

And so when the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices is canceled, it is a clear indication that, yes, this campaign of assault on vaccines is going to continue, which—not surprisingly—is likely to make RFK, Jr., even more money.

On February 26, we see Trump's MAGA hats that are for sale on his website displayed in the Oval Office. And it is just a reminder that so many people inside Trump's universe continue to sell merchandise on the side in order to make money.

Donald Trump has always done this, and we have just kind of accepted it, even though it is a kind of corruption in and of itself. But Kash Patel, the Director of the FBI, is still selling Kash-branded merchandise, even while he is going to run the FBI. Elon Musk and others are selling DOGE merchandise.

So as they trumpet their brand inside the government, they are making money off their brand outside of the government. On February 26, maybe the third most significant brazen corruption happens. News breaks that Elon Musk is just going to have the FAA cancel a contract with Verizon that has been in the works for years and instead just substitute in Starlink for Verizon. Just extraordinary that this is happening in plain view of everybody.

Elon Musk takes his private company, uses his access to government to just shove out of the way his competitors and instead insert himself and his company. Again, we have never seen this ever before in American history, and now it is happening on a daily basis.

And now we get to this week. This week, Wired reports that guests are paying millions of dollars to dine with Donald Trump at Mar-a-Lago, and business leaders are being targeted with advertisements that sell access to a one-on-one meeting with the President of the United States for \$5 million.

Come on, like seriously, there are advertisements that say if you are a business CEO and you pay \$5 million to Donald Trump, you can get a meeting with him. Like, this isn't OK. And yet because it happens every single day, every single day, they are asking for us to pretend that this is normal.

This is just 6 weeks. It is just 6 weeks, and the last thing on the list is an offer to meet with the President for a million dollars or \$5 million. If any previous President had sent out an advertisement suggesting that you could meet with them for a payment to them of a million to \$5 million, in and of itself, we would deem that to be unacceptable.

But Donald Trump and Elon Musk believe that because they have arranged this dizzying pace of corruption in which not a day goes by in which something doesn't happen inside our government in which Elon Musk or Donald Trump use their power in order to rig the rules to enrich themselves,

that we are all going to feel that it is normal.

This is how democracies die. Democracies die when the very powerful people steal from us so regularly, so openly, so unapologetically that we come to believe that it is normal.

And listen, I understand that many Americans may think that all of this stuff just used to happen quietly, and the only difference is that Trump and Musk are just putting it all out in the open. And I am not saying that there haven't been instances of corruption. Democrats and Republicans in this body have been accused of and convicted of acts of corruption.

It has been a fact of life in American politics for a long time, but never before has the corruption happened this openly or this frequently. And so I lay it all out for you this afternoon in the hopes that it is not too late for us to decide to stand up as a body and as a nation to say that this isn't OK.

The Trump meme coin is not OK. It is not OK for people who have interests before the Federal Government to be able to anonymously funnel money to the President of the United States. It is not OK for Elon Musk to have access to the Department of Labor enforcement data against him or his competitors that nobody else gets access to.

It is not OK to just cancel contracts that were going to Musk's competitors and substituting his own business just because he has the ability to do it as a friend of Donald Trump. The rule of law matters. Doing things by the rules matter.

This level of corruption was not occurring behind the scenes prior. It is not just that the cover got pulled off of it all, and it is our decision as a body and as a country to decide not to normalize this scale of corruption.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HUSTED). The majority leader.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 26.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Steven Bradbury, of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary of Transportation.

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 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. 26, Steven Bradbury, of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary of Transportation.

John Thune, Jim Justice, Bill Cassidy, Mike Rounds, Ted Budd, Tom Cotton, Jon Husted, Tim Sheehy, Deb Fischer, Ron Johnson, John Kennedy, Markwayne Mullin, Steve Daines, Ashley Moody, Ted Cruz, Tim Scott of South Carolina, Eric Schmitt.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 28.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Abigail Slater, of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Attorney General.

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 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. 28, Abigail Slater, of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Attorney General.

John Thune, Jim Justice, Bill Cassidy, Mike Rounds, Ted Budd, Tom Cotton, Jon Husted, Tim Sheehy, Deb Fischer, Ron Johnson, John Kennedy, Markwayne Mullin, Steve Daines, Ashley Moody, Ted Cruz, Tim Scott of South Carolina, Eric Schmitt.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

RECOGNIZING FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, since he took office, President Trump, his unelected billionaire buddy Elon Musk, and their DOGE bros have begun to systematically dismantle the Federal Government. In their efforts to root out so-called “government waste,” President Trump and Elon are targeting and illegally terminating the Federal workforce, the employees who make our country run.

These are the air traffic controllers who make sure your flights land safely, the workers responsible for sending Social Security checks out the door for millions of older Americans, the national security experts who keep our Nation safe from threats. These people are not loyal to any party or President. They are career civil servants devoted to serving Americans and answering to the Constitution. And they are being abruptly and illegally fired from critical positions across the government.

Today, I will share the stories of four Federal employees with ties to Illinois who have been terminated in the President's DOGE rampage.

One of my constituents has devoted his career to transit safety. He dreamed of working for the Federal Government. After working for a decade to make the Illinois transit system safer, he landed a job with the Federal Transit Administration in safety assurance, where he was hired to start a program that looked into transit safety hazards across the Nation.

But after President Trump took office, he started to receive strange emails about his job. He was still on probation, but his performance was excellent, and even his managers did not know who was sending the emails. That was until February 14, when he was emailed that he had been terminated for poor performance, despite there being zero documentation suggesting lackluster work and glowing appraisals from his managers.

He was given no severance or benefits. He was gutted. He had never been fired from a job before, and he loved his work. And more importantly, he worries about how he will take care of his two children—both of whom have autism.

We need Federal employees to ensure our public transportation systems are safe. But now, his job investigating transport hazards sits vacant. Public transport is less safe as a result.

How will firing transportation safety experts make America greater?

If you live in Chicago, you will remember last July's derecho, when a record-breaking 32 tornadoes ripped through the Chicagoland area. Eric Carothers remembers it well. At the time, he was an intern for the National Weather Service in Chicago under their Pathways student program, which al-

lowed him to gain experience at the National Weather Service while he was earning his graduate degree in meteorology.

Eric has long been passionate about public service and meteorology. A career at the National Weather Service was a dream come true for him, and he expected to join its staff full-time after graduating from school this spring. That is until he was terminated last week—without cause.

Americans rely on the National Weather Service for everything from knowing when to pack an umbrella to avoid being caught in a thunderstorm to staying safe during tornado clusters. Eric explained that meteorologists at the National Weather Service are already understaffed and overworked. He fears for what the terminations of younger staff will mean for expertise when more senior forecasters retire. Without passionate, dedicated, trained meteorologists, Americans' lives and property are at risk.

How will firing workers in charge of warning the public of weather emergencies make America greater?

Few of the President's actions have been as repulsive as putting veterans in the crosshairs of so-called “government waste.” I want to share the story of one employee, a woman who worked at the Marion VA Medical Center in southern Illinois. Every year, this facility serves 43,000 veterans.

Like many VA employees, she received an email in the middle of the night informing her that she was fired from her logistical job that ensured the rural hospital's lab had what it needed for patient care. Her supervisor had no idea this was coming. Her coworkers were shocked. Her role was valuable to the lab, and she did good work. According to the cookie-cutter email, she, too, was being fired for “poor performance.” But how could that be true when she had just received an outstanding performance evaluation? It made no sense. And get this: She is a veteran. And her spouse is Active-Duty Army.

Not only does this senseless firing hurt someone who so bravely served our Nation, but it will impact the ability of other veterans to receive the healthcare and benefits they need, earned, and deserve.

How will firing veterans responsible for caring for other veterans make America greater?

Last, I want to reiterate that what we do here at home reverberates around the world. One of my constituents spent 10 years dedicating his life to U.S. foreign policy at the State Department and USAID. He was already among the last staffers at USAID, where rounds of firings have hollowed out the Agency.

But despite working for years to improve food security in countries of need around the world and despite exemplary performance reviews, he was fired. Further, he was posted overseas with a fellow public servant spouse.

Now, he is essentially stranded abroad, fearing for his livelihood and future of his family.

How will firing and abandoning Americans dedicated to helping others make America greater?

Our Federal workforce is the backbone of this Nation. And their indiscriminate, unjust firings not only hurts them, but all Americans who rely on the government for critical services.

It seems that Donald Trump and Elon Musk have mistaken the Federal Government for Silicon Valley. The old adage “move fast and break things” might ring true in the tech industry. But, in Washington, “moving fast and breaking things” leads to chaos that everyday Americans bear the brunt of and suffer from.

100TH ANNIVERSARY PASSAGE OF THE FEDERAL PROBATION ACT OF 1925

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today we honor the 100th anniversary of the Federal Probation Act of 1925, the pivotal law that established our Federal probation system, thereby helping to reduce unnecessary detention and crime. This is a prime example of criminal justice reform designed to make our communities safer and allow offenders a second chance to reintegrate into society.

Probation, like many other criminal justice reforms, did not happen overnight. Some Federal judges were in favor of a probationary system, seeing it as an alternative to the sometimes-harsh penalties they felt constrained to impose. Other Federal judges were against probation, believing it too lenient. Congress could not reach agreement on a national plan. While the first Federal probation bills were introduced in Congress in 1909, it was not until 1925—after more than 30 bills had been introduced—that the Federal Probation Act came to fruition.

Since passage, we have seen the life-changing effects of probation as an alternative to prison. This is especially true for past offenders suffering from substance abuse and mental health challenges. Our probation system provides these individuals with structured supervision and access to treatment programs that offer the tools they need to lead productive lives.

In the United States alone, approximately 90,700 dedicated probation officers and correctional treatment specialists work every day to reduce recidivism and promote public safety. I want to thank them for their hard work and dedicated service.

Last December, on the sixth anniversary of the First Step Act, another landmark piece of criminal justice reform legislation, I highlighted that most people who are incarcerated will ultimately be released, so we must prepare them for a successful reentry. The First Step Act is bipartisan criminal justice reform legislation designed to make our justice system fairer and our