

Donald Trump tells Americans: You should be OK with pain and disturbance with the economy. That is pretty rich coming from a billionaire who said he would bring cost down on day one and doesn't have to suffer when prices go up, wages stay flat, or be fired and not have any income.

Donald Trump knows his policies could wreck the economy, but he is doing it anyway. Why? Same thing as Social Security. Why are they doing all these crazy things that Americans don't like? One reason—one reason alone: tax breaks for billionaires, the North Star of the Republican Party's goals.

#### TESLA AND THE WHITE HOUSE

Mr. President, now on Tesla and the White House, Donald Trump yesterday did an unseemly, self-serving—it just turns your stomach, what they do to help one another. He did an unseemly, self-serving business advertisement for his No. 1 political patron on the White House lawn, Elon Musk. What do you think Americans think of that when they see Trump pushing Elon Musk's—the richest man in the world's—Teslas? A man born with a limousine, who for the rest of his life will be driven by Secret Service, was supposedly buying a new car and checking out his EV options. What a joke.

This was a grossly transparent attempt to get Donald Trump's MAGA supporters to purchase Teslas after sales have slumped. That has driven the company's stock price into a wall. We all know what Donald Trump thinks about stock prices—it is the end-all and be-all.

But for any of the new MAGA converts who are now joining the EV revolution even though they have said they have hated it—MAGA said they hated it—let me just say to these MAGA converts who might buy an EV to bail out their buddy Elon: If you are below the income limit, you can thank Democrats for your \$7,500 EV tax credit.

I yield the floor.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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.

#### INFLATION

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor having just heard my colleague, the Democrat leader, senior Senator from New York. Formerly, he had been the majority leader; now the minority leader because of an election we just had. I heard him talk about the fact that household debt is up.

Every American who has lived through the last 4 years knows that household debt is up, and they know why household debt is up. It is up because we have been living through 4

years of a previous administration, which was an administration of high prices and open borders, and people have been paying the price; and the debt of the American families is much higher than it was when they took over.

That is why President Trump and Republicans in the Senate and the House are now in a situation where we are trying to get America back on track. So to hear the minority leader talk about household debt being up, there is a reason, and they are the cause of that. And so I am delighted by seeing the headlines that just came out this morning in terms of the economy under President Trump.

New York Times, "U.S. Inflation Shows Improvement." We need a lot of improvement there. Happy to see it is showing improvement; we have a long way to go.

Wall Street Journal, "Inflation . . . Lower Than Expected."

Republicans knew that we would be able to deliver for the American people. We are doing just that. Now, I am from an energy State. The Presiding Officer is from an energy State. We produce a lot of American energy. I am from Wyoming, America's energy breadbasket, a powerhouse of energy. What do we see about energy prices?

The average price of gasoline in the U.S.—

The headline is—

dropped for the third straight week.

That is what happens when you have an American energy policy—a policy that puts American energy first. Affordable, available, reliable energy. Not what we lived with through the last 4 years where they wanted to prioritize—believe it or not—the climate over energy for American families that was affordable, available, and reliable.

So there you have it.

The average price of gasoline in the United States dropped for the third straight week.

Additionally, the national average is now just a little over \$3 a gallon, the lowest March price in 4 years.

#### HALT FENTANYL ACT

Mr. President, I come to the floor today, however, to talk about the bill that is currently before us on the floor of the U.S. Senate. And it is a bill relating to the fentanyl crisis in our country. We are seeing it in every State in the country, including the Presiding Officer's home State of Montana and my home State of Wyoming. And so in many ways every State has been impacted by the crisis of fentanyl.

Look, I practiced medicine in Wyoming for 24 years. Illicit fentanyl is poisoning and killing Americans every day. More than 74,000 Americans died last year as a result of this poison.

Every State is impacted to the point that it is the No. 1 cause of death now for Americans between the ages of 18 and 45. When you take a look at the number of people that are being killed, this has actually resulted in lowering the life expectancy of the American

people. Every American in one way or another is a victim of fentanyl because everyone knows someone who has lost a loved one to illicit fentanyl. No community has been spared.

We are losing our sons and our daughters, our brothers and our sisters, friends and neighbors, our fellow citizens.

Congress needs to treat illicit fentanyl like the crisis it truly is, and we are going to do that today in the U.S. Senate. Look, our law enforcement officers are working to stop this flow of illicit fentanyl into this country. They are doing a great job now cracking down on drug dealers.

But what they need and they asked for and have come to us with is a desire for certainty within the law. Right now, law enforcement officers are fighting against these merchants of death, and they seem to be doing it, but they have one hand tied behind their back.

The Senate has an opportunity today to change that. We have legislation to the floor that is going to save lives. It is called the HALT Fentanyl Act. This bipartisan legislation permanently schedules deadly illicit fentanyl as a schedule I drug.

That is the way things are scheduled under the Controlled Substances Act. This is the reason it is an important change, because it means tough penalties for fentanyl traffickers.

It means certainty for law enforcement. Now, that is going to be a law enforcement tool that they have been asking for in our effort to get fentanyl off our streets. This is why Senators, just on Monday evening, unanimously agreed to debate the legislation. We now, after working and working on this, now have strong bipartisan support.

In 2018, the Drug Enforcement Agency temporarily scheduled illicit fentanyl on a short-term basis under this schedule I. They found it started to make a difference. Congress voted a number of times to extend this classification—bipartisan votes.

Republicans have pushed for years to make this change permanent. The Democrat Leader said, "No, no," when he was the leader of the majority. He wouldn't bring the permanent solution to the floor of the U.S. Senate. He would not allow us to have votes on the HALT Fentanyl Act. Why? Because he bowed to the soft-on-crime Democrats, the left wing of his leftist party. They didn't want tougher penalties on drug traffickers. That was the clear message behind the Democrats' blockade.

What Americans need, we want safety, we want security, we want it for our families, we want it for our communities, and the status quo of fentanyl is not an option. The border crisis of the last 4 years is what fueled the fentanyl crisis. An open border meant more illegal drugs flowing across our southern border.

Most of the fentanyl in the United States actually comes from Mexico. It

is produced, it is transported, and it is sold by transnational criminal cartels—criminal cartels. They import chemicals to make the poison from communist China and then traffic it into the United States.

The secure border that President Trump is delivering does take a chunk out of the cartels' bottom line, and they notice it. The cartels are actually having to shut down their drug labs. They are running scared. We need to keep them on the run. Now is the time to turn up the heat.

Passing the HALT Fentanyl Act will aid President Trump's successful efforts to secure the border and to stop these killer cartels.

On one point, let me end with this: The Senate Judiciary Committee heard from parents who lost their children to fentanyl overdoses. One of those parents who testified, Jaime Puerta of California, lost his son to a fentanyl overdose. His son was just 16 years old. Listen to what Jaime had to say here in the Senate. He said:

My son had consumed what he thought was a blue M30 Oxycodone pill, but, in fact, had, unknowingly—

And the man went on to say—

I repeat, unknowingly ingested an illicitly manufactured counterfeit opioid made of nothing more than filler, a binding agent, and illicit fentanyl. This was deceptively made to look exactly like a pharmaceutical grade oxycodone pill, and it killed him.

Look, we need to pass the HALT Fentanyl Act. We need to do it today. We need to turn the tide against this fentanyl epidemic. This is the legislation that deserves to become law. Every major law enforcement group supports it. Most importantly, families of victims support it as well.

We have an opportunity to act today to save lives, to act now. Let's work together to get it done.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

#### ECONOMY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, my friend and colleague from Wyoming mentioned the New York Times this morning and reports, articles, on the economy, and so I took a quick look to see if I could find the column that he was referring to, though I couldn't find it, I did find this on page B2.

Headline: "Stocks Decline Further As Investors Struggle To Make Sense Of Trump's Latest Tariff Talk."

The article says:

Markets whipsawed on Tuesday, as investors puzzled through President Trump's commitment to tariffs, with stocks dropping in early trading before recovering late in the day. The S&P 500 index fell 1.5 percent at its low point before recovering some ground and ending the day 0.8 percent lower.

Same page B2:

Business confidence falls as uncertainty sets in. The confidence level of small businesses dropped for a third straight month in February wiping away much of the gains notched in the aftermath of President Trump's election victory.

I don't think the Trump plan for this economy is all that clear, and it ap-

pears that the writers of the New York Times agree. Many of the people in the business community are puzzled. Some are alarmed by the tariff talk of this administration and the zigzagging approach to the economy.

So I would say, at this moment the jury is still out and sending messages to the court that they are dubious about this policy at all.

If the Presiding Officer has any question in his own mind, I suggest he starts with the farmers in his State and ask them what they think of this tariff policy. I have been meeting with them over the last several days, and they are very skeptical, to say the least.

#### HALT FENTANYL ACT

Mr. President, the second point I would like to make is on the HALT Fentanyl bill which is coming before us. I am going to vote for it. It extends the classification of fentanyl-type drugs as schedule I drugs, the most serious narcotics in our country.

I do say this: What we are doing is extending current policy. There is no new approach in this bill. It was reported out of committee virtually as it passed the House, and the effort in the committee—Judiciary Committee—to make it stronger or better was turned back with the argument: We can't change a word. We have to accept the current language.

As Senator BOOKER of New Jersey has said on the floor—and I have heard him—unfortunately, saying that we can't change a word means the policies of today must continue indefinitely.

I think that is a mistake. We need to consider several other elements that could help us fight these cartels and stop fentanyl, which is taking so many American lives.

Let me give you a couple examples. No. 1, the President had thunderous applause when he suggested that he was designating the cartels in Mexico as terrorist agents. I applauded along with the rest of the people in the Chamber, but I wonder if we are seriously, as a nation, treating the cartels as terrorist agents. And here is why I raise the question: One of the major complaints in Mexico is the fact that the cartels are heavily armed, sometimes more heavily armed than the Mexican military and law enforcement forces.

And they are heavily armed with weapons provided by the United States, high-powered rifles that we are sending in volume down to the cartel members to fight the Government of Mexico and to spread their deadly product into the United States and beyond.

If we seriously believe the cartels are a terrorist group, what in the world are American gun manufacturers doing supplying them with the arms that they can stop the reach of the law and military forces in Mexico? Are they terrorists, or are they customers? If they are just customers, then I don't understand this bragging about designating them as terrorists. Let's treat

them as terrorists, and let's stop the flow of deadly weapons from the United States to the Mexican drug cartels.

Secondly, 80 percent of the drugs that end up in the hands of our children in America are there because of the internet. Kids have access to buying drugs. The Senator from Wyoming gave a good point and illustration of that when referring to a recent hearing we held. The 16-year-old thinking he was buying some form of oxycodone ended up buying fentanyl and dying as a result of it.

Why in the world aren't these social media sources and internet sources being held responsible? Why don't we pass laws now saying they cannot develop the end product for these cartels to sell to our children in a deadly fashion?

If they are truly terrorists, let's treat them as such. And those who are complicit in the terrorist strategy of poisoning our youth should be held accountable.

#### NOMINATION OF MARTIN MAKARY

Mr. President, I would like to make the following statement: The Food and Drug Administration is one of the most important Agencies in the Federal Government and the world. Every day the FDA makes life-and-death decisions, whether to approve a new cancer drug, initiate a recall of contaminated food, or keep deadly tobacco products out of the hands of our children.

This Agency, the Food and Drug Administration, oversees 20 percent of the entire American economy, nearly \$3 trillion in product and services, on a budget, the FDA budget, of \$6 billion annually.

Yesterday, I met with President Trump's FDA nominee Dr. Martin Makary. It was a good discussion. There were areas where I would imagine we would be able to work together, such as promoting healthy food or addressing deceptive direct-to-consumer prescription drug advertisements you see everywhere on television.

These commercials overstate the benefit about the latest wonder drugs, rattling off side effects so quickly you can hardly hear them, but always keeping you in the dark about one crucial element on each one of these drugs: How much does it cost?

My bill, which I introduced with Senator GRASSLEY, Republican of Iowa, would end Big Pharma's secrecy and require these ads to show a pricetag—just that simple. They declare the price, and they advertise it. I appreciated Dr. Makary's comments that medication can give a patient false hope if it is not affordable.

But let me share my concerns with Dr. Makary's nomination, in general. The FDA requires a Commissioner who is willing to withstand a lot of pressure from Big Pharma, Big Tobacco—maybe even the President—to protect public health. We cannot afford an FDA Commissioner who gets chewed up by Elon Musk's chain saw or stands idly by while RFK, Jr., pushes his deadly bias