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Senate

(Legislative day of Monday, March 10, 2025)

The Senate met at 10 a.m., on the expiration of the recess, 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.

O God, our Father, speak to us today that here, in Your presence, we may find knowledge of what You want us to do. Guide our Senators so that they clearly understand Your desires, and give them the wisdom to strive to do Your will. Lord, provide them with daily strength to live honorably for Your glory. Give them the ambition to please You with faithfulness and humility.

Come with Your great power, O God, and rescue our Nation and world. Deliver us from the fear and trembling that seek to overwhelm our efforts to please You.

We pray in Your merciful 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. MORENO). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will pro-

ceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

LITHUANIA

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, 35 years ago today, the freely elected Parliament of Lithuania declared that country was restoring its independence after about 50 years of Soviet occupation. This started the breakup of the Soviet Union. The end of that evil empire made the world safer and millions of people freer. So I say: Thank you, Lithuania—or I should say, in their language, “*aciū*.”

Lithuania didn't become a country just in the 1990s, however. It is a very old country. In fact, it was a significant regional power in the Middle Ages. The modern Republic of Lithuania was born on February 16, 1918. The United States has maintained continuous diplomatic relations with Lithuania for now 103 years, going back to 1922.

As an American, I am proud that our country never recognized the Soviet annexation of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, just as we don't recognize Russia's annexation of any part of Ukraine to this very day.

Today, Lithuania is free, and Lithuania is prosperous. Lithuania is a close U.S. ally and a beacon of Western values on the frontlines of freedom. I thank Lithuania for its friendship, for its important contribution to the NATO alliance, and for its vocal defense of our shared values.

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.

HALT FENTANYL ACT

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, Zach Didier was a good student, an athlete, and a musician. He was an Eagle Scout, star of the school play, and he was hoping to attend Stanford University. But 2 days after Christmas, in 2020, Zach's dad found him dead in his bedroom of fentanyl poisoning. He was 17.

Zach and his friends had gone to the mall to meet a drug dealer they had found through social media. He bought what he thought was Percocet, but it wasn't. The counterfeit pills he bought contained fentanyl, and what was a bad decision became deadly.

Zach was one of the more than 90,000 Americans who died of an overdose in 2020, many of those deaths from fentanyl poisoning. He was one of countless victims of fake pills being peddled on our streets, pills that too often find their way into the hands of young people and steal their futures.

Courage Minten's is another tragic story. Adopted from Ghana, Courage was pursuing his dream of becoming an airline pilot. He had attended flight school and interviewed for a job, just days before he died, at age 23. Courage's parents found him on their couch after a night out with friends, seemingly asleep, until he stopped breathing. As they later found out, Courage had taken a pill with two times the lethal dose of fentanyl in it.

Ashley Romero, a 32-year-old mother, took half of what she thought was a

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



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painkiller, but that half a pill contained a deadly dose of fentanyl. The dealer who had supplied Ashley's boyfriend with the pill that took her life is believed to have sold pills that killed several other people.

One of those individuals was Jonathan Ellington. Jonathan had become addicted to OxyContin when it was prescribed to him for a high school soccer injury. He got clean and stayed clean for about a decade, until another injury and another prescription got him back on it. When his prescription ran out, he bought some pills from an acquaintance. It only took one pill with a lethal dose of fentanyl to take Jonathan's life.

Mr. President, these are just a few of the stories that families have shared with the Judiciary Committee in support of the HALT Fentanyl Act. Unfortunately, there are many more like them; lives lost, futures destroyed, families changed forever.

One in three Americans know someone who has died of a drug overdose. We are losing young people, teenagers, young parents, and people with bright lives ahead of them. When the Trump administration temporarily classified all fentanyl analogs as schedule I substances, law enforcement gained a critical tool to combat fentanyl and go after people who are bringing this poison into the United States.

Congress has extended this temporary classification several times because it works. Now we need to make it permanent by passing the HALT Fentanyl Act.

I was very pleased at the strong bipartisan vote this bill received last Thursday, and I hope the vote on final passage will be equally robust.

As I said, classifying all fentanyl analogs as schedule I substances gives law enforcement a critical tool to go after the criminals bringing this poison into our country and selling it on our streets, and it joins other efforts to end the fentanyl crisis in our country.

President Trump is taking significant steps to halt the supply of drugs flowing across our borders. Senator BLACKBURN has done great work bringing attention to the role of social media, which is often the link between teenagers and drug dealers. And the Senate will continue working to stop fentanyl from taking more American lives.

Fentanyl has caused too many tragedies. I am grateful to the families who have lost loved ones to this deadly drug for sharing their stories. The HALT Fentanyl Act is moving forward due in no small part to their support.

I yield the floor.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill 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.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, yesterday afternoon, Elon Musk confirmed what many of us have been warning about for a long time: Republicans are getting ready to gut Social Security and Medicare.

Let me repeat that. Elon Musk confirmed what many of us have warned about: Republicans are getting ready to gut Social Security and gut Medicare.

Here is what he said during an interview with FOX Business. The richest man on Earth repeated again a bevy of lies that entitlement programs that tens of millions of people rely on are riddled with fraud and abuse. That is a pretext to slashing, but it is false.

He added that "most of the Federal spending is entitlements"—that is true—"so that is the big one to eliminate," meaning Social Security.

Let me quote Elon Musk again: "That is the big one"—Social Security—"to eliminate." It is rare to hear Republicans tell the truth about their plans so directly.

What Elon Musk is saying is that sooner or later, Republicans are going to target people's Social Security and Medicare benefits.

The outrage that the richest man in the world would tell millions of seniors who depend on those checks each month that it is fraud, that it is waste, is outrageous. He doesn't have any idea the harm it would do, and it isn't fraud. Donald Trump, Elon Musk, and Republicans know that the math on their billionaire tax cuts will not work without going after these benefits, and all they care about is cutting their taxes further—outrageous.

As America begins to hear this, America is going to realize what a bad bargain Donald Trump was in the election. It is another awful reminder that under Donald Trump and Elon Musk and Republicans, billionaires win, American families lose.

There is something truly rotten about the Republican agenda when a multibillionaire—the richest man in the world—is allowed to lie so casually about one of America's most sacred programs in order to justify taking benefits away from hard-working Americans. Few programs have done more good, have helped more people, have been more popular than Social Security has for nearly a century. Few programs are as beloved by Americans as Social Security. Americans, of course, support eliminating waste, but they do not want to see their Social Security benefits get taken away.

How is Elon Musk trying to do this? He is using the oldest trick in the book: shamelessly lying about Social Security—just as Donald Trump did in his State of the Union Address, where he listed hundreds of people who were born 120 years ago and couldn't show a single one was getting Social Security.

Musk is shamelessly lying about Social Security, claiming it is riddled with fraud, in order to justify taking benefits away from seniors and retirees. He ignores the very bold, plain fact that the Federal Government already conducts an audit of Social Security every year. It is a legit audit, not a partisan audit. It has been done during Trump's Presidency and Biden's Presidency. What did it find? Less than 1 percent—1 percent—less than 1 percent of all payments from 2015 to 2022 were made in error.

That, Mr. Musk, is not what fraud looks like.

He cherry-picks data to suggest that tens of millions of dead people are getting checks. This is a lie.

To be sure, this isn't just about Elon Musk's rhetoric. The assault on Social Security is taking shape in practice. DOGE has already taken over the Social Security Administration Agency and has free access to the private data and benefits of tens of millions of Americans. The Trump administration has already begun to fire 7,000 staffers, which means local offices will shut down, customer service wait times will explode, and the risk of delayed benefits will skyrocket.

So I ask my Republican colleagues: Are you all fine with this?

Are they fine with Musk calling Social Security one giant scam? Let's find a single person here on the Republican side who starts rebutting Musk once and for all when they know he is doing what the American people hate and is not telling the truth.

Do our colleagues agree with Musk's lie that hundreds of billions of dollars in outright fraud has compromised Social Security?

Mark my words, if Elon Musk and DOGE continue their attacks against Social Security, if the President continues his attacks, which he made in the State of the Union, sooner or later, benefits are going to be delayed, mistakenly halted, and the political uproar from Americans from one end of the country to the other—red, purple, and blue—will be immense.

And more trouble for the Trump administration—the Trump economy. Donald Trump promised Americans a golden age on day one. Well, today is day 50, and Americans are wondering, scratching their heads, where is this golden age? You can't find this golden age in the inflation numbers because inflation has gone up under Donald Trump, from groceries, to retail, to cars. He campaigned prices will begin going down on day one. That is by the wayside, that is for sure.

You can't find this golden age in the stock market either. We know the stock market is Donald Trump's favorite measuring stick. But right now, because of him—his actions, his erraticness—his own actions have plunged markets and therefore people's retirement accounts into chaos. Yesterday, the Dow fell by almost 900 points, 2 percent. The S&P 500 plunged