

these legal analyses. DOJ also found evidence that Mr. Bradbury's legal analyses "were written with the goal of allowing the ongoing CIA program to continue."

Mr. Bradbury, then, at the Department of Justice, was writing rules that fit the outcome that he wanted, instead of looking objectively at what the American people needed. These legal opinions were contrary to what this Nation stands for.

Later, the Senate refused to confirm Mr. Bradbury as Assistant Attorney General during the Bush administration, and Congress passed the McCain-Feinstein amendment to the 2016 NDAA, codifying the illegality of those torture methods—those very torture methods that Mr. Bradbury said were okay.

We passed a law to basically change what this guy's legal opinion was because it was so bad. And so now, when the Senate is asked to provide advice and consent on Mr. Bradbury's nomination to be Deputy Secretary of the Transportation Department, I think you should look back at what happened then. Two of our Republican colleagues voted against his nomination because of the torture memos. They rightly concluded that he was not right to fit in the Department of Justice role.

I am saying today, what do you need to know? He didn't fight for strong safety rules at the Department of Transportation before; he is not going to fight for them now. It is really clear that our aviation safety system needs strong leadership at the FAA, not someone who is going to write the rule to fit business, but write the rule to fit safety.

As if these issues weren't concerning enough, there is another issue. During his confirmation hearing, I asked Mr. Bradbury, "What about the conflicts of interest that appear to be mounting between Elon Musk and the FAA?"

I thought, a smart lawyer could really give guidance to the Secretary of Transportation, give guidance to the FAA Administrator, the acting one, and could say, "These are the ways in which Elon Musk should not pass go, would be a conflict of interest, would be a problem at the FAA, given that there are already issues that are really clearly in front of us."

So I said, "Tell us. Tell us. Where do you think those conflicts of interest exist?" Of course, at the hearing, he kind of demurred, and I said, "You know what, Mr. Bradbury, you can give me for the record where exactly do you think there's a conflict of interest?"

But he didn't just evade my questions; he basically said that he thought that it was an excellent idea to have Elon Musk and SpaceX making changes to the FAA air traffic control system. In fact, he said that he didn't "see the potential for a conflict" with the SpaceX employees having access to the FAA.

Of course, we know now that three SpaceX engineers were recently hired

as special government employees at the FAA and were immediately granted conflict of interest waivers by the Trump administration so they could work on matters at the FAA. Why? Because they had "direct and predictable effects upon the financial interests of SpaceX."

So in other words, the Trump administration conceded that conflicts of interest do exist, and they are going to let them happen anyway, and they went to get a waiver. The conflicts of interest for Mr. Musk and SpaceX at the FAA is obvious.

Let me just say, though, first, you can have all sorts of broadband solutions, including satellite solutions. But when you are talking about the air traffic controller system, that kind of system is inferior to fiber. Why? Because of speed, capacity, cost, weather, all sorts of issues. And when there is chaos, we need certainty and predictability.

So we are seeing a conflict play out right before our eyes. According to a Bloomberg report, one of SpaceX's engineers who was granted a conflict of interest waiver recently told the FAA that SpaceX planned to send 4,000 Starlink terminals to the Agency. For what? We are still trying to find out.

The FAA already entered into a \$2 billion contract with Verizon in 2023 to upgrade its telecommunications network. But Mr. Musk's own tweet suggests he wants to cancel the FAA's contract with Verizon. He is saying that they are failing. He wants them to use his product instead.

And yet, Mr. Bradbury apparently doesn't even see the potential—he doesn't even see the potential for the conflict of interest.

It doesn't stop with Starlink as a broadband supplier. Just last week, SpaceX's Starship heavy lift rocket malfunctioned and broke apart over the Caribbean before it reached orbit. Dangerous debris fell from the sky. The FAA smartly halted flights in the area to ensure safety, and thankfully, no one was injured. The FAA initiated an immediate investigation into SpaceX to determine what happened. The investigation presents another clear conflict of interest.

As we know, Mr. Musk doesn't think FAA safety rules should apply to him. Last September, the FAA fined Mr. Musk and SpaceX for failing to comply with specific requirements in its launch license. Afterwards, after getting fined, Mr. Musk made a spectacle, calling for the firing of the FAA Administrator.

That is right, the FAA fined him, and then he called for the FAA Administrator—oh, wait, wait 1 second, the FAA Administrator that passed this body 98-0, because everybody here thought he was going to do a great job.

But Mr. Bradbury doesn't think Elon Musk has a conflict of interest, but Elon Musk can basically say to the President of the United States, "Fire the FAA Administrator that we all said we thought would do a good job."

Now, we all know Mr. Whitaker wasn't going to stick around without being backed up for the safety work that he was doing. And now, we don't have a Senate-confirmed head of the FAA. Why? Because Mr. Whitaker didn't want to stay around if everybody was going to let Donald Trump do whatever the heck he wanted when it came to the FAA. All this because Musk got fined for violating safety rules.

So I really don't understand what Mr. Bradbury doesn't understand that he can't write down on a piece of paper where real conflict of interest exists.

We need new leadership in the Department of Transportation so that we can continue to stand up to safety issues. I do not believe Mr. Bradbury is that person.

Mr. Bradbury sees bureaucratic hurdles when other people see safety safeguards. He sees redtape where we see lifesaving protections. He sees the objective of having a light-touch FAA, and we see the objective of having safety be the primary purpose—because you can't win at aviation if you don't win at aviation safety first.

Ask the people of the Pacific Northwest. The catastrophes of the MAX crashes not only lost lives; they cost billions of dollars. So not adhering to safety is hardly a winning economic solution.

So Mr. Bradbury hasn't shown us the leadership on safety. He has not shown the fidelity of upholding the law, or even respecting Congress. He has not shown us the courage that it takes to stand up and make sure that safety is implemented. And the consequences of putting the wrong person in place are measured in human lives, not dollars—human lives.

The Boeing 737 MAX families know this—yesterday was the sixth anniversary of the Ethiopian Airlines crash that claimed 157 lives—family members like Javier de Luis and Nadia Milleron, who have now oriented their lives around making aviation safer. I so appreciate their advocacy, but the people at the FAA should be doing the same.

I urge my colleagues to vote against the nomination of Steven Bradbury.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to complete my remarks prior to the scheduled rollcall vote.

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

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, it is another week in Washington and I think maybe the 52nd day since President Trump was inaugurated, and we are seeing the compliant mainstream media continue to spread falsehoods about the work of the Department of Government Efficiency and Elon Musk.

As I have said before, the Federal Government has a spending problem, and, like with any addiction, getting

clean and solving that problem is not necessarily easy or comfortable, but it is long overdue and absolutely necessary. With the national debt at \$36.2 trillion and counting, we have to start somewhere, and little things add up. What better place to start than the waste, fraud, and abuse that DOGE is identifying?

This has long been a bipartisan issue—I can think of everything dating back to the Grace Commission, where waste, fraud, and abuse was a bipartisan target—but apparently not with President Trump in the office and not with Elon Musk in charge of the effort to identify the spending.

If you take a look at most things that the Federal Government is cutting at the recommendation of DOGE, it becomes harder and harder to become a DOGE skeptic unless you are just blind to what they are doing.

Last week, I mentioned the waste that DOGE had identified with subscriptions and software licenses. People may think, well, that is no big deal, but there is no reason taxpayers should be footing the bill for expensive subscriptions that go unused.

DOGE uncovered the potential for massive fraud with an audit they conducted of government credit cards. At the beginning of the audit, there were 4.6 million active government credit cards—4.6 million. After 2 weeks, DOGE identified nearly 150,000 credit cards that were thankfully unused or unneeded and closed both down. I am sure there is more to be done with 4.6 million active credit cards.

There is no reason for so many government employees to have direct access to spending taxpayer money at the click of a button or the swipe of a credit card. This is basic and would never happen in the private sector or in our individual lives, but in the Federal Government, before this administration and before DOGE, this was commonplace and has been overlooked for way too long.

There are some instances of fraud that we have known about for some time, but it has taken the Trump administration and DOGE to identify and fix them. For example, the Government Accountability Office submitted a report to Congress last April estimating that the Federal Government loses between \$223 billion and \$521 billion every year as a result of improper payments. The Federal Government is making improper payments and spending potentially up to half a trillion dollars. Naturally, this was an opportunity for DOGE to identify this waste of taxpayer dollars.

DOGE found payments to illegal immigrants using multiple Social Security numbers to submit Medicare claims, something for which they are not legally entitled.

They found \$57,000 in Medicare payments in 2020 for a patient who actually was recorded to have died 14 years earlier. It is amazing you can continue to charge for Medicare payments 14 years after your death.

In one particularly egregious instance, an illegal immigrant with a warrant out for her arrest was receiving more than \$100,000 in loans from the Small Business Administration, but the waste and abuse of tax dollars goes beyond mere inefficiencies.

Some of the other line items on the DOGE cutting floor are so patently absurd it would make your blood boil. For example, last week, the National Institutes of Health canceled more than a half billion dollars in grants for transgender experiments on mice. You can't make this stuff up. It is stranger than fiction.

In a similar vein, NIH also canceled millions in woke grants ranging from promoting healthy relationships among transgender youth to delivering transgender services via telehealth. I think if you ask most taxpayers how they would like their money to be spent, these programs would not make the cut, but that is not all.

NIH is also canceling research grants that were going to universities in China. They canceled a grant for \$1.7 million going to the Peking University in Beijing for the "China Health and Retirement Longitudinal Study."

Once again, I think American taxpayers would prefer to focus on the things here at home, including their own retirement savings rather than sending millions of dollars to China to study health and retirement security in a country which is our chief geopolitical rival, but that is not all.

The list goes on. A group called the Inter-American Foundation has been significantly reduced after DOGE found egregious misuse of tax dollars, including over \$900,000 going toward alpaca farming in Peru. That is on top of \$800,000 for vegetable gardens in El Salvador and more than \$700,000 to improve the marketability of mushrooms and peas in Guatemala.

I know that children frequently squirm at the dinner table when they are told they have to eat their vegetables, but I don't think this is an area where most people think our tax dollars should be spent. Unfortunately, this waste doesn't stop at the vegetable aisle.

This foundation also spent more than \$600,000 to expand the sales of fruit and jam in Honduras as well as nearly half a million dollars on improving the production of artisanal salt in Ecuador—artisanal salt in Ecuador.

Well, thank goodness the Department of Government Efficiency and Mr. Musk were key to identifying these egregious abuses of the taxpayer, but they have been going on for a long time until the Trump administration came along. So I am grateful that now some of these outrageous expenditures of tax dollars are being exposed and dealt with.

As I said earlier, Washington, DC, has a spending problem. And like any addiction, it is hard to kick the habit, especially after you become adjusted to it, but it is time for a little cold turkey

when it comes to this addiction. Many people who benefit from this gravy train don't want it to end.

So, naturally, many of our colleagues on the other side are concerned about DOGE, and they want to suggest that everything the Federal Government does is absolutely perfect. They wouldn't change a thing. But they don't really have any real substantive response to these outrageous examples that I am mentioning here. They wouldn't change a thing.

They see these stats, and they tell you don't believe your lying eyes. But those of us who have looked into it, who have taken the time to study what has been exposed, know otherwise: The government is not infallible.

We have an unsustainable level of Federal debt that threatens our economy and our national security, and the truth is, the Trump administration and Republicans are hard at work trying to address it to make the government more efficient and more affordable for American families.

So, once again, I would like to do something that you don't hear very often here in DC these days and thank Elon Musk for his service to our country in performing this essential and long overdue role.

WAIVING QUORUM CALL

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to waive the mandatory quorum call with respect to the Bradbury nomination.

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

CLOTURE MOTION

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

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.

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 Steven Bradbury, of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary of Transportation, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. JUSTICE).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Illinois (Mrs.