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Senate

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Holy One, who expresses Your love to us each day, shower us with Your mercy so that we may rejoice and be glad. May the gift of Your presence be more than sufficient to meet the needs of our Nation and world. Bring peace to those who are devastated by war.

Lord, empower the Members of this body to depend on Your might and to stand united as they meet the challenges of our time. As they strive to do Your will, teach them to say the right thing at the right time and to serve You with faithfulness. Keep them humble and fill them with Your peace.

We pray in Your powerful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SHEEHY). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

DISAPPROVING THE RULE SUBMITTED BY THE BUREAU OF CONSUMER FINANCIAL PROTECTION RELATING TO "DEFINING LARGER PARTICIPANTS OF A MARKET FOR GENERAL-USE DIGITAL CONSUMER PAYMENT APPLICATIONS"—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the following joint resolution, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (S.J. Res. 28) disapproving the rule submitted by the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection relating to "Defining Larger Participants of a Market for General-Use Digital Consumer Payment Applications".

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

CHINA

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, in January, investor concerns about China's advances in AI innovation wiped out nearly \$1 trillion in U.S. tech stock value, and that happened in a single day.

Chinese companies like DeepSeek are often able to keep pace with Silicon Valley because they steal our tech secrets, and they do it from right under our own noses. This not only puts the United States at a competitive disadvantage but also threatens our national security.

The Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman has warned that Chinese nationals in our university systems are engaged in widespread technological espionage both on campus and in the workplace. Foreign STEM students often take tech jobs that give them access to sensitive technologies. This shouldn't be possible. Why? Because the law clearly states that student visas are solely for study, not for work.

Outrageously, the Department of Homeland Security has granted work authorizations to hundreds of thousands of foreign students every year, in violation of the law. The Department of Homeland Security has even allowed foreign students to stay in this country under their student visas for years after they graduate in order to work. If we want to protect our national security and our competitive economic competition with China, this must end.

So I am hopeful that with new leadership at the Department of Homeland Security, these unlawful work authorizations will no longer be approved. That leads me to calling on Secretary Noem to protect American jobs, innovating, and national security by terminating the CPT and the OPT student work programs—in other words, stop the steal that benefits the Communist Party of China.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative 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 LORI CHAVEZ-DEREMER

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, the Senate will soon vote on its 21st Cabinet nominee, Lori Chavez-DeRemer, nominated for Secretary of Labor.

Ms. Chavez-DeRemer is a former Congresswoman from Oregon. She has been a mayor, a city councilor, and she and her husband spent 30 years building a small business. From her first job packing peaches at a California farm, Ms. Chavez-DeRemer has known the value of a hard day's work, and in her public service, she has put in the work to seek differing perspectives and to find common ground.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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Ms. Chavez-DeRemer's mother would always tell her "When you know better, you do better," and we need the Labor Department to do better than what we saw from the Biden administration.

Over the last 4 years, the Labor Department pushed out many mandates that were the very opposite of pro-worker. Americans lost their jobs because of the Biden COVID vaccine mandate. Many workers found the independent contractor status they valued threatened by a Biden administration rule. Then there was the Labor Department's attempt to allow 150 million Americans' retirement savings to be invested based on climate factors rather than just an investment's rate of return.

President Trump has shown his commitment to the working people of this country. Making life better for working Americans was a priority in his first administration, and it will be a priority in his second. It is a welcome change in direction from the last 4 years.

JOINT SESSION OF CONGRESS

Mr. President, speaking of a welcome change in direction, last night, the President came to Capitol Hill to address Congress and lay out his vision for the next 4 years—his vision and his record of accomplishment, because in just 6 weeks, President Trump has already accomplished an incredible amount.

Chief among his achievements is the job he and his administration have done in securing our southern border and restoring respect for the rule of law. There were approximately 8,450 encounters at our southern border during the month of February—8,450. That is at least—at least—a 25-year low. To put that number in perspective, during the Biden border crisis, Customs and Border Protection was sometimes dealing with 8,000 or more attempted illegal crossings per day. In just 6 weeks in office, President Trump is overseeing an incredible turnaround. It just shows what happens when you have a President and an administration committed to securing the border and enforcing the law.

Senate Republicans are committed to answering the President's call for additional funding to protect our borders, enforce our immigration laws, and get dangerous criminal aliens off of our streets.

Another crisis the President has lost no time in addressing is the national energy emergency that we are facing. As the Washington Post reported last March, "Amid explosive demand, America is running out of power."

The Biden administration, of course, pursued policies guaranteed to make things worse, from restricting conventional energy development to forcing Americans into electric vehicles. Fortunately, we are in a new era. President Trump has already taken steps to roll back burdensome Biden energy regulations like the electric vehicle

mandate and unleash American energy development, and the Republican Congress will support his efforts. For the sake of our security, our economy, and Americans' pocketbooks, we need to have a reliable, affordable, and abundant energy supply, and I am thankful to have a President who recognizes this.

One of the signature accomplishments of the first Trump administration was the passage of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, legislation that put more money in hard-working Americans' pockets, and one of the top priorities of the second Trump administration is making that tax relief permanent. It is a priority for the President, and it is a priority for Republicans here in the Senate. We are hard at work laying the groundwork for permanently extending the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act this year.

There were so many things to hear last night that were a welcome change from the last 4 years: President Trump's commitment to reversing burdensome Biden administration regulations and eliminating 10 regulations for every new one his administration proposes; the President's commitment to eliminating wasteful and unnecessary spending; his commitment to protecting children from radical gender ideology and ensuring that women and girls' athletic opportunities are protected and more.

As always, Mr. President, I am grateful for President Trump's faith in America. It reminds us just how blessed we are to live in this great country and that in the United States of America, everything is possible.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MULLIN). The Democratic leader is recognized.

JOINT SESSION OF CONGRESS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, last night, Donald Trump subjected the American people to a deluge of falsehoods, misrepresentations, and outright lies. What Americans heard last night was easily the nastiest, most divisive, most partisan, and most dishonest Presidential address in American history.

In a speech that lasted almost 2 hours, Donald Trump spent over 10 minutes falsely ridiculing and delegitimizing Social Security, following DOGE's lead alleging this program, which serves tens of millions of Americans, is a scam. They seemed to be preparing to go full steam ahead to take benefits away from you, the American people.

It is amazing. Tens of millions of Americans depend on that check, that Social Security check, to buy food,

which is becoming more expensive under Donald Trump; to pay for prescription drugs, and they want to repeal the laws we did that made them cheaper for the average American; and so much else. Calling it a scam, ridiculing it with false information, and cutting 7,000 out of Social Security offices shows you where they are headed: to hurt Social Security, one of the most sacred programs in America.

Why are they doing this? Why would they do this? So unpopular. Only for one reason: The motivation of Donald Trump, Elon Musk, and the Republican Party is tax cuts for the billionaires. That is their No. 1 goal, and they will twist America in knots, hurting people—many people, millions of people—to get it done.

Trump also lied about his plans to eviscerate Medicaid and lied about his plans to cut taxes for billionaires while making working Americans pay the costs.

Mr. President, there was more truth in 10 minutes of Senator ELISSA SLOTKIN's rebuttal than in 2 hours of Donald Trump's long-winded, self-serving diatribe. Senator SLOTKIN did an outstanding job last night dismantling Donald Trump's nonsense with clarity, with facts, and with some desperately needed common sense. I am so glad I asked her to deliver the Democratic response because she knocked it out of the park.

Now, when Donald Trump wasn't lying, he was distracting. He talked again about renaming the Gulf of Mexico. He talked about renaming mountains. He said that he was a better President than George Washington. What a bubble this guy is in. What planet is he on? For a moment, I wondered if Donald Trump was utterly clueless of the disaster his administration has been under his watch.

The one thing Donald Trump did not mention last night was a real, serious plan to bring down costs—the No. 1 thing Americans wanted to hear most. Instead, Donald Trump doubled down on his plans to send costs skyrocketing by starting a trade war with Canada and Mexico.

Let's be very clear about this. Donald Trump's tariffs are a tax on working- and middle-class families. The average American household could see an extra \$2,000 a year in expenses. Tariffs mean the cost of pretty much everything would go up, not just cars, although he could destroy the car industry—remember, about 40 percent of the parts that are in American cars come from Canada—but also housing and groceries and food—beef, dairy, eggs—and the cost of furniture and smartphones and laptops and fertilizer for farmers. Even going out to dinner with friends will be more expensive because of Donald Trump's tariffs.

Tariffs will slow growth. They will erode profits. They worsen unemployment and inequality and wreak havoc on supply chains that tens of millions of people and businesses depend on.

Let's be clear. The administration has obviously not thought through these tariffs. They seem to be changing their plans by the hour. Even this uncertainty is extremely harmful to the economy. It makes it impossible for businesses to plan ahead. It depresses spending, slows growth, and eats away at consumer confidence.

Yes, there are certain tariffs—particularly against China, which is competing with us economically in unfair ways—that might make some sense, but these have been unthought through. They are creating chaos for the economy. That is the one thing that the tariffs are accomplishing—chaos for the economy, stock market plummets.

Why are they doing this? Well, it is not different here than Social Security or Medicaid. Why is Donald Trump hell-bent on starting a trade war when virtually every expert knows the casualties of a trade war will be families and consumers? The reason is very simple—one reason he and DOGE say that Social Security is a scam: They want to take away people's benefits to pay for billionaire tax cuts. That is the whole ball game.

I can't think of a time where any President ridiculed Social Security the way Donald Trump did, and I can't think of a time where someone was more chaotic and deleterious on tariffs than Donald Trump was.

What they are seeking in return is the greatest transfer of wealth from working families to billionaires in the history of America. They want to take Social Security benefits away from you, the American people. They want to take healthcare away from you, the American people. They want to take away education and medical research and infrastructure and basic public services. Why? Well, it is pretty expensive to give tax cuts to the wealthy and elite, but that is what they are doing. That is what a transfer of wealth looks like to the average American—taking so much away from you, the things you need and depend on.

But Donald Trump and Republicans forget one thing: The American people aren't just going to roll over and let Republicans ruin this country. Democrats and, frankly, all Americans of good will, regardless of party, are organizing and mobilizing to defend healthcare and Social Security and the livelihood of American families. Americans are organizing in public, and Republicans have seen these frustrations at townhalls. That should be the first clue that they should drop their terrible agenda. When a lead Republican in the House tells Republicans "You better cancel your townhalls," they are running away from their policies and priorities.

We are organizing online. I set up a call with some of the leading activists, people who have been out there on the frontlines protesting in New York last week. I thought about 500 people would get on the Zoom; it was 3,000. I met

with 3,000 on Zoom—a turnout exceeding all expectations—to talk about how to defend healthcare, defend public services, stop tax cuts for the very wealthy, and make people's voices heard in the halls of power.

We are organizing in the courts. New lawsuits are happening every single day. Since just March 1—that is 4 or 5 days ago—at least 35 court rulings have come down halting or pausing some of the administration's worst abuses. The courts are one of the best tools available for protecting the rule of law and preventing the worst abuses of the administration.

Organizing is not easy. It takes persistence. But it works. It makes change happen. It is the cornerstone on which democracy is founded.

Donald Trump's exhausting speech is now in the rearview mirror, so Democrats will keep fighting every day to protect this precious democracy and hold the line against Donald Trump's attempts to rob American families of their livelihoods, taking so much away from the average American family and giving it to the very, very wealthy.

I yield the floor.

Mr. SCHUMER. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

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

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

The Republican whip.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor today having just heard the minority leader come to the floor and have his reflections on last night's address to the Nation by President Donald Trump. Well, a man is entitled to his opinion.

This morning, however, CBS News reported on what the viewers at home thought about what they saw. The headline is "Poll of Trump's 2025 joint address to Congress finds large majority of viewers approve."

A large majority—76 percent of the viewers—approved of what they heard last night.

They asked those viewers: Did the President spend time on talking about the issues that you care about?

Two out of three said: Yes, indeed.

His speech—how did it make people feel? What did they say?

Almost 70 percent said: Hopeful. Hopeful for the future.

Over half said: Proud. Proud of America.

Speech viewers described the President as "presidential," "inspiring," and "unifying."

The question they asked is: Does President Trump have a clear plan for inflation?

More than two out of three said: Yes.

That is what the American people saw.

So apparently the minority leader did not see the same speech or did not

reflect the same way as the great majority of the American viewers at home, because last night, I believe people saw President Trump's bold agenda and rapid action in motion. That was focused on securing the border.

Joint addresses to Congress are typically about making promises, but last night, it was different. President Trump spoke about the promises he is keeping, the action that he has already taken to make our country safer.

The numbers tell the story. Under President Trump, in February, there were less than 9,000 illegal crossings at our southern border. That is the lowest in recorded history.

Under Joe Biden, the border was a very different story. The border was wide open for members of criminal cartels, the drug dealers, people on the Terrorist Watch List.

Last month was February. We are now into March. So we look at February 2022, 2023, 2024, and now with President Trump back in office. In February 2022, under Joe Biden, 160,000 illegal crossings; 2023, 157,000 illegal crossings; 2024, 190,000 illegal crossings; President Trump, less than 9,000. Joe Biden was having these numbers in a single day when he was in the White House.

President Trump is securing the border. He is doing it boldly. He is doing it strongly. He is doing it with intention.

One illegal immigrant said: It is too hard; you can't cross right now. That is the message we wanted. The American people wanted illegal immigrants to be hearing that it is too hard, don't even try it.

Under President Trump, we actually have reverse migration. It is the reality. Cartel criminals once profited from the border invasion—not anymore. One smuggler told NBC News that his profits had fallen 80 percent. That is a good message for them all to hear.

Illegal immigrants are turning around, and at the same time, illegal criminals in this country are being taken down. In my home State of Wyoming, ICE recently arrested two Mexican nationals, drug dealers. One man was found with a pound of methamphetamine. President Trump is taking coldblooded criminals like this off of our streets and getting them out of the country.

President Trump is also fighting to stop the drug cartels, and these are the people who are flooding our Nation with deadly drugs. Fentanyl poisoning kills more than 70,000 American citizens each and every year. This is a crisis.

On day one, President Trump listed these killer cartel members as terrorist organizations. No other President has taken such a bold step ever. And it is working. The cartels are now shutting down drug labs. The leaders are going into hiding. For the first time in years, the cartels are running scared.

That is the way it should be. President Trump said he is going to do

whatever it takes to keep Americans safe.

President Trump began his first day in office by signing dozens of Executive orders. He cracked down on illegal immigrant criminals in each and every one of our communities.

He empowered the Border Patrol agents. They are securing the border once again. He launched the largest deportation operation in history. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers have started to deport the worst illegal immigrant criminals.

President Trump also made sure American taxpayers stopped paying billions of their dollars on free hotels, on free phones, on free healthcare for illegal immigrants, which, of course, acted as a magnet to bring more illegal immigrants into the country. Not the message they are hearing today.

Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid are for American citizens, not for illegal immigrants. President Trump's actions are going to protect and preserve these vital programs for the very people that the programs were intended from the beginning.

The American public overwhelmingly supports what President Trump is doing. CBS News, the same people that did the poll this morning on how successful and how much the people of this country welcomed the President's address last night—well, last week, CBS News reported that 59 percent of Americans approved of President Trump's deportation program. And 64 percent say the President's actions are reducing illegal migration and crossings at the southern border.

It is what the American people want. It is what they voted for in November—a secure border. People around this country oppose what the Democrats are doing in sanctuary cities like Chicago, Los Angeles, Denver, and Boston. They oppose funneling their hard-earned taxpayer dollars to pay for benefits for illegal immigrants. People want safety, they want security, and they want some sanity coming out of Washington that they didn't have in the last 4 years. That is what President Trump and that is what Republicans are delivering.

This is only the beginning. Last night, President Trump laid out a clear path forward. He said the Department of Homeland Security needs backup, needs manpower, we need to finish the wall.

Manpower, technology, the wall, they are essential for full border security. That is why 2 weeks ago, the Presiding Officer and I and other Members of our colleagues here on the Republican side of the aisle passed a budget that increases for border security. Senate Republicans voted for more border agents, more detention beds, more deportation flights. Every Democrat, when having an opportunity to vote for those things, voted no.

Securing the border is why I introduced a bill called the Build the Wall Act. My legislation finishes building

the wall along the southern border, and it was paid for with unspent COVID money. The money is still there. Stopping the killer cartels is why the Senate needs to now pass the HALT Fentanyl Act. Lives are on the line. Fentanyl is the No. 1 killer of Americans between the ages of 18 and 45.

Permanently listing deadly illicit fentanyl as a schedule I drug, I believe, will save lives. The HALT Fentanyl Act is bipartisan. It passed the Senate Judiciary Committee, 16 to 5. It passed the House of Representatives with the support of 98 Democrats, and I am grateful that Leader Thune is preparing to bring it to the floor.

The Senate is going to deliver a secure border and safer communities. That is what the American people demand, and it is what the American people deserve.

WAIVING QUORUM CALL

I ask unanimous consent to waive the mandatory quorum call with respect to the Blanche nomination.

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

I yield the floor.

CLOTURE MOTION

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

The bill 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. 27, Todd Blanche, of Florida, to be Deputy Attorney General.

John Thune, Roger Marshall, Tommy Tuberville, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Tim Sheehy, Katie Britt, Tom Cotton, Pete Ricketts, Kevin Cramer, John Barrasso, James Lankford, Rick Scott of Florida, Jon A. Husted, Markwayne Mullin, John R. Curtis, Roger F. Wicker, Bernie Moreno.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Todd Blanche, of Florida, to be Deputy Attorney General, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Wyoming (Ms. LUMMIS) and the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Michigan (Ms. SLOTKIN) is necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 51, nays 46, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 104 Leg.]

YEAS—51

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

NAYS—46

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

NOT VOTING—3

Lummis	Murkowski	Slotkin
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The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 51, the nays are 46. The motion is agreed to.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Todd Blanche, of Florida, to be Deputy Attorney General.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, there is a lot going on here in Washington, DC. That is an understatement. But I want to highlight the meeting that I had—that I attended, along with many of my Senate colleagues—last week, with Elon Musk and the Department of Government Efficiency team. That is a topic that has gotten a fair amount of information and visibility in the press, but much of it has been misinformation. I would like to address some of that and the importance of this effort, here, in the next few minutes. We had a very informative meeting with Mr. Musk and his team about the work they are doing on behalf of the American people.

I first met Elon Musk maybe 15 years ago, when he came to my office and said he had a new company called SpaceX, and he wanted to be able to compete with other companies that had all of the NASA contracts for space. I guess, looking back on it, that was quite a long time ago, but we see how far SpaceX has come, which now