

|           |            |          |
|-----------|------------|----------|
| Moran     | Risch      | Sheehy   |
| Moreno    | Rosen      | Sullivan |
| Mullin    | Rounds     | Thune    |
| Murkowski | Schmitt    | Tillis   |
| Paul      | Scott (FL) | Wicker   |
| Ricketts  | Scott (SC) | Young    |

NAYS—44

|                 |           |            |
|-----------------|-----------|------------|
| Alsobrooks      | Hirono    | Sanders    |
| Baldwin         | Kaine     | Schatz     |
| Bennet          | Kelly     | Schiff     |
| Blumenthal      | Kim       | Schumer    |
| Blunt Rochester | King      | Shaheen    |
| Booker          | Klobuchar | Slotkin    |
| Cantwell        | Lujan     | Smith      |
| Coons           | Markey    | Van Hollen |
| Duckworth       | Merkley   | Warner     |
| Durbin          | Murphy    | Warnock    |
| Fetterman       | Murray    | Warren     |
| Gallego         | Ossoff    | Welch      |
| Gillibrand      | Padilla   | Whitehouse |
| Hassan          | Peters    | Wyden      |
| Heinrich        | Reed      |            |

NOT VOTING—2

Cramer Tuberville

The joint resolution (S.J. Res. 11) was agreed to, as follows:

S.J. RES. 11

*Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,* That Congress disapproves the rule submitted by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management relating to “Protection of Marine Archaeological Resources” (89 Fed. Reg. 71160 (September 3, 2024)), and such rule shall have no force or effect.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

EXECUTIVE SESSION—Motion to Proceed

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 24.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

VOTE ON MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER) and the Senator from Alabama (Mr. TUBERVILLE).

The result was announced—yeas 51, nays 47, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 93 Leg.]

YEAS—51

|           |            |            |
|-----------|------------|------------|
| Banks     | Graham     | Moran      |
| Barrasso  | Grassley   | Moreno     |
| Blackburn | Hagerty    | Mullin     |
| Boozman   | Hawley     | Murkowski  |
| Britt     | Hoeben     | Paul       |
| Budd      | Husted     | Ricketts   |
| Capito    | Hyde-Smith | Risch      |
| Cassidy   | Johnson    | Rounds     |
| Collins   | Justice    | Schmitt    |
| Cornyn    | Kennedy    | Scott (FL) |
| Cotton    | Lankford   | Scott (SC) |
| Crapo     | Lee        | Sheehy     |
| Cruz      | Lummis     | Sullivan   |
| Curtis    | Marshall   | Thune      |
| Daines    | McConnell  | Tillis     |
| Ernst     | McCormick  | Wicker     |
| Fischer   | Moody      | Young      |

NAYS—47

|                 |              |            |
|-----------------|--------------|------------|
| Alsobrooks      | Hickenlooper | Rosen      |
| Baldwin         | Hirono       | Sanders    |
| Bennet          | Kaine        | Schatz     |
| Blumenthal      | Kelly        | Schiff     |
| Blunt Rochester | Kim          | Schumer    |
| Booker          | King         | Shaheen    |
| Cantwell        | Klobuchar    | Slotkin    |
| Coons           | Lujan        | Smith      |
| Cortez Masto    | Markey       | Van Hollen |
| Duckworth       | Merkley      | Warner     |
| Durbin          | Murphy       | Warnock    |
| Fetterman       | Murray       | Warren     |
| Gallego         | Ossoff       | Welch      |
| Gillibrand      | Padilla      | Whitehouse |
| Hassan          | Peters       | Wyden      |
| Heinrich        | Reed         |            |

NOT VOTING—2

Cramer Tuberville

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Linda McMahon, of Connecticut, to be Secretary of Education.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 24, Linda McMahon, of Connecticut, to be Secretary of Education.

John Thune, Cindy Hyde-Smith, James E. Risch, Katie Boyd Britt, Tommy Tuberville, James Lankford, Markwayne Mullin, Marsha Blackburn, Tom Cotton, John R. Curtis, Bernie Moreno, Tim Sheehy, Mike Rounds, Joni Ernst, Roger F. Wicker, David McCormick, Rick Scott of Florida.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, with me today is Mr. John Lowery, who is one of my colleagues from my office, who has been a big help to me.

NATIONAL DEBT

Mr. President, as you know, when Vice President HARRIS and President Trump ran against each other for the Presidency, one of the planks in President Trump’s platform was that he was going to review every penny of Federal Government spending.

Why did he say that? Why did he promise to do that? Well, first, there is a moral principle involved. People work hard for their money, and when they give it to government, they are entitled to expect government to spend it efficiently.

Number 2, President Trump ran on that plank because of our debt. The Federal debt is \$36.5 trillion. You know, we throw these numbers around—like a trillion, you know—and we start to take them for granted.

To give you a little perspective, this \$36.5 trillion grows bigger by the second. It is going to increase—if we just keep doing what we have been doing, it is going to increase \$1 trillion every 100 days. If we just keep doing what we have been doing, it is going to increase \$10 billion a day. Today, nothing changed. We added \$10 billion in debt. That is also \$417 million an hour. That is \$6.9 million a minute. I think I have been talking about a minute; we just added \$7 million to our debt. That is why the President wants to get rid of spending porn.

The reaction here in Washington has been breathtaking. I understand Washington is not exactly a slice of America. I get that. I understand that Washington is not normal. Normal in Washington, DC, is a setting on the dryer. So I get all that. We are different in Washington. But the pushback to President Trump’s effort through Mr. Musk and his team to reduce spending has just been extraordinary. I mean, people are barking and yelping and shrieking about it. They sound like the game room in a mental hospital.

I get that a lot of people don’t like President Trump, and I get that many people don’t like Mr. Musk. I get that Mr. Musk is different. I kind of like that. I mean, I like different. You know, he is the sort of guy that would wear—I don’t know—he would wear Crocs to a wedding. I get that. I find it kind of refreshing. But nobody has ever called him a dummy. And he has found an incredible amount of waste and abuse of taxpayer money, what I call spending porn.

I am not going to repeat everything I have repeated or said the first time we talked about this, but it just seems to me to be, once again, extraordinary that people are mad at President Trump or Mr. Musk for the process they are using, but they are not mad about the money being wasted.

I mean, Mr. Musk, whether you like him or not, has found, for example, \$7.9 million that we spent to teach Sri Lanka journalists to avoid binary gendered language. He found money that was given to an NGO to empower the LGBT community in Armenia. He found \$1.5 million that we spent to rebuild the Cuban media ecosystem, \$2.1 million to the BBC to strengthen the media ecosystem in Libya, and \$8.3 million spent for equity and inclusion education in Nepal. Does no one care about how the money was actually abused and wasted?

It is not unusual for me to be disappointed for some things I see in Washington, and under the last administration, I have to admit, I was disappointed just about every single day. I had almost gotten used to it.

But last week—and this is what I want to talk about—I read a story. It

was a story about the abuse of taxpayer money in the last administration, and it was so nauseating that it triggered my gag reflex.

In April of 2024—not that long ago—the EPA, under President Biden, gave \$2 billion in taxpayer money to an organization that had absolutely no experience, that was backed by a very prominent Democratic politician by the name of Ms. Stacey Abrams.

Here is what happened: In 2022, as you know, President Biden and my Democratic colleagues passed the Inflation Reduction Act. Not a single Republican voted for it—not one—either in the House or in the Senate.

We knew, at the time, that spending \$1.2 trillion—that is what the Inflation Reduction Act cost—would only make inflation worse, not better. And even President Biden eventually admitted that the Inflation Reduction Act did absolutely nothing to lower prices. Even President Biden, at the end of his term, admitted that.

So where did all the Inflation Reduction Act money go? A fair question for taxpayers to ask. I mean, there is nothing wrong with wanting to know what they do with our money.

Let me say that again. There is nothing wrong with wanting to know what they do with our money.

So where did all the Inflation Reduction Act—this \$1.2 trillion—go? Well, President Trump and DOGE, the group appointed by President Trump, and the EPA under new leadership, under Mr. Lee Zeldin, have begun to follow some of that money.

Now, this is where Ms. Stacey Abrams comes in. I think it is fair to say that Ms. Abrams is—I don't know. I would call her controversial. She has the right to believe what she believes. This is America, and she has the right to free speech. I am not criticizing that, even though I disagree with some of what she says. But I think it would be fair to describe her as controversial. She is probably best known for the fact that she ran for Governor of Georgia twice, and she lost.

In her career, Ms. Abrams has said the following. I don't want to just articulate hyperbole here. I want you to read her words, not mine. On April 20, 2024, Ms. Abrams appeared on MSNBC with Rev. Al Sharpton, and this is what Ms. Abrams said:

What we know is that the attack on diversity, equity, and inclusion, DEI, is an attack on democracy.

On September 20, 2022, during a panel discussion in Atlanta, Ms. Abrams said this about a baby's heartbeat—a fetal heartbeat—the heartbeat of a baby in a mother's womb. This is what Ms. Abrams said about a fetal heartbeat. She said:

It is a manufactured sound designed to convince people that men have the right to take control of a woman's body.

Her words, not mine.

In May of 2022, during a Georgia gubernatorial debate—she is running for Governor of Georgia now—Ms. Abrams

called Georgia “the worst State in the country to live” in.

In October of 2022, during another Georgia gubernatorial debate, Ms. Abrams accused the sheriffs—all the sheriffs in Georgia who endorsed her opponent, Governor Brian Kemp—of wanting “to be able to take Black people off the streets.”

In October of 2022, Ms. Abrams appeared on MSNBC. She suggested that abortion is the solution to inflation. Here is what she said. She said:

Let's be clear. Having children is why you're worried about your price for gas. It's why you're concerned about how much food costs.

Her words, not mine. Let me say again, Ms. Abrams has the right to her opinion. This is America. You are not free if you can't express yourself. But I do think any fairminded person would have to conclude that Ms. Abrams is controversial.

So in March of 2023, not that long ago, Ms. Abrams went to work for an organization, a nonprofit, called Rewiring America. You have probably seen that name in the news: Rewiring America.

Ms. Abrams' title—she went to work for Rewiring America. Her title was senior counsel. She was paid for her work for Rewiring America. We don't know how much, though there will probably be an investigation to find out.

Now, nonprofits like Rewiring America, Ms. Abrams' group, they have to file documents with the IRS, and one of the documents they have to file is called Form 990. This form by the IRS asks a number of questions about nonprofits. One of the questions the IRS asks is for the organization—the nonprofit—to list its accomplishments.

Rewiring America, Ms. Abrams' group, told the IRS in 2023 on this Form 990 that this was Rewiring America's “startup year for the organization,” and the form goes on to say that the only accomplishment Rewiring America listed was that it had “joined a coalition of other national organizations to apply for a grant from the Inflation Reduction Act's Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund.”

In other words, Ms. Abrams' organization told the IRS that this filing was their first-ever tax filing, in 2023; that the organization was a startup; and its purpose was exclusively to seek a grant from President Biden's Inflation Reduction Act—fair enough.

So what do we know about this coalition Ms. Abrams' group wanted to form? Rewiring America, Ms. Abrams' group, announced on October 12, 2023, that it was joining Habitat for Humanity, it was joining United Way Worldwide, and two other organizations, and these four organizations were going to form another nonprofit—a coalition of nonprofits—called Power Forward Communities.

So you have got Power Forward Communities up here. You have got Rewiring America and some other organiza-

tions down here. And all together, they make up Power Forward Communities. And they also announced that a gentleman by the name of Tim Mayopoulos, a former Obama administration appointee, would lead the coalition.

Now, as a nonprofit, I told you that Rewiring America had to file forms with the IRS. Well, so did this new group Power Forward. It had to file Form 990, as well, with the IRS.

According to its filings, Power Forward had just \$100 in total revenues in 2023. According to the IRS filing, it didn't list a single accomplishment. I have seen Girl Scout troops with more business credentials. Yet Power Forward Communities, of which Ms. Abrams' Rewiring America was a part, had the audacity to ask the Federal Government for a \$2 billion grant. For what, you ask? It was supposed to be “to expand access to clean energy by prioritizing housing, equity, and resilience.”

Power Forward Communities said it wanted to take this taxpayer money and help people install energy-efficient upgrades to their homes.

What are we talking about? Heat pumps, getting rid of gas stoves.

Now, it is good to dream big in America. I am all for that. But under any reasonable standard—under any reasonable standard—one is entitled to ask how these organizations—Ms. Abrams' Rewiring America and Power Forward Communities—brandnew organizations, no business experience, \$100 in the bank, are qualified to receive \$2 billion of taxpayer money from the Biden administration.

Now, that didn't stop the Biden administration from cutting a check, though. They took our money and gave Power Forward Communities and Rewiring America \$2 billion.

Do you want to know how we ran up \$36 billion in debt? That is how.

Now, the EPA announced in 2024, under President Biden, just 6 months after Power Forward was formed—Power Forward was formed, and 6 months later President Biden and his team announced they were giving them \$2 billion. And as I said, that is billion with a “b.”

Now, look, I try to see the world from other people's bell towers as much as I can, but I cannot come up, not for the life of me, with a single rational justification as to why the EPA under the Biden administration thought it was appropriate to give Power Forward and Rewiring America—two brandnew nonprofits with no business experience, no accomplishments according to the IRS forms, and only 100 bucks in the bank—\$2 billion of taxpayer money, especially to the exclusion of every other qualified applicant for that money, if there were any other qualified applicants. We don't know. I don't know. I don't know if there was a competitive bid.

Now, I do know that the EPA, under President Biden, gave Ms. Abrams' group—her two groups—\$2 billion cash.

In the grant approval, President Biden's EPA said that Power Forward had to allocate this money to get rid of stoves and to put in heat pumps. They had to allocate the money—they had to spend it—in 21 days.

Now, that meant that Ms. Abrams' group, Rewiring America, which was part of the larger group, likely received or was supposed to receive a check for \$490 million, about a quarter of the total of \$2 billion, by the end of May 2024. And the other organizations, within 21 days, President Biden directed, were also supposed to receive their share of the money.

But get this: President Biden and his team directed these NGOs to distribute \$2 billion in 21 days, but the Biden administration also told Power Forward, within 90 days, to go take a course. You know what the course was? The name of the course was "How to Develop a Budget"—"How to Develop a Budget."

So President Biden gave Power Forward 21 days to spend the money but said: You have got 90 days to go take a course about how to put together a budget.

And why would anybody in the Milky Way give \$2 billion of taxpayer money to two organizations that had just been formed that, according to the IRS filings, had no accomplishments and one of them only had 100 bucks in the bank?

I think I know why. I certainly know what it looks like. I mean, this would be comical if it wasn't so odious—\$2 billion.

You know, the last 4 years under the last administration have been very difficult for America. The cost of everything has gone up. The cost of many things have gone up by 20 percent, and our wages didn't keep up. The average electricity bill in America went up 19 percent. The average Louisianian, because of President Biden's inflation, had to spend an extra \$890 a month—extra—for food and clothing and car notes, and they didn't get an \$890-a-month raise.

President Biden and my Democratic colleagues told us that the Inflation Reduction Act—I remember when it was passed. They said: If you spend \$1.2 trillion on the Inflation Reduction Act, it will be a lifeline to every family in America.

That is not what it looks like to me. It is starting to look like to me that it was really a slush fund—a slush fund for Washington insiders.

Now, I don't want to make accusations that are unfair. I think EPA Administrator Zeldin needs to get to the bottom of this. I believe in fairness. I believe in due process. Mr. Zeldin has announced that he is going to try to claw back as much of this \$2 billion and other moneys as he can. Again, I think he ought to do it fairly and accord everybody due process.

But you know what, if the shoe fits, wear it, Cinderella. Here is what I see. I see two organizations formed in the

last year or so of President Biden's administration—on their IRS filings, they say: We have no experience. We have no accomplishments.

One of them only has a hundred bucks in the bank. One of them—their senior counsel is Ms. Stacey Abrams, a well-known Democratic politician.

I see them asking the President of the United States and his EPA for \$2 billion cash to fight gas stoves and getting it—and getting it—to the exclusion of every other applicant who might have been able to use that money.

Now, this is just the beginning of the type of spending porn that President Trump and Mr. Musk are uncovering that people are screaming about.

I am going to repeat what I started with. There is nothing wrong with wanting to know what they do and did with our money. That is all President Trump and Mr. Musk are doing.

#### MAURITIUS AND CHAGOS ISLANDS

Mr. President, I want to spend 5 minutes talking about another subject because President Trump tomorrow has a very important meeting with Prime Minister Starmer of the United Kingdom.

This is the Indian Ocean. You have heard me talk about this. A group of islands right here are the Chagos Islands. This is China over here. Down here is another group of islands called Mauritius that I will talk about in a second.

Why do I talk about the Chagos Islands? Well, from 1715 to 1810, the Chagos Islands were owned by France. In 1814, France gave the Chagos Islands to the United Kingdom. At the time, the United Kingdom—after France gave the islands to them—not only owned the Chagos Islands, but the United Kingdom also owned Mauritius.

The United Kingdom administered both the Chagos Islands and Mauritius from headquarters in Mauritius. Mauritius never owned the Chagos Islands—never. They were always owned either by France or by the United Kingdom, which owns them today. The only connection Mauritius had with the Chagos Islands was that the United Kingdom owned both at the same time and administered the two groups of islands from headquarters in Mauritius.

After the United Kingdom acquired the Chagos Islands here, the United States of America built one of the most important military bases in the world on one of the islands called the Diego Garcia—hugely important. The United Kingdom helped, but we put up most of the money.

Now, Mr. Starmer, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, has decided that he wants to give the Chagos Islands, with our military base, to Mauritius. He wants to give it to them.

We said: Wait a minute. We have a military base here. What about our military base?

Mr. Starmer says: Well, I am going to give all of the islands, including the military base, to Mauritius—even though Mauritius never owned them.

Now that Mauritius owns them, we are going to pay Mauritius \$9 billion over time—I want to be fair, over time—for a military base that we built. What? Why? Well, I will tell you why. Prime Minister Starmer feels guilty because the United Nations—actually, it is not the United Nations; rather, a group called the International Court of Justice, which is loosely affiliated with the United Nations, issued a ruling that criticized the United Kingdom for actually owning the Chagos Islands.

They said: United Kingdom, you are an anti-colonialist. You should feel guilty, you should feel bad, and you need give the Chagos Islands away. You need to give them to Mauritius even though Mauritius never owned them.

That is what is going on. That is all that is going on.

Now, how did this get started? The Prime Minister of Mauritius—his name was Prime Minister Jugnauth—sued in the International Court of Justice—he sued the United Kingdom. He said: Give me Mauritius and the military base.

He filed a lawsuit. The International Court of Justice, based in the Netherlands, issued a ruling in Mauritius's favor. It is an advisory opinion. It is not binding on anybody. But Mr. Jugnauth got what he wanted on behalf of Mauritius.

A few weeks later, Prime Minister Jugnauth got beat, and he was replaced by a new Prime Minister, whose name is Prime Minister Ramgoolam. Prime Minister Ramgoolam said: Not only do I want the Mauritius Islands, you are not paying us enough, United Kingdom and America.

According to news reports, he wants not only \$9 billion, he wants \$18 billion for our own military base.

He said: We will lease you the base that you built, which we, Mauritius, now own, back to you, but you have to give us between \$9 and \$18 billion.

Isn't that special? Isn't that special? That is what is going on.

Now, there is one other thing you need to know. Mauritius is very close to China. Mauritius has a very lucrative trade agreement with China, and you might be surprised to learn that after all of this has been developing, China all of a sudden is Mauritius's best friend. Do you know why? Because if Prime Minister Starmer does this, Mauritius is going to own the base. They are going to own the base.

Now, Prime Minister Starmer is going to meet with President Trump tomorrow to try to talk President Trump into agreeing to this. The Prime Minister of the U.K. has already said: If President Trump is not comfortable with me giving away an American military base—I want to giggle when I say that—if President Trump is not comfortable, I won't do it.

Here is what the Prime Minister is going to tell President Trump tomorrow. He is going to say, No. 1: Mr. President, we need to do this because it is the right thing to do.

The United Nations' International Court of Justice, which is comprised of