

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

communities safer by changing sentencing laws and providing opportunities for incarcerated people to prepare to reenter society successfully.

I was proud to champion this landmark legislation alongside Senators GRASSLEY, BOOKER, and LEE. It took months of bipartisan negotiation and compromise. But the result was a historic victory that significantly improved our justice system.

I can safely say that the Federal Probation Act laid the groundwork 100 years ago for legislation like the First Step Act.

Today, we are all responsible for advancing this work through the passage of fair and effective criminal justice reforms. And I would like to thank the Administrative Office for the Courts' Office of Probation and Pretrial Services and the Federal Probation and Pretrial Services Officers Association for their continued partnership in leading this work. It is an honor to celebrate 100 years of this pivotal law.

HALT FENTANYL ACT

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I voted today to oppose cloture on the motion to proceed to the HALT Fentanyl Act. Our Nation and my State of Maryland are experiencing a crisis with synthetic opioids like fentanyl and related drugs, and I strongly support action to combat drug trafficking and prevent overdoses. We need public health solutions that will help American families and our communities, but instead, the bill before us could lead to harmful unintended consequences, including limiting the potential for less addictive pain therapies and treatments like Naloxone that could prevent and reverse overdose. It also expands mandatory minimums, which increase incarceration but do not reduce crime, and applies them to a broad class of drugs regardless of their actual physiological effects, so that someone could be incarcerated for a decade or more for drugs that are effectively harmless.

It is my hope that we will have the opportunity to amend this legislation, including with amendments put forward by my colleague Senator BOOKER. However, as we have no guarantee that amendments will be permitted by the majority despite the urgency of the issue before us, I voted against cloture today. I urge my colleagues to work to improve the bill in the coming days in order to address the possible unintended consequences of this legislation so, instead, the bill focuses on tackling dangerous drugs and allows for life-saving research and development of potential treatments.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, I was absent for one rollcall vote on March 6, 2025.

On March 6, had I been present, I would have voted nay on the motion to

invoke cloture on Executive Calendar No. 29, Troy Edgar, of California, to be Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security, rollcall vote No. 107.

CONFIRMATION OF LINDA McMAHON

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, I was absent from the Senate on March 3, 2025. Had I been present for rollcall vote No. 99 on the nomination of Linda McMahon, of Connecticut, to be Secretary of Education, I would have voted no. As Secretary, Mrs. McMahon will be a rubberstamp on President Trump's agenda to dismantle the Department of Education. President Trump has even said that he hopes that Mrs. McMahon "puts herself out of a job."

The Department of Education is responsible for distributing funds to K-12 schools and administering Pell grants, the Federal Student Loan Program, and programs that help support students with disabilities. Already, the Trump administration has cut funding contracts within the Department that support data collection, learning tools, and programs to increase test scores.

Mrs. McMahon does not have the experience required to support the more than 62 million students in their elementary to postsecondary education across the country. Mrs. McMahon has no experience teaching or working in a school. Her experience does not lend her the tools the Secretary of Education needs to address the complex needs of our Nation's students, who are struggling with rising mental health issues.

I do not have confidence that, under Mrs. McMahon's leadership, the Department of Education will continue to perform its core duties and support students across the country, in all stages of their education.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, I was absent from the Senate on March 3, 2025. Had I been present for rollcall vote No. 100 on S.9, I would have voted no. This legislation is a gross overreach of Federal authority on mandating State action. It does not in fact protect women and girls in sports, nor does it create competitive fairness. Rather, it is an effort to marginalize an already targeted community. Instead of investing in and removing barriers for women and girls to participate in sports, this bill threatens women's sports by creating harmful Federal gender verification standards that impede on the privacy and dignity of women and girls.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO PETE BUNCE

• Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, today, I want to recognize Pete Bunce, the president and CEO of the General Avia-

tion Manufacturers Association, GAMA, who is retiring next month. Pete is a dedicated leader and a stalwart in the aviation industry. He has done a remarkable job advocating for the interests of general aviation manufacturers, many of which call Kansas home.

I first met Pete during my time in the House of Representatives, when he was the Director of the U.S. Air Force Congressional Budget and Appropriations Liaison in the House. We worked together on military, veterans, and transportation issues. When he went over to GAMA, I knew the association would be in good hands, and he has taken it to new heights during his illustrious 20 years at the helm.

Throughout his storied career, Pete has engaged regulators, policymakers, and elected officials to promote general aviation. As part of his legislative affairs efforts, he led GAMA during the passage and implementation of the Small Airplane Revitalization Act, which modernized the certification standards and methods for small aircraft. He and his team have also provided valuable industry insights through numerous FAA reauthorizations, including the latest bill passed last Congress. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Pete and his team strongly advocated for the Aviation Manufacturing Jobs Protection (AMJP) program, which I helped successfully manage through Congress to strengthen the aviation industry's fragile supply chain and keeping highly skilled workers in the industry.

Pete and his GAMA team were also was intimately involved with consideration and passage of the Advanced Air Mobility and Coordination Act. I hope that report, which should be delivered by the administration in the near term, will help lay the foundation for this critical industry and the innovations it will bring.

Pete has been recognized for his noteworthy service to the general aviation industry with many accolades including being named the 2007 Aviation Industry Leader of the Year by the Living Legends of Aviation, awarded the ICAS Sword of Excellence in 2009, inducted as one of the 70 Living Legends of Aviation in 2010, inducted into the Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame, presented with the NAA Wesley L. McDonald Distinguished Statesman of Aviation Award in 2022, and bestowed with the EAA's Freedom of Flight Award in 2024.

Pete has done so much to advance the welfare of the general aviation industry, one which he has loved and cherished since first learning to fly as a teenager and working at his local airport.

Thank you, Pete, for your steadfast service to the general aviation industry, especially within the great State of Kansas. I wish you "Blue Skies and Tailwinds" during your well-earned retirement. I hope you enjoy retirement and spending more time with your lovely wife Patty.●