

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

that are loyal and friendly to Donald Trump first and all the rest of us second.

The apex of this effort to turn our government and government policy over to the billionaires is this tax cut. Again, this tax and spending package has a lot of elements to it, but the centerpiece is a tax cut that is 852 times bigger for the top 1 percent of earners in this country than for low-income families. That is a number that is a little hard to get your head wrapped around, so I just wanted to put it on this chart. That is what 852 times looks like.

The rates go down for folks who make more than \$600,000 a year, but they don't move for folks who make under \$600,000 a year. I mean, they are not trying to hide what is going on here. Rates are coming down if you make a whole ton of money. Rates are staying the same if you are middle income or lower income.

Another way to tell this story is that if you are in the top 1 percent, your average tax cut is about \$70,000. That is a lot of money. That is a lot of money. But if you are making \$30,000 a year—and there are a whole bunch of people in this country that are making \$30,000 a year, especially when Republicans refuse to support the minimum wage going above \$7.25 an hour. If you make \$30,000 a year, you are going to get about \$130. \$70,000 if you are doing really, really well; \$130 for everybody else. That doesn't make sense. Why do people making \$600,000 a year need \$70,000 while only 100 bucks goes to everybody else?

The corporations are in the mix here too. They came to Congress in 2017 and said: We need a lower tax rate. And then Trump and his Republican allies gave them a tax rate even lower than they asked. And they made this claim that all this extra money going to the corporations was going to be passed down to workers. They had a specific claim that it was going to result in \$4,000 more in income to every American, because that is how trickle-down economics works in the brains of Republicans. You give a whole bunch of money to corporations, and they are going to be generous, and they are going to give that money to workers in extra income.

Well, we now have 8 years of experience since that first tax cut that they are looking to reauthorize. We know what happened. The study shows that it wasn't \$4,000 of extra income; it wasn't \$3,000; it wasn't \$2,000; it wasn't \$1,000; it wasn't \$500; it wasn't \$400; it wasn't even \$200. It was zero. The tax cut resulted in an increase in salary to those people who worked for those corporations that got the big tax cut. The salary increase was zero.

It is a scam. Trickle-down economics is a scam. When you put this much money into the hands of the wealthy, it does not trickle down to everybody else. When you give corporations those enormous tax cuts, it does not trickle

down to everybody else. It stays in the pockets of the wealthy. The corporations use it in order to do stock buybacks, in order to inflate CEOs' salaries. It just separates the rich from the poor. It is a scam. It is a scam.

The last thing I will say before turning it over to Senator Kaine is that this version of the giant billionaire and corporate tax cut is so much worse than the first version. It is still a tax cut for the wealthy that is 852 times bigger than for folks at the bottom of the income scale, but whereas in 2017, it was all borrowed—and that is bad because that money has to be recouped somehow.

That means that everybody eventually is either going to pay higher interest rates or have their taxes raised or their services cut to service all that debt—trillions of dollars' worth of debt. This time, Republicans are contemplating not borrowing the money but instead just taking it from poor people and middle-class people—just take it from them to give it to the billionaires and the corporations.

The cut that they are contemplating in the House of Representatives is a cut to Medicaid. Now, they are also thinking about cuts to Medicare, your parents' primary health insurance. They are contemplating cuts to the Affordable Care Act. That is the program that insures 20 million working Americans, but they are really zeroed in on Medicaid.

They are contemplating such devastating cuts to Medicaid that it would eviscerate the program. And maybe you can say: Well, I mean, it is Medicaid for poor people, and that is not me. Well, I think we have an obligation to try to make sure that everybody in this country—even poor children—have access to healthcare, but Medicaid also pays for your parents' or your neighbors' nursing home costs.

If you cut the amount of money that they are talking about out of the Medicaid Program, you are literally talking about nursing homes shutting down and seniors being out on the street. That is not hyperbole. That is what happens if you make these massive cuts to Medicaid.

So what they are talking about this year is not just running up a credit card bill in order to fund the tax cuts for the wealthy, they are literally talking about putting seniors out on the street in order to fund the tax cut for the wealthy.

The whole thing feels like a scam: the favors being given to billionaires that are inside the government; the tax cut that benefits the very, very wealthy at the expense of everybody else; the cutting of services that help regular people in order to finance the tax cut.

And whether it ends up being one bill or two bills, the centerpiece is still the centerpiece: the transfer of resources and wealth from regular people, from the middle class, from poor people to the very, very wealthy, the millionaire and billionaire class, the corporations.

So we are going to tell this story here on the Senate floor, all over the country, while this bill moves its way through the process, either as one bill or two bills, because regardless of the process, the story is still the same: a scam to take money from regular people to make the lives of the rich and powerful even more lavish.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MORENO). The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. Kaine. Mr. President, I rise to follow my colleague from Connecticut to talk about the impending business before the Senate, the 2025 budget resolution.

My colleague talked about this discussion and the Republican proposal as a scam. I am going to use a slightly different term, but I bet we all know a "Trojan horse"—a Trojan horse. We all know the story about the Battle of Troy when the invaders created this beautiful gift of a horse that they then gave to those in the besieged city, but it turned out it wasn't a gift. It was an agent of destruction, and that is what this budget deal is.

If the Republican majorities here and at the House cared about the budget, we would have an appropriations deal. There was an appropriations deal on the table to be taken at the end of the last calendar year, but after the election result, the Republican majority just decided, we don't want to negotiate with Democrats in the Senate. We will kick it into next year, and we will come up with a budget deal that we write.

We would have had an appropriations deal before the end of last year. We would have had an appropriations deal by March 14. Instead, what Democrats are hearing is that the Republicans don't want to do the traditional appropriations budget. They want to do a continuing resolution, which would be very harmful.

If my Republican colleagues cared about the budget, they would complain about Elon Musk and Donald Trump unilaterally violating past appropriations deals that we all voted for and that the President signed. If they cared about the budget, that would matter to them because a deal is a deal, especially a deal that we voted on.

Instead, my Republican colleagues are quietly acquiescing to Head Start Programs closing, to community health clinics closing or reducing services, to veterans hospitals and clinics grappling with serious staff shortages.

Why would my colleagues quietly acquiesce to those kinds of violations of appropriations bills you voted for if you cared about the budget? This discussion is a Trojan horse. The advertised purposes of the bill that is pending before the Senate now are twofold: border security and defense.

Let me take defense first as a member of the Armed Services Committee. Do you need to use reconciliation to do defense spending? We not only do hundreds of billions of dollars a year in defense spending in a bipartisan way, but

twice in the last calendar year, we did supplemental appropriations to defense, once in April as part of a supplemental security deal and once at the end of calendar year 2024 as part of a continuing resolution.

We spent 850 billion, and we added to it twice with a bipartisan vote. You don't need reconciliation for that. You don't need reconciliation to find spending on border security. I have been here since 2013. We did a border security bill that was bipartisan that spent money in this Chamber. The House Republican majority killed it. In 2018, we did a bipartisan border deal in this body that spent tens of billions of dollars on border security. President Trump urged everyone to vote against it.

My colleague from Connecticut played a key role in a tough bipartisan border security deal just last year. President Trump said vote against it. All of those bills had significant budgetary resources to invest in border security. Donald Trump and House Republicans opposed them.

So if there is a track record of being able to do defense spending in a bipartisan way, border security spending in a bipartisan way, then why are we claiming—why are my Republican colleagues claiming that this reconciliation bill is about those two items? It is not what it is about. My colleagues have done a good job of explaining it.

This is about an effort to dramatically cut spending programs that support everyday Virginians and everyday Americans and then to take those dollars and use them to fund tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans and the biggest corporations, taking from people who rely upon community health clinics, rely upon Medicaid, rely upon student loans, taking those dollars and then using them to fund tax cuts for the wealthy.

My colleague from Connecticut talked in particular about the fixation that Republicans have had in slashing Medicaid. We saw it in 2017. The Republican priority during Donald Trump's first year was to kill the Affordable Care Act, but it went much further than just killing the Affordable Care Act.

Republicans made attack on the core of the Medicaid Program a key element, and that is why they ended up losing on the floor of the Senate in one of the most dramatic votes I have ever participated in. Medicaid is about our neighbors and parents in nursing homes.

Medicaid pays for more than half of the births in this country. The hospitals are reimbursed by Medicaid. Fifty percent of the Medicaid budget goes to children—I am sorry. Fifty percent of Medicaid recipients are children. Only 20 percent of the budget of Medicaid goes to kids, but 50 percent of the recipients.

When you go after Medicaid, you are going after folks with disabilities. You are going after our parents and grandparents in nursing homes. You are

going against kids. You are going against low-income mothers delivering children in American hospitals.

The tax cuts for the wealthy are not necessarily part of the proposal that is before us in the Senate right now, but the House GOP has given away the game. The big beautiful bill that is being urged on both House and Senate Republicans by the Vice President and the President contains the tax cuts for the wealthy that my colleague Senator MURPHY has described.

We need to have \$4½ trillion in tax cuts, and just as was the case in 2017, they will go to folks at the top. In fact, almost half of the benefits of these tax cuts would go to the top 5 percent of taxpayers. That is the end result of the process of reconciliation that we are starting on today.

So I would just say: Let's be candid about what is going on here. We can't trick people. We can't convince people, oh, this is about border security and national defense. We have got a demonstrable bipartisan track record to be able to advance in those areas.

The people that are out there whom the GOP are trying to trick in this effort, they are the ones in communities that are complaining about Head Start Programs being closed. They are the ones that see health clinics reduced or clinics laid off. They are the ones that are getting punched because they are veterans.

The indiscriminate layoffs that are being pushed by the DOGE brothers and President Trump hit veterans. Thirty percent of the Federal workforce are veterans. It is only about 3 percent of the civilian workforce, but if you do mass and indiscriminate layoffs of Federal employees, whom do you hurt disproportionately? You are hurting people who have served this country and are entitled to respect and gratitude. They don't deserve to be treated, in Donald Trump's words, as losers in the way that they are being treated with these indiscriminate layoffs.

These are the people who are being affected thus far by these policies of the President. So that is what we are fighting about, and that is whom we are fighting for.

We are going to offer amendments during vote-arama to clarify what is going on to try to protect Medicaid and children's nutrition and other safety net programs, and we will battle to try to convince some Republicans to join us in those amendments.

But let's just be clear about what this is: It is a Trojan horse-effort to amass savings off the backs of everyday people to pour into tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans who don't need help. We need to resist it in every way we can. I look forward to joining my colleagues in doing so.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I want to thank my colleagues Senator MURPHY

and Senator Kaine for very strong speeches, and I look forward very much to working with them in this fight.

My colleagues have raised a host of important issues that I want to touch on, and I am going to start with the big picture of what is going on in America as the Senate careens toward a budget showdown.

Donald Trump, as of today, seems to consider himself royalty. Elon Musk seems to believe he calls the shots. They are trampling over the Constitution and violating laws as they try to rip apart so much of what makes America special, and they are clearing the way for financial predators and financial scammers to steal from innocent Americans.

They are gutting medical research. Days after the deadliest airplane crash on American soil in decades and when more plane crashes seem to be happening by the hour, they fire hundreds of people who work on airline safety.

They are slashing the university system, which is the envy of the world and a huge source of economic growth and opportunity in America. They fired hundreds of people who manage our nuclear arsenal because whomever in DOGE ordered those fired didn't seem to have any idea what the Department of Energy does.

The national parks closed because they don't have enough staff, and that is going to be a disaster for rural communities that depend on tourism. Farmers missed payments they are owed. Nobody I know voted for this chaos.

Now, I heard firsthand from Oregonians this past weekend at townhall meetings. Thousands of Oregonians, according to the press, were in attendance. They shared their real fears and legitimate concerns about how this slash-and-burn approach we are seeing from Trump and Musk is a recipe for a lower quality of life in America and people will lose their lives as a result of these attacks on healthcare and medical research.

Unfortunately, there has barely been a peep from Republicans. In fact, I have heard more support for Trump than criticism of this lawlessness from the other side, and it is business as usual here in the Senate.

What is so important to my colleagues on the other side that they are letting Trump and Musk get away with this destruction? It is another round of breaks for billionaires and big corporations. That, colleagues, is the Republican prize at the end of this process. That is Trump's plan to pay back his supporters who bought the election for him.

Now for some specifics. The centerpiece of the plan is extending his 2017 tax law at a cost of more than \$4 trillion. Ultrawealthy individuals who rake in millions each year would get tax breaks of hundreds of thousands of dollars. Families who live paycheck to paycheck, as my colleagues have been talking about this afternoon, would be

lucky to get enough to cover groceries for a week. What an outrageous imbalance.

Trump and Republicans want typical Americans to be satisfied with peanuts compared to the growing fortunes of Elon Musk and Trump's other billionaire donors, and it is not just a bunch of extensions. Trump wants even more breaks for big, profitable corporations. Senate Republicans want new giveaways to the ultrawealthy.

How would it be paid for? By booting tens of millions of Americans off their health insurance, increasing child hunger, laying off hundreds of thousands of manufacturing workers, and raising the cost of living here.

The Republican chair of the House Budget Committee had a whole list of destructive proposals a few weeks ago. Dozens of pages long, item after item, it looked like the kind of plan you would design if your goal was to wipe out the middle class in America and push tens of millions of families into poverty.

But this was a real document from a Republican committee chair. A couple of lowlights stuck out to us on the Senate Finance Committee. Trump and Republicans want to take a wrecking ball to the Medicaid Program. It is a devastating prospect for tens of millions of Americans, and I heard about it in Oregon all this weekend.

Medicaid pays for two out of three nursing home beds. Where do American families turn when nursing homes no longer accept Medicaid due to these Republican cuts? What my colleagues are saying is who is going to take care of our parents and our grandparents?

Medicaid covers 30 million kids. That includes half of all American kids with special needs. Cuts to Medicaid will set these kids back for the rest of their lives. Hospitals, nursing homes, other providers in rural communities all over America barely hang on. They depend on Medicaid. If the Republican cuts go through, rural America is going to become a healthcare desert.

The clean energy tax cuts, which I worked on for a full decade, are another disaster in the making. Republicans are looking at wiping out a host of tax incentives for clean energy to pay for a big chunk of their handouts to the top.

Nobody is rooting harder for Republicans to succeed on this than the Chinese Government. That is because if Republicans follow through and gut the clean energy tax credits that we passed in 2022, it will be a total surrender to China on clean energy. Hundreds of thousands of American jobs would be destroyed. Energy prices will jump, and that will hurt working families and small businesses.

The jobs and investment we have attracted to America over the last few years, that goes to China and other countries that win the clean energy arms race at our expense.

If you look at that document from the House Budget Committee chair, it

is one item after another that is going to clobber typical families and communities across the land. They are looking at a tax increase on single moms. They are considering a tax increase that will raise the cost of owning a home. They are considering cuts to infrastructure that will hurt local economies. They are even considering taxing scholarships for kids looking to go to college.

The only people who won't feel the pain of these hardships are the ultrawealthy, people like Donald Trump and Elon Musk. There is a game of hide the ball happening here in the Senate, with this first resolution that hides all the unpopular plans in the second bill that comes down the pike.

Over in the House of Representatives, they are trying to cram it all into one bill. In the end, the process here in Congress won't really matter to the people whose lives are made worse by the painful cuts Republicans are preparing to inflict on the country.

The reality is, this agenda goes hand in hand with the lawlessness we are seeing from Elon Musk and Donald Trump. My view is, this amounts to pillaging the government. They are breaking vital programs at Agencies, and there is no sign they care about the people who are hurt so greatly along the way.

Donald Trump even admits out in the open that it is causing pain—his words, not mine. And here in the Senate, Republicans are getting ready to add to the cuts, and they are getting ready to give even more tax handouts to the top: Donald Trump, Elon Musk, and the billionaire donors who support them.

As my colleagues have said this afternoon so eloquently, we are going to shine a light on this floor on the destructive agenda of the Republicans as the debate continues. The American people do not support what is happening here in the Senate or what Donald Trump and Elon Musk are doing to their government. We are going to do everything we can to stop that. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I was here to speak on the across-the-board cuts that the Forest Service is facing in Colorado, but I was so glad to hear my colleagues from Connecticut and Virginia and Oregon talking about this tax bill. I want to add just a couple of thoughts to it.

First of all, I appreciate so much what they were saying because the American people are struggling, and it is not just with inflation. It is with an economy that, for 50 years, has worked incredibly well for the wealthiest people in our country and hasn't worked for anybody else.

It used to be the American dream. That is how we knew our country was working—when, if you worked hard, you could get ahead. Even more important to most Americans, when you

worked hard, you knew your kids were going to get ahead. And we are at a moment in American history, for the first time, when our kids, people that are 30 years old, are going to earn—half of them are going to earn—less than their parents. And people all over the country are looking at it and saying: That is not the America that I recognize. That is not the American dream.

And it is not the American dream.

Today, in the United States, the top 1 percent of people own 20 percent of our income. The bottom 50 percent own 10 percent. The bottom 50 percent own half of what the top 1 percent have.

Some people might say: Oh my God, that is just a natural feature of the way our economy works or the way capitalism works.

It is not, even in this country. Twenty-five years ago, that wasn't true; it was reversed. Twenty-five years ago, the bottom 50 percent earned twice as much income as the top 1 percent. And that has flipped since Ronald Reagan came here with his trickle-down economics that my colleague from Connecticut was talking about, with a tax policy that was all about rewarding the wealthiest people and the folks who were outsourcing jobs from the United States of America.

And now Donald Trump is here to do it again, as he did when he was President the last time. He went to the Mahoning Valley in Ohio, after passing that tax bill, and said: You are welcome for your middle-class tax cut.

But 50 percent of it went to the wealthiest 5 percent in our country. He gave a little tip, as the Senator from Connecticut was saying, to working people in our country to obscure the fact that what he was doing was giving massive tax cuts to the wealthiest people.

And I will finish just by saying this. Sometimes people say: That is not surprising, Michael. They are the richest people. So maybe they pay the most in taxes; maybe they should get the biggest benefit.

The reality is very different because somebody is going to have to pay for this bill. It is either going to be the cuts that they are going to make to Medicaid, which are cuts to a program for healthcare coverage for people in this country that are poor or working poor, or they are not going to pay for it at all.

And if they don't pay for it at all, the people who are going to have to pay for it are the kids of police officers and firefighters all over our country who are going to have to pay the debt that is incurred by Donald Trump's tax bill, which is what happened the last time.

The chairman will remember that. They didn't pay for it the last time. And when they didn't pay for it the last time, every working person in America is having to pay for it because of the interest rates that are on our national debt.

My friend from Virginia was the mayor of Richmond. This tax policy is

one—and I know my colleague from California wants to go; so I am going to stop. But this tax policy is equivalent to the mayor of Richmond waking up one morning and saying: I am going to borrow more money than we have ever borrowed in the city's history.

And I would say to him: I am worried about that. What are you going to do with that money? I am worried about what you might spend it on. Tell me what you are going to spend it on.

Are you going to spend it on parks?

No.

Are you going to spend it on infrastructure?

No.

Are you going to spend it on mental health, which we desperately need all over the country?

No.

Early childhood education, K-through-12 education, the university in our community?

No, no, no.

What are you going to do with all this money that you are borrowing?

Well, I am going to give it to the two richest neighborhoods in Richmond, VA, and I am going to expect that it will trickle down to everybody else in Richmond.

You would be run out on a rail for doing that, which is why no mayor in America has ever done that. No Governor in America has ever done that. And Donald Trump is about to try to do it for the second time—for the second time.

And I hope that people in this body won't be fooled by it, because we saw it before.

And we could get a big bipartisan vote in this Senate to begin to reestablish a set of economic rules that is actually lifting the fortunes of the vast majority of people in this country, instead of giving these tax cuts to the people in America who need it least.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. President, it is a great day to be a billionaire in America; for the rest of us, not so much. Egg prices are the highest they have ever been. Rent is through the roof. Prescription drug costs are squeezing families and seniors. But billionaires like Elon Musk—billionaires—are doing just great. In fact, they are about to be doing a whole lot better because, if Donald Trump and my Republican colleagues have it their way, they are about to get another massive hand-out—a \$4.5 trillion handout, to be precise—yes, trillion with a “t”—and one that will explode the national debt.

This bill, the one we will all, but certainly soon, consider on this very floor, reads like a thank-you card to the ultrawealthy. It supercharges the President's 2017 billionaire windfall.

But how, we should ask, are we going to pay for it? Well, we already know; don't we? They are going to come after Medicaid. Forty-four percent of their proposed cuts to fund this tax cut for billionaires are to Medicaid.

They are going to come after Medicare and healthcare generally. They are going to come after the services that keep our veterans housed, our communities healthy, our children educated. All of it—all of it—is on the chopping block, and here is the thing: They are already chopping away.

So let's be crystal clear about what Republicans are asking us to consider. It is a smash-and-grab, targeting not the local store but the national Treasury—a cash grab from the programs that keep so many hard-working families afloat and what will be the biggest wealth transfer in modern American history, and in exactly the wrong direction, from the working and middle-class families to the uber-rich, at a time when billionaires need it the least. Now, don't get me wrong. I am all for people succeeding beyond their wildest imagination. But like everyone else, they should earn it through hard work, not by stealing it from working people.

All of this comes as Elon Musk and Donald Trump seek to co-opt every lever of government to go after anyone who dares stand up to them. When I called out Musk for seeking access to Americans' personal banking and financial data from the IRS, he retweeted one of the replies and aimed it at—well, me, yours truly.

It read:

He's not trying to snoop around my personal finances. He's trying to snoop around yours—

Meaning mine.

They are not even hiding it anymore. The goal has never been to cut government waste or make government more efficient. No, the goal is to help their wealthy friends and go after anyone who dares criticize them or holds them accountable. They plan to use a weaponized IRS, a weaponized DOJ, and a weaponized FBI to investigate and prosecute and persecute Donald Trump's enemies, not just elected officials like myself but anyone who steps out of line: business owners, big or small, who could be next in line for an audit if they express their opposition to the President and what he is doing to hurt them with tariffs or anything else, or journalists who write stories that the President doesn't like—anyone—because anyone standing up to them is standing in the way of their very simple, well-demonstrated goal: One-man rule—give Donald Trump all the power, so he can take from the poor and give to the rich to feed his ego and bank account and that of his pals.

Remember the winter of 2023? Donald Trump stood at the gold-plated Mar-a-Lago podium and told a room full of the richest people in America:

You're all people that have a lot of money. . . . You're rich as hell. . . . We're going to give you tax cuts.

Most of my California constituents are not “rich as hell”—far from it—and Donald Trump couldn't care less about them. The vast majority of them make less in a decade than it costs to pay the million-dollar membership fee at Mar-

a-Lago, let alone the amount necessary to get a gold-plated promise from the now-President that their taxes will get lowered.

But for this administration, it has never been about ordinary Americans. And if you look at what Donald Trump is proposing here, the priority is exceedingly clear. If you look at what Elon Musk has done over the last few weeks, his priority is pretty damn clear as well.

A single mother choosing between paying rent and buying groceries, that is not the priority. A veteran wondering if the housing assistance that helped them get off the street is going to dry up, that is not their priority. But that billionaire who wants another yacht, now that is their priority. When a CEO wants another corporate loophole, that is the priority.

Now, of course, they won't put it that way. They will tell you this is about spurring investment or creating jobs or unleashing the power of the free market. We have heard that story before. Remember 2017, when Donald Trump gave trillions to the wealthy and promised these tax cuts would pay for themselves? Guess what—and you won't believe this. They didn't. They didn't pay for themselves. In fact, they exploded the deficit by as much as \$2 trillion. And now they are telling us the only way to fix the hole they dug is by cutting services for the Americans who actually need them and, of course, more tax cuts for rich people.

We all heard it when they told us: If we just cut corporate taxes a bit more, the savings are sure to trickle down to working families. Well, they didn't. Corporate profits hit record highs. CEO bonuses soared, but wages—wages for regular people—they barely budged, to the point where it would take an average worker at an S&P 500 company almost 200 years to make what their CEO made last year. Just think about that for a moment. It would now take an average worker at an S&P 500 company almost 200 years to make what their CEO made last year.

How is that right? How is that fair? How is that good economics? And how could they possibly want to make that worse?

What is their goal? To provide another tax cut for the wealthy so that it will now take 300 years for an average worker to make what their CEO makes?

We are hearing the same pitch all over again, but, I will tell you, what has changed since 2017, since that last big give-away? Nothing. Nada. Bubkes. They want you to believe that we can afford to shower the wealthiest people and corporations with even more tax breaks, but we can't afford to pay Federal workers, including a ton of veterans who dedicated their lives to serving this country at home and abroad.

Now, we can hand trillions to millionaires and billionaires, but we can't afford to help families afford childcare, or hire firefighters, or fund critical

cancer research—that the real problem, they would have you believe, in the richest country in the world is the program that helps seniors retire with dignity.

At the end of the day, governing is about choices. The choices aren't always easy. There are very few clear choices in a complex and robust democracy, but this should not be a hard choice, because today we are not asked what we can afford. We are asked what we choose to afford. We could choose to invest in our children, in our workers, in our future; or we can choose to hand the wealthiest Americans another tax cut they don't need. We can choose to honor the commitments we made to seniors, to veterans, to families struggling to get by; or we can choose to break those commitments just to make sure that Elon Musk's tax bill stays as low as humanly possible. After all, launching your car into space isn't cheap.

We could choose to build an economy that works for everyone, or we could choose to keep writing blank checks to those who already have more than they could spend in a hundred lifetimes or 200 or 300.

Donald Trump has made his choice. Elon Musk has made his choice. What will we choose?

Donald Trump and Elon Musk would have you believe that America is broke.

America isn't broke, but it is broken for so many people who actually do the work.

So, no, it is not a great day to be a teacher struggling to pay the rent or a nurse working a double shift just to afford groceries. It is not a great day to be a retiree watching Social Security and Medicare under attack. But it is a great day to be a billionaire in America, and that, my colleagues, is exactly the problem.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. JUSTICE). The Senator from Hawaii.

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, when I immigrated to this country from Japan, as a young girl, I spoke no English. But when I enrolled at Koko Head Elementary, I met Ms. Petri, the school librarian who read to us every week. It was Ms. Petri who helped me learn English and instilled in me a lifelong love of reading. The public education I received at school at Koko Head Elementary, gave me—a girl from very humble beginnings—the opportunity to get ahead.

My story is not unique. Our public education system has enabled generations of Americans to get ahead and has been essential to our country's economic success and global leadership. But despite their promises to make life better for working Americans, Donald Trump, Elon Musk, and their billionaire buddies have set their sights on gutting support for public education. Trump has made no secret of his desire to eliminate the Federal Department of Education altogether.

Thankfully, the Department of Education was created by Congress, and only an act of Congress can eliminate it. But, even so, Trump's assault on the Federal Government is already undermining the Department's ability to meet its mission of supporting our Nation's students and teachers. And in their quest to give trillions in handouts to Trump's billionaire buddies, Republicans are poised to gut the Department of Education and programs on which millions of American children rely. They have no problem eliminating Federal funding for programs that support low-income students, low-income schools, students with disabilities, students experiencing homelessness, and much more.

Just look at Project 2025. They want to eliminate funding for title I schools, which supports low-income students. We are talking about funding for 49,000 title I schools throughout the country, including 170 schools in my State of Hawaii.

They have no problem coming after Federal funding for programs that provide afterschool care, childcare, and even school meals. None of this is hypothetical. Cutting afterschool programs could make life even harder for working parents already struggling to make ends meet.

Republicans don't seem to give a rip about the millions of children in their schools. They care about one thing and one thing only: delivering for their billionaire buddies. But Democrats care about you, about your family, and about your children's fundamental right to a quality public education. That is why Senator PETERS and I will be introducing a series of amendments to this massive, misguided budget proposal to fund a giveaway for billionaires at the expense of our kids. Our amendments will protect our schools and the services children and families rely on, including an amendment to protect school meals.

This is a simple amendment. It would prevent any reduction in funding for the National School Lunch Program and Breakfast Program, which have been wildly successful in feeding 29.6 million children at 95,000 schools nationwide every single day, including 93,000 children in Hawaii, 102,000 children in South Dakota, 518,000 children in South Carolina, and many, many more. Every single State has thousands of children who rely on the school meals paid for by the Federal Government.

From coast to coast and beyond, these programs keep our kids from going hungry. For many kids, school meals are the only meals they can count on all day. I can't believe we are standing here fighting over whether or not kids have the right to eat, but apparently even that is controversial to my Republican colleagues.

So here we are. It is simple, Mr. President. We have no business depriving our kids of lunch to fund massive giveaways to Trump and his billionaire buddies. It is that simple.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Ms. ROSEN. Mr. President, I rise today to speak on an issue that will affect millions of hard-working families, seniors, children, veterans, and any American who relies on essential services.

As we will soon see, Republicans are going to use the budget reconciliation process—a tool that was originally designed to help rein in wasteful spending and lower the national debt—to pass massive new tax cuts for billionaires and the ultrawealthy. To pay for these tax breaks, they are proposing devastating cuts to vital programs that people in my State of Nevada rely on, including Medicaid, SNAP, supplemental programs for women, infants and children.

Let me say that again. Congressional Republicans are going to cut critical government programs like Medicaid and SNAP in order to give the wealthiest Americans even more tax cuts. You got that right.

Their policies are, well, billionaires win and families lose. This isn't fiscal responsibility; it is moral negligence. This isn't just about economic policy; this is about the livelihoods of everyday Americans.

At a time when Nevadans are already grappling with economic hardship and the rising cost of living, these actions by my Republican colleagues are just plain wrong. They are just out of step. Instead of using this budget process to provide relief for hard-working families, Republicans are exploiting it to push through policies that benefit billionaires like Elon Musk while leaving millions of Americans—I will say everyday, hard-working families, regular people, everyday people—leaving them all behind, leaving you in the lurch. Again, their motto seems to be “billionaires win, families lose.”

Let's remember what Senate Democrats did with the budget process when we were in the majority. Anybody remember? Well, we gave Medicare the power to negotiate for lower prescription drug prices. We capped the cost of insulin at \$35 a month. We helped hard-working Americans who are being crushed by high costs. We stood up to corporate interests on behalf of the middle class. Now my Republican colleagues are in the majority. What do they want to do? Well, again, billionaires win, families lose. They want to give additional billions in tax breaks to the wealthiest Americans while the rest of us are footing the damn bill.

The numbers tell the story. Extending these tax cuts would give the top 1 percent of earners—those making roughly \$750,000 a year or more—a tax cut averaging more than \$60,000 a year. I am going to put that in perspective for a moment. The tax cut that the top 1 percent would get is more than the total income of most families who rely on Medicare or SNAP or just most families in general. It is the top 1 percent.

The two programs Republicans are planning to cut, Medicare and SNAP, they are going to cut them in order to pay the tax cuts—trillions of dollars—for who? Elon Musk and their billionaire buddies. So you heard that right. These expanded tax cuts will cost the Federal Government \$4.2 trillion.

You might be asking yourself, wait, so how are Republicans going to pay for all of this? In order to help offset some of that cost, they are going to decrease funding for Medicaid, SNAP, and other services that support people with disabilities and elderly individuals.

Medicaid alone provides health coverage to almost 80 million Americans, including children, seniors, and people with disabilities, like I said. And these cuts would directly harm some of the most vulnerable people in our society, making it harder and harder for them to get the kind of lifesaving care or just any care that they may need.

In my State of Nevada, more than 800,000 people rely on Medicaid for their healthcare—800,000. Any reduction in its funding would leave these individuals—some of them our friends, our neighbors; they go to church with us—a reduction in funding is going to leave these individuals without access to affordable healthcare or the ability to see a doctor.

Similarly, SNAP is a lifeline for millions of families seeking to feed their children—just feed their children. It feeds our seniors. It helps our working parents. It is estimated that more than 40 million people rely on SNAP just to put food on the table. Nearly one in six people in Nevada benefited from SNAP last year, the majority of whom are children. You have that right—one in six people benefited from SNAP in Nevada. The majority of them are children.

So we are talking about parents who rely on this program to make sure that their kids don't go to bed hungry or that they have breakfast before they go to school. They are feeding hungry kids. But Republicans are proposing cuts to SNAP that would affect millions of families, driving up food insecurity, placing an additional burden on those who can least afford it.

On top of these cuts, you have to consider the cuts that the Trump administration has already made, actions that are hurting veterans' services, healthcare, and good-paying jobs rebuilding our infrastructure.

The Trump administration has already made cuts to the staff of the Department of Veterans Affairs, including the people that staff the Veterans assistance hotline. These cuts are going to have a severe impact on our veterans. They served our country with honor. They deserve the best possible care when they return home. Cutting doctors and nurses and counselors and people who answer the help line—how is that helping those who protected us, who keep our homeland safe? We owe them that. Well, these cuts aren't showing that at all.

The administration has already targeted Medicare for staffing cuts that could undermine healthcare access for seniors across the country. Nearly one in five seniors depends on Medicare for their healthcare needs, and for many, it is their only source of care. Letting go of Medicare employees will impact seniors' ability to access this literal lifeline.

We have also seen attacks from the Trump administration on job-creating infrastructure projects like those authorized in the bipartisan infrastructure law, the Inflation Reduction Act. These projects—well, what I want to tell you is that they support good-paying, American jobs—good-paying jobs in construction and engineering and public works. They fix our roads and our bridges and our trains, our grid. It matters. They build the rail systems that help connect our communities. These are American jobs on American roads, on American rail, on American bridges. We should be keeping these jobs and investing in our infrastructure. These are the folks who help modernize our airports. I can tell you, in my State of Nevada, they support our travel and tourism jobs—a top industry for us.

These jobs modernizing our airports and our infrastructure help everyone across this country, every American—American jobs in America for Americans.

We should be investing in our infrastructure, but the cuts made by the Trump administration mean that projects all over the country are in limbo. Even delayed projects are going to cost jobs and make it harder to rebuild our Nation's infrastructure.

In Nevada, we know how important infrastructure investments are to keeping our economy moving and our communities safe. We are talking about jeopardizing projects to build new solar energy installations and even expanding access to high-speed internet. For us, that is nearly half a billion dollars' worth of Federal funding that has been allocated for Nevada to connect rural communities across our State to just reliable internet.

The loss of funding for projects like this one just doesn't stop at people accessing the internet; it will hurt people who are counting on the jobs a project would create, particularly in our rural communities.

The numbers here are staggering, and the impact is undeniable. We are talking about cuts that have the potential to impact millions of people—people who are working hard every day to make ends meet, to provide for their families, and to ensure they can live with dignity.

These existing cuts, coupled with the Republicans' proposed budget cuts, are just going to be devastating for American families, and the fact that these cuts are being made to give billionaires even more tax breaks—well, it is unconscionable.

The American people deserve better. They deserve a government that works

for them, that works for our families, not for the ultrawealthy.

At the end of the day, Republicans have to decide who they are fighting for because right now, with this budget proposal, they are fighting for billionaires and the largest corporations that have already benefited from their 2017 tax cuts.

We cannot and we must not turn our backs on the American people. We cannot allow billionaires to get richer on the backs of everyday Americans. We cannot let the motto be for this administration "billionaires win and families lose" because families are the backbone of America—families are the backbone of America—and they deserve respect and attention, and we cannot allow the billionaires to break their backs.

So I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to come together and put the American people first—people over billionaires. Let's work together to strengthen our economy, protect our vital programs, and ensure that everyone, regardless of their wealth or status, has an equal opportunity to succeed.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

RECOGNIZING THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE AMPHIBIOUS LANDING ON THE JAPANESE ISLAND OF IWO JIMA DURING WORLD WAR II AND THE RAISINGS OF THE FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES ON MOUNT SURIBACHI

MR. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be discharged from further consideration and the Senate now proceed to S. Res. 53.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 53) recognizing the 80th anniversary of the amphibious landing on the Japanese island of Iwo Jima during World War II and the raisings of the flag of the United States on Mount Suribachi.

There being no objection, the committee was discharged, and the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

MR. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 53) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in the RECORD of February 4, 2025, under "Submitted Resolutions.")