

The Senator from Michigan.

NOMINATION OF LINDA MCMAHON

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I rise today in opposition to Linda McMahon's nomination to serve as the Secretary of the Department of Education.

All across America, from small towns like Grand Marais to cities like Grand Rapids, public schools serve as the bedrock of our communities.

As a product of Michigan public schools, the son of a public school teacher, and having watched my own three children attend public schools, I know firsthand the importance of public education.

Education is the cornerstone of academic achievement, career development, and lifelong learning in our society. A strong public education system is critical to not only our Nation's economy but community safety, social mobility, and the health of our democracy.

We need a Secretary of Education who values and respects public education and the millions of teachers and faculty who support the system.

We need a Secretary of Education who will support critical funding streams like Head Start for early education, IDEA for students with disabilities, and the school meal program that ensures that no student—no student—goes to class hungry.

That is why we cannot allow Mrs. McMahon to run our Department of Education. Instead of working to protect funding for the programs that support our students, improve classrooms, and help recruit the hard-working teachers that we so desperately need today, Mrs. McMahon has made it clear that she has, well, other priorities.

During her committee hearing, she blatantly supported efforts to dismantle our education system, including taking funding away from our public schools and using it to make investments in private schools. Mrs. McMahon and others have tried to sell this as "school choice," but we know—we know—that it is basically a voucher program that will ultimately give private schools the ability to hand pick students and close their doors to everyone else. Private schools have no requirement to serve students with disabilities, students with mental health needs, or homeless students.

We have already seen private school voucher programs fail in States that have actually implemented them, like Louisiana—Louisiana, where students who accepted vouchers experienced significant declines in their academic performance, worse than the learning loss caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and Hurricane Katrina.

So-called school choice does not meet the needs of our students, and American voters overwhelmingly agree. A 2024 poll found that less than a quarter of Americans support increasing funding for school vouchers. Meanwhile, 68 percent of Americans want to boost public school funding to better support

teachers and give our opportunities and children the education and career opportunities that they certainly deserve.

Under Mrs. McMahon's plan, we would be letting private schools decide who is educated and who is not. But, unfortunately, we know that these private institutions will always prioritize their bottom line, and the needs of students and families will be second.

If confirmed as Secretary of Education, the quality of our American education will certainly decline, and our children will ultimately suffer the consequences.

I would urge my colleagues to vote no on Mrs. McMahon's nomination.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, over the last few months, there has literally been more than 10,000 Californians who have made it a point to reach out to me by phone calls, by letters, by emails to say one thing loud and clear: Stand up for public education.

There are students throughout California, teachers throughout California, parents throughout California, and I am sure beyond in all of our States who are afraid that Donald Trump is going to decimate Federal funding for public schools. And from what we have seen, they have every right to be concerned.

You see, only 1 month into office, the richest President in our history has teamed up with the richest man in the world to slash public funding across the board, including in education.

They have already terminated nearly \$1 billion in contracts with the Education Department alone. They have fired or placed on leave Education Department staff. These are hard-working Americans dedicated to everything from protecting the civil rights of students to special education, to student aid. And they are making it clear that this is just the beginning.

President Trump has bragged that he actually wants to eliminate the Department of Education, threatening the quality of education of 80 percent of students who go to public schools.

Colleagues, that is the situation. That is the context in which we find ourselves today as we consider the nomination of Linda McMahon to serve as Education Secretary.

We could talk about Linda McMahon's qualifications, or, frankly, lack thereof, but I am not shocked because President Trump isn't looking for someone with the background or the commitment to strengthen education in America. He is looking for someone to destroy it. President Trump has said publicly that he wishes that Mrs. McMahon would "put herself out of a job." And it is clear that she is ready to do it. And to justify it, I know I have heard of her countless accusations of Department of Education overreach or that the Department is just too big. Now, if we are saying this because of the budget cuts Republicans

are starving for to underwrite the tax rate for the wealthy, let me remind us all that the Department of Education is the smallest Agency in the Cabinet by a lot.

The Department is responsible, though, for promoting equal access to education; ensuring protections and support for students with special needs; defending the civil rights of tens of millions of students; and, yes, managing the student loans and Pell grants that students need to afford an education, just like I did when I was graduating from San Fernando High School, trying to figure out how I was going to be able to pay for college.

Yet Linda McMahon and Republicans in Congress will try to sell us on the idea that education should be left to States and to local communities.

Tell that to the young student who is struggling to read by the fourth grade but whose school doesn't have the resources they need to help them catch up. Tell that to the parents of an eighth grader who is behind in math who fear that their child will never be able to make up the time that they lost during the pandemic.

While it is true that State and local communities play the primary role in education, it is actually the Federal Government that helps close the gaps. That is part of what makes our country strong—the idea that no matter where you live, no matter who your parents are, or what tax bracket your family is in, you have the right to a good education because, after all, it is the surest path to achieve your American dream.

And, yes, it is personal for me. As I mentioned, I am a proud product of public education, a graduate of San Fernando High School—go Tigers. Upon completion of my high school education, I was accepted and had the blessed opportunity to attend the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where I earned my degree in mechanical engineering. That led to a better life and more opportunities—exactly what my parents worked so hard and sacrificed for. That is the American dream. And I know that, by far, I am not alone.

That is why I find it outrageous that Mrs. McMahon and Republicans can so callously plan to take a chain saw to the American dreams of so many current and future students.

But, today, we are here to say that tens of millions of public school students are not line items on your chopping block. They deserve better. Our country is better than this.

I urge all of my colleagues to reject President Trump's attempts to abolish the Department of Education and to reject Linda McMahon's nomination or any nominee who is willing to carry out his wishes.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, I rise today deeply concerned about the state of public education in our country.

Public education is foundational. It allows people to get ahead. As simple as that, it is foundational.

I have spoken before on the floor about the power of public education in my own life. As an immigrant from Japan, I arrived in this country speaking no English.

I started off by trying to learn how to count from 1 to 10—very humble beginnings. But it was the public education I received at schools like Koko Head Elementary and Kaimuki High School that enabled me, an immigrant from very humble beginnings, to learn English and to go on to college, law school, and, ultimately, the U.S. Senate.

We should all agree on the importance of a strong public education system for every student in our country. An educated citizenry helps grow the middle class and drive economic success in red and blue States alike.

Support for public schools should not be a partisan issue. There are millions of kids who are attending public schools in every single State in our country, so it shouldn't be a partisan issue. But just weeks into the Trump administration, public education is under attack. Already, chain saw-wielding Elon Musk—it is really hard to get rid of that image because he takes such delight in wielding that chain saw and willy-nilly cutting all kinds of government programs that we rely on. But Elon Musk and his minions have started unilaterally canceling contracts at the Department of Education without any transparency or accountability whatsoever, and Donald Trump has made no secret of his desire to eliminate the Department of Education entirely, as part of his quest to cut government services we rely on to give trillions in handouts to his billionaire buddies.

While only Congress has the power to eliminate the Department of Education in its entirety, that is not stopping Trump from using every means available to weaken Federal support for education. And as you heard from my colleague just previously, there is a lot of support for public education in our country. Why? Because most of the people in our country have to go to public schools.

The person who will help him do this, meaning totally weaken our public school system and eliminate the Department of Education, is billionaire Linda McMahon. As Trump's Secretary of Education, she will dismantle the Department of Education from the inside out.

President Trump told her that he wants her to "put herself out of a job" by eliminating this Department. Since President Trump only nominates people who are 100 percent loyal to him, we can expect Linda McMahon will comply with putting herself out of a job, which leads us to wonder why we are even giving her this job in the first place.

A nominee tasked to end the very Department that she is supposed to be

leading does not need to have much by way of experience in leading or running such a Department, which is the case with Linda McMahon. In her confirmation hearing, Mrs. McMahon could not name a single requirement of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the main Federal law that supports K through 12 education.

She couldn't say whether teaching African-American history courses violated Trump's Executive order on radical indoctrination. Teaching the history of our country is considered radical indoctrination by this President. Think about that for a minute.

She couldn't even answer a simple yes-or-no question about whether schools receiving taxpayer dollars should be allowed to discriminate against children with disabilities.

Mrs. McMahon is totally unqualified to oversee the education of our Nation's children, but Donald Trump doesn't care about that. Linda McMahon will carry out President Trump's dangerous agenda to dismantle the Department of Education, privatize the Nation's public schools, and strip educational opportunities from millions of students across the country.

In doing so, she will be 100-percent loyal to Donald Trump above all else. She will execute the plans laid out in Project 2025 to eliminate funding for title I schools, which support 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, 2,091 title I schools in Florida, 7,500 title I schools in Texas, and so many more. Every single State has title I schools. There are 49,000 title I schools throughout our country.

Project 2025, Trump's blueprint, will have the Secretary of Education dismantle civil rights protections for students and weaponize the Office of Civil Rights to advance Trump's hateful, far-right political agenda. Then the Secretary will come after funding for programs that help provide childcare, afterschool care, school meals, and more. Think about it: school meals. For many children, that would mean taking away access to the only meal a day they can count on.

Why? Not because she thinks these decisions will improve outcomes or benefit students. No. These attacks on the Department of Education are about one thing and one thing only: finding money to pay for massive giveaways to billionaires like McMahon, Elon Musk, obviously the President, and their ilk.

Republicans are robbing our children's futures to line the pockets of their billionaire buddies, and they are robbing our country of future doctors, innovators, leaders, and more.

A strong public education system is the foundation of a strong democracy, a strong economy, and a strong middle class. That is why Democrats are committed to strengthening our schools and ensuring every child has the opportunity to get ahead, regardless of dis-

ability, income, or background. That starts with our rejecting Linda McMahon's troubling nomination to lead the Department of Education, a Department that she is going to start dismantling and, indeed, working herself out of a job.

On behalf of students, teachers, and families in Hawaii and all across our country, I urge my colleagues to think about it and to oppose this nomination. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. President, I rise today to speak on the importance of the Department of Education and my grave concerns about the nomination of Linda McMahon to be the Secretary of Education.

President Trump has made it clear what his directive is for Linda McMahon. It is to dismantle the Department of Education. And despite President Trump's stating that he has never read Project 2025 and Mrs. McMahon repeatedly stating that she is not familiar with Project 2025's proposals on higher education, it is abundantly clear that this administration is following Project 2025 to a tee.

Project 2025 lays out a blueprint for ending the Federal Government's role in public education, starting with dismantling the Department of Education, so that they can find the money they need to provide tax breaks for their billionaire friends. You heard me right: cutting public education dollars so that the richest can get richer.

Eliminating the Department of Education would be absolutely devastating for students, for teachers, and parents in Wisconsin and across America. Wisconsin stands to have \$235 million in title I funding ripped away. Wisconsin stands to have over \$270 million in IDEA funding, which is critical for special education, ripped away.

What this means is Wisconsin teachers stand to have needed resources for their classrooms ripped away. Parents stand to have in- and out-of-classroom support for their children ripped away. And of course, our children—our children—stand to lose out on the public education and opportunity to learn that they deserve, regardless of their ZIP code.

Look, we know we are facing a challenging time in the American education system. We know that, as a nation, we must turn the tide and ensure that America is a global leader in educating our children, and I am committed to working with parents, teachers, principals, and school districts to do just that. But we also know what won't help our children get a good education, and that is slashing the education budget. And we know what will help turn the tide: critical, data-driven investment in our public education system to support our children, our teachers, our schools, and our communities.

It is clear that Mrs. McMahon is being nominated for this role not to help children but to do Mr. Trump's

bidding. She comes to this role with very little experience in education, but she has a wealth of experience in Trump world. She has never been a teacher, but she did donate over \$20 million to Trump's campaign and organizations that are backing him. She has never been a school administrator, but she does sit on the board of directors for Trump Media & Technology Group.

In this critical time, we need to be providing our students and schools with more support, not less, and I urge my colleagues to join me in voting no on her nomination.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. RES. 103

Mr. GALLEGU. Mr. President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 103, which was submitted earlier today; further, that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. GALLEGU. Mr. President, 3 years ago, when Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine, many people, including experts, believed Putin would crush Ukraine's democracy in days. They were wrong.

About 1 month before the war broke out, I traveled to Ukraine with a bipartisan coalition of House Representatives to meet with Ukrainian soldiers. Those soldiers we met there knew they were up against one of the strongest militaries in the world, but they refused to back down when it came to fighting for their families, their freedom, and their future. These soldiers are the reason why—against all odds—Ukraine still stands strong.

Over 3 years, the scrappy little country of Ukraine has grinded down the second most powerful military in the world. Ukraine is holding the line for democracy, and they are doing it with our support. But Monday's vote at the U.N. undermined that and was a betrayal of Ukraine, America's allies, democracy, and everything we have stood for as a country.

Let's be clear on this: This is a war that Russia started. Ukraine did not ask for it. They did not ask to go to war with a nuclear superpower, and they did not ask for their cities to be reduced to rubble. They didn't ask for their children to be displaced and families to be torn apart. If Ukraine had its way, this war would have ended years ago.

What happened at the U.N. puts us on the same side as Russia and North Korea. That is not just embarrassing; it is dangerous. It sent a message to

our allies and every other country that relies on the U.S. to stand up to bullies and defend freedom that America cannot be relied on to rightfully call out unprovoked aggression. It told them that they are on their own; that America's words mean nothing.

If we can't stand up against these criminals, if we can't stand up against pariah states like Russia, how can we expect the world to take us seriously as leaders of democracy?

This is why I am introducing this resolution. I urge my colleagues to correct the mistake we made at the U.N. this week. Stand with our allies, and condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine. America does not stand with dictators, and we never will, and we shall never.

With that, I ask for consent and vote on my resolution.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, was there a unanimous consent request?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. No, there wasn't.

Mr. GALLEGU. I ask unanimous consent—

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, what was the consent request?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Can the Senator repeat the request, please.

Mr. GALLEGU. I withhold my request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. President, "I urge you to beware the temptation of . . . label[ing] both sides equally at fault—

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Time has expired, Senator.

Mr. SCHIFF. May I have consent to speak for 2 minutes?

Ms. ERNST. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? Objection is heard.

Mr. PAUL. Two minutes? If it is going to take longer.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion to invoke cloture—

Mr. PAUL. If we can be done in 2 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Senator ERNST, you objected.

Ms. ERNST. Withdrawn.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Withdrawn.

The Senator from California is recognized for two minutes.

Mr. SCHIFF. I thank my colleagues for their courtesy to speak on this resolution.

I urge you to beware the temptation of . . . label[ing] both sides equally at fault, [the temptation] to ignore the facts of history and the aggressive impulses of an evil empire.

My colleagues, these are not my words; they are, of course, the words of Ronald Reagan almost 42 years ago to the day.

Imagine if he could see his party now turning its back on our ally and fellow democracy, Ukraine; sponsoring a U.N. resolution that would whitewash the start of the war; engaging in the most immoral equivalence and failing to assign responsibility to Russia for its in-

vasion and ruthless aggression; voting with Russia and North Korea against our longtime friends and allies in Europe and around the world; and abandoning and insulting our allies as Putin seeks to remake the map of Europe.

What is this resolution in the United Nations about that we helped defeat? The United States has used its influence and its vetoes in the Security Council many times, but this resolution was offered by dozens of our close allies on the third anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. What was in it that was so objectionable to split the United States from its friends?

The resolution made clear that Russia started this war. It reaffirmed the sovereignty and independence of Ukraine. It deplored Russian aggression on women and children. It raised concerns with North Korean troops fighting alongside Russian forces. It noted the threat to nuclear safety. It called for an end to the war and a just and lasting peace and the withdrawal of Russian forces from Ukrainian lands.

None of this is in dispute—none. This was the resolution that the United States, the leader of the free world, blocked at the United Nations. Can any Member of this body point to a single problematic word in that resolution? Of course not.

The Senate should stand by that resolution, even as we must stand by Ukraine.

Today, the White House and Kremlin seek to rewrite the history of this war with falsehood and slander, calling Zelenskyy the dictator, Ukraine the instigator, and Putin the hero. We need to do more than say something; we need to do something.

"Slava Ukraini."

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MORENO). The majority whip.

WAIVING MANDATORY QUORUM CALL

Mr. BARRASSO. I ask unanimous consent to waive the mandatory quorum call with respect to the McMahon nomination.

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

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The 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 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.