

and that is who Republicans are desperate to help. They are doing it by going after some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

I will be joining my Democratic colleagues in voting no on the pending legislation.

(Mrs. BRITT assumed the Chair.)

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Madam President, we are witnessing one of the worst starts to any Presidency in generations, and it is not even close. There is a possibility of negative growth in the first quarter of this year—which would have been unheard of—so bad economically that the Secretary of Commerce is trying to concoct another way to calculate GDP. If you wonder how bad the data is, you have the Secretary of Commerce going, like, “Well, this whole GDP thing—we have been measuring it wrong for all of these decades.”

There is no comparison for the staggering—staggering—levels of incompetence and lawlessness coursing through this administration, and regular people are paying a steep price.

Tomorrow night, the President will try to rewrite his record and recast blame when he addresses Congress. I want to go over some of the worst things that he has done that actually hurt people, because unless you are a billionaire, life has gotten harder, not easier, over the last couple of months.

No. 1. He is actively raising the price of everything. He is actively raising the price of everything. After specifically promising that he would bring down prices on day one, he has gone out of his way to raise them. The price of eggs is up 15 percent. Coffee prices are at record highs. The price of everything from tomatoes, to strawberries, to clothes, to toys, to cars, to homes and home building is about to go up starting tomorrow because Trump is picking a needless fight with our largest trading partner with tariffs. Prices will skyrocket, businesses will be hurt, and people will lose their jobs.

No. 2. Not even a week into his second term, Trump illegally froze Federal funding for all 50 States—all 50 States. With one Monday night memorandum, the White House locked States out of portals for everything from Medicaid payments to housing assistance. Schools, childcare centers, rural hospitals, and VA clinics were suddenly left wondering if they would have to close their doors or lay off staff. Almost a month later, the taps are not fully turned back on.

As a result of the freeze and Trump's other Executive orders, hundreds of billions of dollars continue to be withheld from States and communities where they belong. These are taxpayer dollars. These are dollars that are appropriated by this branch of government, the article I branch of government.

If you don't like how appropriated funds are going to be spent, there is a mechanism for an executive branch to do something about it. They can propose a new budget, and they can either

sign or veto a new appropriations bill. But that is not what they did. They just acted as though they could cross out things that they found objectionable. And it is not even as though they did that in some sort of methodical way. They had a bunch of kids going in there—literally kids—going “Control+F.” Oh, gender? Kill that. Oh, Native? Kill that. Oh, climate? Kill that. That is how they figured out what they were going to cut.

No. 3. Trump is illegally firing tens of thousands of government workers, many of whom are veterans, and he is not done yet. These are people who have dedicated their careers to public service, and in the case of veterans, risked their lives to protect our country. They are just like the rest of us—bills to pay, kids to feed, parents to care for. And they are being discarded. This is the biggest mass firing of veterans in U.S. history.

No. 4. No one stands to benefit more from this ransacking of the government than billionaires, which is no surprise considering it is being led by the richest people on the planet.

Eliminating the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau that was created in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis specifically to protect people from fraud and deceptive lending practices or dramatically shrinking the IRS, which means refunds will be delayed during tax season, and tax fraud will skyrocket without proper scrutiny—none of that benefits a regular person. None of that benefits a regular person, but it is great news if you are a billionaire trying to wiggle out of paying taxes or a shady lender who is looking to defraud people.

No. 5. If all of this wasn't enough, Trump and the Republicans are working to cut taxes for billionaires and make regular people foot the bill. Now, that is not unusual for them. Cutting taxes for billionaires is kind of their thing. They like it. It is their reason for being. But it is alarming nonetheless in the brazenness of how they are going about doing this.

They basically want to cut money that goes to regular people and book that as savings, right? So whenever you do a tax bill, if you are doing it right, it pays for itself, which means you have to have something on the side of the ledger where you are bringing in more money and then another side of the ledger where you are cutting revenue, and then it adds up to zero, nets out, deficit neutral.

The problem is, they can't really figure out how to deliver this \$4 trillion-or-so tax cut to the wealthiest corporations that have ever existed in human history and do it in a deficit-neutral way, and so they are just, like, committing arson within Departments and then trying to book that as savings to pay for the tax cut.

Now, it is true that—well, all political parties have a tendency towards exaggeration, and so you would be forgiven if you hear this and go “Well, the

Democrats are saying this is what the tax policy is, and maybe it is not exactly like that.” But I want you to understand that what is happening in the U.S. House as they negotiate over this big tax bill is exactly that.

They are demanding more and more cuts from the Affordable Care Act; from the Social Security Administration in terms of the staffing of the place; from Medicaid, where they want to turn it into block grants, which is just a euphemism for “Medicaid cuts.” Then they want to take all of those savings and not, like, reinvest it in some other part of the government, not put it in the Department of Education, not give it to low-income individuals so that they can climb out of poverty; they actually just want to take trillions—trillions—of dollars from you and give it to them.

USAID

Madam President, since taking office just over a month ago, Donald Trump has rapidly obliterated America's standing as the leader of the free world. Decades of hard work, extraordinary sacrifice, and painstaking bipartisan diplomacy to lead our allies and partners against the forces of autocracy and repression have been crushed, and America's reputation as the indispensable Nation is in tatters.

It started with the illegal dismantling of the U.S. Agency for International Development and continued with the unlawful elimination of virtually all foreign assistance and culminated this last weekend—Friday—with the Oval office meeting with Ukrainian President Zelenskyy last week.

Trump has undermined American values and interests at every turn. This is not a doctrine that somehow puts America first. Past Presidents of both parties, with different words and different means, have aggressively pursued American interests.

I have to say on the specific question of how USAID operates with the State Department, you hear Secretaries of State of both parties saying: Hey, it would be great if USAID and the State Department were better aligned.

I am the top Democrat on the SFOPS Committee, which is the funding committee for foreign aid, and I sat down with the chairman, LINDSEY GRAHAM, and I said: I think there is some opportunity to do some bipartisan work here in reforming the foreign aid enterprise.

We had a really constructive conversation. That was 2 days before all hell broke loose at USAID—all hell broke loose at USAID. Trump froze all foreign assistance and then moved to illegally shutter USAID, which is responsible for implementing most of our foreign aid.

None of it was about achieving efficiency or rooting out waste; it was about Trump trying to wish away whatever parts of the Federal Government he doesn't like, in violation of the law, in violation of the Foreign Assistance Act, in violation of the Constitution, in violation of the Prompt

Payments Act, in violation of every appropriations bill that we have ever passed as it relates to U.S. aid since the original Foreign Assistance Act. This is not actually a close call.

You can hate USAID—I don't; I think it is great—or you can think it needs reform. I also think it needs reform. But the way to enact a law is to enact a law. The way to enact a law is not to just break a law and see if a judge will impose parameters on you. Trump literally fired the people whose job it is to identify and combat waste. That is not the kind of thing that you would do if you were interested in combating waste.

There was a person at USAID who basically wrote a bunch of factual memorandums to senior staffers saying: This is the consequence of what you are doing. Among other things, it said, specifically: Hey, you might have a waiver program in place to allow lifesaving aide to continue, but you sent everybody home and locked them out of their email.

They sent everybody home and locked them out of their email, and then we are to believe that this waiver process is somehow going to push through the billions of dollars for lifesaving aid that are needed and expected.

So what is happening? These big providers—I won't even name them because they are so terrified—good organizations, no political valence. If they have any political inclination, they tend to be Christian organizations doing, literally, God's work all across the planet. They are laying off people. They are literally closing up tents. People are flying home back to the continental United States or Hawaii or Alaska—wherever they live—and just saying: We are out of here now.

So babies are getting HIV AIDS from their moms now because the PEPFAR funding is frozen. And don't let anybody tell you that PEPFAR is unfrozen. Everything is frozen. Why? Because—I might be getting this number slightly wrong, but as I recall it, there is about 70 people left. And this is a tens-of-billions-of-dollar enterprise.

How the hell are you going to consider a waiver for 5,800 individual programs when you have 70 human beings, not all of them in this particular bureau, to try to process the waivers?

What I have been told is: Hey, if there is anything especially important to you, sir, let me know. I am thinking, I am not here to petition the King for mercy. The way this works is everybody operates within the law.

We lost the election. Democrats lost the election. We lost the House, we lost the Senate, and we lost the Presidency. And we lost it all fair and square. But now it is on Republicans to operate fair and square.

What is happening at USAID—I understand this is not the most compelling issue for people back home in Hawaii or people back home in Alabama or people back home in Illinois or any-

where. It is not like most people's burning desire. But people do understand following the law or not following the law. What is happening right now is plainly unlawful. They are violating multiple statutes, and the consequences are not some arcane discussion about legal principles or the rule of law. Millions of people will die.

I am still new enough to the Senate—I am not that new to the Senate—but I am still new enough to the Senate where I don't say anything I don't mean to say on the floor. I want anybody who is listening to understand, if we don't resolve this, millions of people will die. Millions of people will die because of an illegal decision made by this administration.

We all have to decide: Are we going to stand up for some basic American values? What are those American values? We are the good guys. When people see that USAID logo, they should say: Awesome, the Americans are here. When they see that food grown in Georgia, processed in the mid-Atlantic States, grown in Kansas and other places—when they see that food arriving to prevent malnourished kids from going in the wrong direction, they should say: I am so thankful that America exists, not just as a country but as an idea.

We are the good guys. And part of being the good guys is even if you hate something, if it is a law, it is a law. There are a lot of laws on the books that I hate. The Global Gag Rule is the first one that comes to mind, but there are probably a dozen more I could come up with. It literally never occurred to me to ask Joe Biden or Barack Obama or Donald Trump or anyone else to violate the statute and see what the judge says.

We as the article I branch and we as patriots have to wrap our arms around this problem, get the aid of the enterprise back up and running for humanitarian reasons, for geopolitical reasons, for legal reasons, for moral reasons, and for reasons related to what we are here to do, which is we are here—if this enterprise needs to be reformed, count me in. But this is a lawmaking process, not a lawbreaking process.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I want to thank my colleague from Hawaii. If he can spare 30 seconds, I would like to tell him a story.

Years ago, I went to India to the dusty villages—not the big cities—just to see what USAID was doing. I heard about it. I wanted to see it. The most graphic example I can remember from that experience was when they showed me a bag of some grain supplement, and on it was written “USAID from the people of the United States of America.” What they were doing with this was making a lunch for the children in the village. I don't think your kids or mine would have touched it. It looked like some odd rice crispy ball that was

held together with water. They sat with little tin plates with this rice crispy ball on it from the USAID package to eat their lunch. But before they ate their lunch, they paused. I said, “What is going on?” The guide said to me: They are saying a prayer of thanks to this United States of America for giving them food to eat.

I thought to myself, for goodness' sake, it is 1 percent of our Federal budget—1 percent—that we spend in this manner to try to give kids around the world a chance to survive. There are many other things we do, but that basic example with those kids sitting in the dust of that village eating that rice crispy ball and thanking the United States of America for it touched my heart and still does to this day. Thanks for what you said. I appreciate it so much.

#### PROTECTION OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SPORTS ACT OF 2025

Madam President, I want to say a word about what we are going to vote on today, an issue that is going to come before us.

I might ask my colleagues if they could answer the following question: How many athletes, NCAA athletes, are there in the United States? I asked Mr. Baker, the former Governor of Massachusetts, that question. He said over 500,000—500,000. I said: Of all those athletes, what percentage are transgender?

Oh, fewer than 10.

I said: Fewer than 10 percent?

No, fewer than 10 total out of 500,000 are transgender.

Yet we are going to come to the floor with a proposal from Senator TUBERVILLE to vote on this issue. He is going to attempt to bring to this floor a bill that targets trans youth.

This bill would revoke Federal funding from schools with athletic programs that allow trans girls to participate on sports teams for women or girls. The bill, which has no enforcement mechanism, could subject women and girls to physical inspection by an adult if someone from an opposing team accused them of being transgender.

Think about that for a second. Your daughter, someone in your family is going to play a sport, and someone on the other team challenges them: That is not a little girl; that is a transgender boy.

This bill we are about to vote on gives authority to someone to make a physical inspection of that little girl if someone from the opposing team accuses them of being transgender.

Does that sound a little extreme to you? Well, it sure does to me too. This infringes on the privacy of girls and women as a dangerous use of the powers of government to target children and their families.

Put yourself in the shoes of these families for just a moment. Imagine being the parent of a trans kid and telling your child they are not even allowed to play on the same sports team