Trump wants to extend his tax cuts for the wealthiest while he is doing things like cutting the Forest Service across the board. Forty-five percent of the benefit of that bill goes to the top 5 percent of Americans. I never understood the priority the last time he cut taxes for the wealthiest people and claimed it was a middle-class tax cut, but I especially don't understand it when he is slashing the Forest Service.

This isn't about the Forest Service employees, although I think they should be treated better; it is about the people whom they serve. They are public servants who are doing the work we need them to do in our forests. It is already challenging enough to do it without these cuts. To level an across-the-board cut—terminating 3,400 employees, including at least 90 in Colorado—is the wrong thing to do.

These unfounded layoffs are just the latest offense to an Agency that is already working, struggling to keep up with the demands of the American people and the reality on the ground.

In the last few days, my office has heard from a number of Forest Service employees who were fired last week. We heard from a Forest Service program manager whose first Forest Service job was as a wildland firefighter at just 19 years old. That is a very, very common way for people to come into the Forest Service. And she recently returned to the Forest Service to manage high-priority recreation and restoration projects for one of the busiest national forests in the United States and help the management plan process for the Camp Hale National Monument, which honors our World War II veterans.

I have also heard from a 40-year career civil servant who has worked for multiple Agencies in rural Colorado, including over 25 years in the Forest Service. As a result of her vast experience and years of service, she was recently promoted which put her in probationary status, not because she was a new employee but because she was—with all of her vast experience, she had been elevated, she had been promoted. But she was, nevertheless, a probationary employee because of the way the bureaucracy works. Over the weekend, she was let go; and she worries that she will never have her well-earned position. These people have done absolutely nothing wrong.

We heard from a lifelong Coloradan who is a national leader for forest conservation and deeply respected in our community. This person moved across the State for a position with the Forest Service. Their work informed local efforts to reduce wildfire risks and restore forest health, creating a safer landscape for wildland firefighters to work in when a fire does break out, which, by the way, is almost all the time these days.

Ironically, the administration fired a member of a Colorado National Forest leadership team—get this, Mr. President—who was actually involved in planning for staff reduction. But it wasn't the across-the-board reduction that came from Washington, DC; it was the thoughtful reduction that you can only do if you are close to the local level.

Our forests look nothing like Central Park, and I am not sure President Trump understands that.

This person was responsible for teams of people working on energy production, wildfire prevention, and the responsible use of our public forests. And there are countless other stories already of people who recently signed up for seasonal work to help manage recreation, rangeland, and wildlife habitat who are now unemployed.

Trump and Musk's actions aren't about increasing efficiency or repaying American taxpayers. These cuts don't root out fraud or government waste, but these actions do place an immense burden on the citizens of Colorado, on the citizens on the West. We are hanging out communities to dry all over—all over—the American West.

I am glad my colleague from Oregon is here, the former chairman of the Finance Committee, who also has had to watch these crazy tax cuts—which by the way, Mr. President, I will say to my colleague: That is not even a speech I was supposed to give. It is about the across-the-board layoffs of people in our forests who already are totally undermanned and aren't able to keep up with the demands of the public. But, really, for what? So you can pass a tax bill—not you but these guys on the other side—where 45 percent of the benefit goes to the richest people in America, or more?

Cutting staff that put out unattended campfires, that manage timber sales and support wildland firefighting efforts means that our communities will face much more wildfire risk come spring.

These cuts undermine businesses that require permits to operate on our public lands—from outfitters and guides to oil and gas companies—and mean fewer boots-on-the-ground staff to manage visitation—from clearing trails to cleaning bathrooms. That means we the American people risk losing our access to our most cherished public lands. Our Federal workers have devoted their careers to making our communities and our country better. They put the American people first, and I am grateful for their service.

Does that mean they couldn't do their job better? No. Does that mean they couldn't do it in a more efficient manner? No. In fact, that is one of the reasons why we have fought to put more money in the budget for fighting fires themselves, because waiting until the fire happens is the most expensive way you could possibly deal with it; but the second most expensive way would be to lay off the very people who help prevent the conditions from arising that are going to lead to those fires, which, by the way, cost \$50,000 an acre to fight.

The Forest Service employees throughout the West are fundamental to our economy and to our communities in Colorado. In fact, the fact that it has been hard to hire them has compromised our communities in really fundamental ways, and we ought to double down on the Forest Service's mission, investing in wildfire resilience, watershed health, recreation management, rooting out waste, and cutting redtape to make the Agency a better partner for rural communities across the country. That is what we would be doing.

Instead, President Trump and Musk's actions to eviscerate the Federal workforce take a torch to that approach and tear at the fabric of our communities. It is an insult to Colorado and all Americans. There is no reason they should do it, and they should rescind these cuts.

With that, Mr. President I thank my colleagues for their indulgence.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

BUDGET RECONCILIATION

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I am down here on the floor this afternoon with my colleague Senator Kaine from Virginia and the ranking member of the Finance Committee, Senator Wyden, to talk about the spending and tax bill that is coming before the Congress, driven by Republicans and the Trump administration. Whether it is one bill or two bills, it doesn't really matter. It is the centerpiece of Donald Trump's economic agenda.

It is really important to talk about the impacts that this spending and tax package will have on the American public. Well, there will be some new spending for defense and some new spending on immigration policy. The heart of this spending and tax package will be familiar to many Americans because they remember it from 2017, during the first Trump administration.

The heart of this Republican economic proposal is a massive tax cut for the very, very wealthy and for corporations and, this time, not borrowed to be paid back later by middle-class taxpayers. This time, it is paid for by immediate cuts to some of the programs that regular ordinary Americans, many frail seniors, depend on, like the Medicaid Program.

Just for a little bit of context, it does appear to a lot of Americans that this

whole thing feels a bit like a scam. This is a government that is being handed over to the billionaire class in order to operationalize government to make money for the very, very wealthy and for the rest of us to pay the price.

The cost of gas is going up, the cost of groceries continues to go up. Meanwhile, Donald Trump and his billionaire crowd are doing better than ever. Just a couple examples: Since Elon Musk, the richest man in the universe, has taken control of the government with Donald Trump, the value of his business has gone up by 30 percent. Tesla stock has gone up by 30 percent. Of course, it has. Of course, it has, because Elon Musk is now able to get inside the government to arrange things to benefit his companies.

For instance, the NLRB is gone. They fired the Democrat on the board. He is unable to muster a quorum. It is not coincidental that the NLRB had several open investigations of Tesla.

Our foreign policy has been monetized to support people like Elon Musk. It just broke yesterday that Vietnam is really worried about Trump's tariff policy, and so the way they are going to try to get some help from the Trump administration is to give some help to Elon Musk's businesses; that they are going to get Elon Musk a Starlink contract. And they believe that by doing that, they will be able to get help from the Trump administration on tariffs.

So Elon Musk and the billionaires are able to operationalize and monetize our foreign policy. Of course, Elon Musk has access to the data, especially the data inside Treasury that is going to help him gain an advantage on his competitors, whether he is trying to set up a new tax payment system or he is trying to set up a new universal payment capacity on Twitter. So it is not shocking that the value of Musk's business has gone way up because he now controls the Federal Government in a way that could benefit his business.

But Trump is doing very well, too. He made \$100 million off of a meme coin—a meme coin where we have no idea as Americans who is buying it. It is very likely foreign actors trying to influence the administration who could secretly buy the meme coin and then whisper to Donald Trump that “we got your back when you needed it.” Also, \$40 million from Amazon for a new documentary of the First Lady. Legal settlements from ABC News, Meta, and X—all, shockingly, settled with cash payments to the Trump family after the election.

And the monetization of foreign policy for Donald Trump, just like the monetization of foreign policy for Elon Musk. News this week that the PGA and the Saudis were meeting with the President to try to settle their disputes. It is not coincidental to the fact that Donald Trump is in business with one of those golf leagues.

So it just appears to many Americans like this administration puts the billionaires, the corporations, those