

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

NOMINATION OF LINDA MCMAHON

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, the Senate will vote later today to confirm Linda McMahon to be Secretary of Education. Mrs. McMahon is an accomplished businesswoman and public servant. She is known for her role in building World Wrestling Entertainment, better known as WWE, from a small operation to a large and thriving enterprise. And she has used her success to give back and make a positive impact.

Mrs. McMahon led efforts to promote reading and civic engagement through WWE. She spent 16 years on the board of trustees for Sacred Heart University in her home State of Connecticut. She served on the Connecticut Board of Education. In his first term, President Trump tapped Linda McMahon to lead the Small Business Administration, where she was known for listening to small businesses to make the SBA a more effective Agency.

She will bring valuable experience, an incredible work ethic, and a passion for education to her new role leading the Department of Education. And she has a big task ahead of her. Let's acknowledge that. In January, the Nation's report card revealed that American students are still struggling to make up ground lost during the pandemic. Reading scores among fourth and eighth graders declined again, after falling in 2022 and 2019. One-third of eighth graders are reading below a basic level—the highest proportion ever recorded. Math scores showed modest improvement, but they still remain below prepandemic levels. And there is a widening gap in student performance. This should concern all of us.

As the son of two public school educators and father of two daughters who went to public schools, I know this problem is not going to be fixed by Washington bureaucrats. It is going to be fixed by good teachers, administrators, school boards, and parents—the people who are closest to the students and most invested in their success.

The Federal Government provides less than 10 percent of funding for schools in this country. The other 90 percent of funding—money that keeps the lights on, pays teachers, and buys new textbooks—well, that comes from State and local governments and from private sources. But while the Federal Government provides a small percentage of education funding, it is responsible for an outsize amount of bureaucracy and mandates in education. More

often than not, it is these policies that are holding back school districts from innovating and ultimately improving the education that they provide.

I am glad that Mrs. McMahon recognizes that education is not one-size-fits-all. States have different needs. School districts and individual schools have different needs. And every student has his or her own needs and aspirations. So I am glad that Mrs. McMahon plans to work in a way that empowers those closest to the student, because they are in the best position to do what is right for that student.

When I met with Mrs. McMahon, we had a long conversation about South Dakota's unique education needs, including our Tribal schools, and I look forward to working with Linda McMahon to limit bureaucracy, empower State and local governments, and let good teachers do what they are best at and what they love to do, and that is to help students succeed.

PROTECTION OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SPORTS  
ACT

Mr. President, most Americans are familiar with title IX. That was the landmark legislation designed to create equal spaces and opportunities in education for women. Title IX is particularly notable for the effect it has had on women's sports.

With its requirement that Federal funding recipients create equal athletic opportunities for women and girls, title IX paved the way for the women's athletic programs we see today at colleges and universities and high schools around the country. But now the gains that have been made through title IX are under attack.

Around the country, we have seen men—biological men who identify as women—take up spaces and medals in athletics meant for actual women. Swimming, track, volleyball, soccer, basketball—this is happening across a range of sports. And the problems here are obvious.

First of all, there is the physical danger that can be posed by men participating in women's sports. But this is about much more than any physical danger; this is a matter of fairness and equality. Title IX, as I said, was created to give women opportunities in spaces that have been denied them, to give women the same opportunities that men enjoy. That is not possible when men are involved in women's sports.

Biologically, men possess physical advantages when it comes to sports—things like greater muscle mass and greater aerobic power—which means that, by and large, men are likely to dominate women's sports, taking wins and medal opportunities away from women. And this isn't hypothetical. This is actually happening.

Let me quote from an August 2024 United Nations report on violence against women and girls, which addresses the participation of men in women's sports:

Policies implemented by international federations and national governing bodies,

along with national legislation in some countries, allow males who identify as women to compete in female sports categories.

In other cases, this practice is not explicitly prohibited and is thus tolerated in practice. The replacement of the female sports category with a mixed-sex category has resulted in an increasing number of female athletes losing opportunities, including medals, when competing against males. According to information received, by 30 March 2024, over 600 female athletes in more than 400 competitions have lost more than 890 medals in 29 different sports.

Let me just repeat that:

According to information received, by 30 March 2024, over 600 female athletes in more than 400 competitions have lost more than 890 medals in 29 different sports.

Now, that, as I said, is from a United Nations report. This isn't some myth that conservatives have dreamed up; this is happening.

I could go down a list of examples here in the United States: the female runner who did not qualify for the women's 55-meter final at the State championship because a biological male identifying as a woman qualified in her place; another female runner who resigned herself to second place at best because, as she said, she knew there would be no winning against the biological male who finished a full minute and 22 seconds ahead of the second place female finisher; the male pole vaulter who won the women's competition with a vault that exceeded that of the second place female finishers by 6 inches; the women's basketball team that saw nearly half of its season's points scored by a male.

That is just a sampling of the stories that are out there. Of course, the female athletes in question aren't just being robbed of their potential places on a winner's podium; they are also being robbed of the opportunities that might be associated with that place—things like college scholarships. As one female runner who was robbed of multiple wins by a biological male described the situation:

It robs girls of the chance to race in front of college scouts who show up for elite meets, and to compete for the scholarships and opportunities that come with college recruitment. I'll never know how my own college recruitment was impacted by losing those four state championship titles to a male. When colleges looked at my record, they didn't see the fastest girl in Connecticut. They saw a second- or third-place runner.

Mr. President, this isn't fair. Girls should not be having to compete in races that are stacked against them. Women deserve their own athletic opportunities, opportunities that are not taken away from them by biological males who have their own spaces in which to compete. They deserve a level playing field.

And this is not a niche position. A 2025 New York Times poll found that 79 percent of Americans—including, I might add, a majority of Democrats—believe that biological males identifying as women should not be allowed

to play women's sports. And that is not the only poll that has found that a huge majority of Americans believe that women's sports should be for actual women.

At the beginning of February, President Trump took action to protect the original meaning of title IX and ensure that Federal funding would not go to schools that allow men to compete as women. As the father of two former female athletes, I am grateful for his commitment to upholding fairness and common sense.

My dad, who was a division I athlete, came back to my hometown to coach women's sports—girls basketball, girls track. It would have been incomprehensible to him to think biological boys would be competing against his female athletes.

Mr. President, fortunately, there is no guarantee that the next President is going to uphold President Trump's measure. So today, we will consider legislation from my colleague Senator TUBERVILLE, a former high school girls basketball coach, to permanently reinstate the original intent of title IX and ensure that women—and women only—participate in women's sports in federally funded educational institutions.

Now, Mr. President, I would love to think that we would easily pass this legislation, that Democrats and Republicans would unite and stand with the vast majority of Americans to protect opportunities for women. Given that every single Democrat voted to block this bill last Congress, I have to say I am concerned about today's outcome.

So this will be a time of choosing for Democrats. They can stand with women or they can stand with a radical transgender ideology that would see women and their opportunities sacrificed to make way for biological males. Democrats can't have it both ways, Mr. President. It is either one or the other.

I had a finance professor in graduate school, and he used to say that some things are just intuitively obvious. Well this, Mr. President, is one of those things.

If the Democrats vote to oppose this legislation, they will have to answer to the women and girls they vote to disenfranchise. I hope Democrats will join Republicans to protect women and women's sports and vote to proceed to the Protection of Women and Girls in Sports Act.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

JOINT SESSION OF CONGRESS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, tomorrow, President Trump will address

a joint meeting of Congress for the first time since taking the oath of office. It is my honor—my true honor—to welcome seven incredible New Yorkers tomorrow who will tell the story of what is under threat by Donald Trump's agenda, from Medicaid beneficiaries to disabled veterans fired from their jobs at the VA, to fired USDA workers, to home healthcare workers.

It will also be my profound honor to welcome Orna Neutra, mother of Omer Neutra, and Ruby Chen, father of Itay Chen, both who were tragically killed by vicious Hamas thugs on October 7.

Orna's son Omer was taken hostage by Hamas during the attacks on October 7. It wasn't until over a year later that Omer's family learned he was murdered by Hamas on October 7. Ruby's son Itay was also taken hostage and tragically murdered by Hamas on the border of Gaza on October 7.

After months of fighting for his return, Itay's family learned that he was also killed by Hamas on October 7. I spoke to Itay's dad and I spoke to Orna as well many times between October 7 and when they were notified that their children had been murdered.

It was vicious cruelty of Hamas for whom viciousness seems to be part of their way not to let the families know what had happened. Over and over again, especially Ruby Chen, whom I got to know well, and we had Brooklyn roots together, would wonder, Is he dead? Is he alive? Is he alive? Is he dead? And Hamas kept him dangling, as I said, viciously and cruelly.

What Omer and Itay's family have endured is beyond comprehension, but I am inspired by their perseverance, by their resolve to keep calling for the safe return of remaining hostages and for the return of the bodies of their loved ones. We must bring all the hostages home now. But it is an honor—a true honor—to welcome all of my guests, the Neutras, the Chens, and, of course, the others to the Capitol.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. President, now, tomorrow, Americans can expect Donald Trump to say many things that are false, including, perhaps, Russian misinformation. What we will not hear from Donald Trump, however, is the truth.

So today let us speak the truth about Donald Trump's agenda. In a little over a month, Donald Trump, Elon Musk, and Republicans have set in motion the greatest transfer of wealth in favor of billionaires we have seen in modern times.

On the one hand, you have Elon Musk calling Social Security the greatest Ponzi scheme of all time; you have DOGE firing 7,000 staffers from the Social Security Administration; you have Donald Trump threatening trade wars with our own allies; and you have Republicans cutting \$880 billion from Medicaid to pay for their billionaire tax cuts. Money that funds things like community health centers, money that funds people who desperately need healthcare, money that funds elderly

parents of middle-aged couples whose parents are in nursing homes, all of that is at great risk.

Together, these actions will mean diminished wealth for working and middle-class Americans and more money in the pockets of the billionaires because, after all, when the wealthiest man on Earth calls Social Security a scam and DOGE fires 7,000 Social Security staffers, that is a clear sign Social Security benefits are in danger.

Donald Trump just said a few minutes ago that he was going to keep the tariffs against Canada and Mexico. When Donald Trump starts a trade war with Canada and Mexico, it means rising costs for produce, for groceries, for cars, even for ordering takeout and happy hour.

It is unbelievable what they are doing with these tariffs. It could mean that restaurant owners in States like mine could be forced to close down as food prices go up. It means that building new homes will be more expensive, and those costs will be passed down to would-be home buyers.

The bottom line is very simple: One of the greatest things Americans complained about in the past election was the high costs of so many different kinds of goods and products, and now Donald Trump is making it worse because he just said that he would not continue the pause on Canada and Mexico's tariffs but will let them go into effect.

Please, Mr. Trump, rethink your plans to start a trade war or the average family will get slapped with an average \$2,000 extra in costs. Families will suffer. Businesses will suffer. You said you would bring down costs on day one, Donald Trump, yet here, 1 month in, you are doing something that would raise costs significantly for the American people.

And when Republicans cut Medicaid, it means healthcare costs will go soaring for tens of millions of kids, seniors, people with disabilities, rural communities. So why are the Republicans doing all this? Why are they creating all this havoc, this chaos, this cruelty, and this harm to the American people? Simple. To cut taxes for billionaires and have the American people pick up the tab.

Make no mistake about it, this is what a transfer of wealth looks like, away from working Americans and into the bank accounts of the billionaires club.

Meanwhile, it is not much better in terms of foreign policy and our own security. Our allies across the world will look at America and see a country in decline under Donald Trump. They will watch in horror as an American President continues to curry favors with war criminals like Vladimir Putin while publicly berating friends—brave, valiant people who risked their lives and have seen so many of their countrymen die in a valiant fight for freedom like President Zelenskyy. He gets berated. Putin gets praised. What is going on?