

deeply about all of her fellow New Yorkers. But don't let that fool you; she is also tough as nails. Geri tells it like it is and doesn't pull punches. She is fearless and formidable. And her family calls her "the expediter" because she gets things done. With Geri on your side, you know you can't lose.

A long-time resident who grew up in New Rochelle, Geri's first career as a homemaker and a mom, she devoted much of her time to caring also for her aging parents. During that time, she took courses at Columbia University and became a stockbroker to support her ailing father's business. She also volunteered at her daughter Leslie's school where she served as Edgemont PTA president.

In 2000, Geri was inspired to volunteer for Hillary Clinton's Senate campaign because she admired Hillary's passion for healthcare. Hillary immediately recognized Geri's talent and hired her as her Westchester regional director when Geri was already 59 years old. In Geri's own words, it gave her a whole new meaning to the term "late bloomer," and she credits Hillary's young staffers for helping her learn the ropes.

To this day, Geri is among the oldest members of staff in Congress. She is proof positive that you can do amazing things at any age.

I first met Geri when I also volunteered on Hillary Clinton's Senate race. When I became Senator, I asked her to continue to serve as my Westchester County expert. I remember meeting her at the train stop in Westchester early in my Senate tenure and knowing then and there that I would have a friend for life.

Since then, Geri has led our community outreach in Westchester and has become a deeply valued member of our team. She is my go-to expert when it comes to anything related to Indian Point nuclear facility. She knows the ins and outs of policymaking and procedure better than most, and she has become an invaluable source for people working on nuclear energy regulation, especially with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and its Indian Point de-commissioning process.

But if it is not nuclear policy, it is something just as important, like her leadership on my aging working group or her work with healthcare and disability advocates. Geri understands the substance of the work, and she knows how to channel her experiences into bigger causes.

But what really sets her apart is that she understands how much relationships matter. Whether you are a neighbor, a CEO, a friend, a high-ranking elected official, Geri is the first person you turn to. Her instincts are spot on. She connects with people in ways that few others can, and she always brings a human touch to everything she does.

She mentors my staff on the importance of public service and the power of grassroots organizing. She emphasizes what it means to connect with a com-

munity and to understand the needs of our constituents, and she gives everything her full attention and effort and leads by example in everything she does.

She clearly sees her work not just as her job but as her personal calling.

Throughout my Senate career, Geri has not only been an outstanding strategic and political advisor, but also a dear, dear friend. She gives me heartfelt advice when I need it most and shows thoughtfulness and generosity to everyone who knows her. She is hard working, she is caring, and the most dedicated Senate staffer that I know by her years served and service given.

When Geri speaks, people listen. And when she gives advice, you know it comes from a place of deep knowledge and careful thought.

New York and this Nation need more leaders like Geri Shapiro. When asked what motivates her, Geri says: Do good. Feel good—a maxim that is evident in everything that she has ever done.

She is truly an inspiration to everyone who knows her, and I am so grateful for everything she has done for Westchester, for our great State, and for our country.

Thank you, Geri. We love you, and we will always remember how you made us feel.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

#### UKRAINE

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, I come here to speak briefly about the status of the peace talks led by the United States and President Trump involving both Ukraine and Putin.

First, I want to thank President Trump for—there is one thing that President Trump has been consistent with: He hates war, and he tries to do everything he can to bring peace.

We attempted—he has attempted that across the globe. He is working right now on trying to settle the situation in the Middle East, and we are trying to address the situation in Ukraine.

Now, the response from Ukraine, after President Zelenskyy—let's keep in mind that President Zelenskyy, over the past week, has withstood attacks in Ukraine that have killed more people than are sitting up in the Gallery right now. So that is over the past couple of days, killed roughly twice as many people that are in the Gallery right now. Many of them civilians. I am not even counting any of the losses on the battlefield.

Now, Vladimir Putin says he needs a little bit of time to assess to see. What part of a complete cease-fire is difficult to understand, right? Stop killing people. Ukraine said that they would. They are ready to sign a 30-day cease-fire now.

Why do you think Putin's not ready to sign it right now? They have got to examine what a complete cease-fire means. It is because this liar and this murderer is trying to find ways to get an angle before they agree to any peace agreement.

He would probably like a partial one because then he could lie about his orders to kill people and destroy Ukraine's infrastructure under the auspices of a limited cease-fire. If Vladimir Putin comes back with a proposed limited cease-fire, then you know he is looking to kill and destabilize Ukraine, Moldova, the West Balkans. It will be interesting to see how he weighs in on the vote today in Srpska where their parliament is voting to separate from BiH, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and create a Russian separatist state in BiH.

So my guess is he doesn't want to sign up to a cease-fire because he hasn't moved all the pieces around to make sure that he can still murder as many Ukrainians as possible during the supposed limited cease-fire.

So I would say to the Ukrainian people and President Zelenskyy: Thank you—in spite of the fact that dozens of people have died this week, including civilians, at the hands of decisions made by Putin—thank you for being willing to lay down your guns and try to get to peace there.

But the American people need to know Putin is a liar. He is a murderer. He hates democracy. He is not trying—the reason that he is in Ukraine now is because Ukraine is finally, after about 20 years of wasted time, that is in part because they had Russians and thugs preventing Ukraine from moving forward on the democratic reforms they know they need to do.

Well, over the past 7 or 8 years, they started taking that seriously, and they are starting to make democratic reforms. They are starting to talk about maybe accession into the E.U., and that scares the hell out of Vladimir Putin because the last thing he wants is a successful former satellite of the Soviet Union demonstrating that democracy works and communism never has. That is what he is worried about. That is the provocative act that he used as a predicate to invade Ukraine and kill tens of thousands of people, including hundreds of thousands of his own soldiers. He is afraid of democracy proving to work in a society that was under the yoke of communism for decades.

That is what this is about, folks. This is about good versus evil. This is about totalitarian versus this messy thing we call democracy.

So if Vladimir Putin can't understand what an unconditional cease-fire means, it is because he doesn't want to. It is because he still wants to find a way to murder and undermine democratic reforms and the people of Ukraine being finally free.

So I do want to thank President Trump for taking the initiative, for showing Ukrainians a path. But I also want to make sure that this administration and everybody in America knows that Putin will not rest until his vision of communist fiat throughout this world is realized.

We have to help Ukraine be free. We have to make Putin lose in Ukraine.

We have to recognize that North Korea, China, Iran are just chafing at the bit to see Putin succeed there so they can export their brand of terrorism and communism throughout the world.

There is nothing redeemable in Vladimir Putin. He is an evil man responsible for the murders of hundreds of thousands of people, nearly a million in the last 3 years in Ukraine alone. We all need to go in open-eyed and understand that this is the true nature of Vladimir Putin. And he cannot succeed in Ukraine.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

#### SENATE SCHEDULE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, two points—a short one and a long one. The short one is simply this: to remind my colleagues that at the beginning of the year, we get a Senate calendar that says what days we are going to be in session and what days we are not going to be in session.

Between now and the end of the fiscal year, September 30, we have 16 Fridays that we are supposed to be in session. Will we be in session on those Fridays? We have had a few Friday sessions this year so far, but I am afraid that if we don't count on being a little more devoted to a 5-day workweek, those Fridays will slip away from us.

I bring that to our attention because we are always complaining because we don't have enough time to do appropriations bills. These extra 16 days that we might not be in session would be a good amount of time to take care of the 12 appropriations bills that we have to do regularly.

I always say there is enough work for a Senator, an individual Senator, to do 7 days a week if he wants to work. But you can't solve this country's problems if you are only in session 2½ or 3 days a week. That was the practice of the U.S. Senate before the Republicans took over. Republicans are supposed to make a difference, and I think a big difference we can make in the U.S. Senate is showing that we are running the U.S. Senate in a businesslike way, and that is to get more work done and in particular do our separate appropriations bills instead of doing one great big thousand-page appropriations bill just before government is ready to shut down.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

Mr. President, the second point and a little longer is to discuss for my colleagues the disastrous legacy of the Biden-Harris administration's Environmental Protection Agency.

Sadly, the recent revelations of wasteful spending by the EPA under the last administration are no surprise.

If you are a Democrat and you get tired of Republicans complaining about something being wrong in the previous administration, hear me out, and I think you will agree that a lot of things happened at the end of the last administration that are just a violent misuse of taxpayers' money.

Two years ago, I wrote the Biden EPA about a program called the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund. I asked a very simple question about how the EPA planned to administer and oversee the taxpayers' money that was going to be spent by the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund. I also expressed doubts about the EPA handling such a large program given the Agency's lack of oversight on how they spend the taxpayers' money.

As you would expect, I requested its plans to ensure this money would be spent responsibly. These are pretty simple questions that Congress and the taxpayers ought to be given an answer to. In its response to my letters, the Biden EPA gave me lipservice about its commitment to the oversight of the spending of the money in the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund. The Biden EPA said it would require "rigorous transparency, risk management, and accountability measures."

Now, if they had actually done that, that is a responsible way of handling the taxpayers' money, but the Biden EPA failed to describe how it would accomplish all of that rigorous transparency and also answer the questions I asked them to answer.

Clearly, based upon the Trump administration's recent revelation of fraud, waste, and abuse, EPA's response to me was really, in the end, nothing but lipservice. For example, in December of last year, as the Biden-Harris administration neared its end, Brent Efron, EPA's Special Advisor for Implementation, was actually filmed saying the Agency had rushed taxpayer money out the door. That EPA official called the effort an insurance policy against the incoming Trump administration to make sure the money was out the door so the Trump administration couldn't stop it.

The EPA official also stated that—this is Brent Efron—"it's like we're on the Titanic and we are throwing gold bars over the edge." The EPA official said his job was "just how to get the money out as fast as possible before they came in and stopped it all." The "they" he was talking about is the new Trump administration.

This conduct is an example of the contempt and the lack of respect the previous administration had for the American taxpayers' dollars.

In January of this year, I met with Lee Zeldin in my office before his confirmation as President Trump's EPA Administrator. I was encouraged by his shared commitment to transparency and accountability.

After Mr. Zeldin took office, I wrote to him asking that he find the gold bars, so to speak, and take steps to get this taxpayer money back that was shoveled out the door the last few days of the previous administration.

Since that letter, Administrator Zeldin found that in the months leading up to President Trump taking office, the Biden-Harris EPA sheltered \$20 billion of the Greenhouse Gas Re-

duction Fund outside of the Treasury at Citibank. Now, that is a lot of gold bars. Administrator Zeldin explained that this unprecedented move by the Biden EPA was done to protect the program from government oversight. This revelation shows that the Biden EPA not only obstructed my investigations, but the oversight assurances it tried to offer me were dishonest.

Administrator Zeldin also referred this mismanagement to the EPA acting inspector general and noted that there is an ongoing FBI investigation.

I am encouraged by what Administrator Zeldin has done so far, and I expect him to provide records responsive to my inquiries showing the Biden EPA fraud, waste, and abuse.

Now, a closer look into the recipients of the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund exposed several ethical red flags.

Jahi Wise, President Biden's pick to lead the program, oversaw a \$5 billion grant to his former employer—that employer is the Coalition for Green Capital—on August 8, 2024, to "build the national green bank and a network with self-sustaining community lenders in every state."

Another 2 billion taxpayer dollars went to an organization called Power Forward Communities on August 8 to reportedly "offer financing for residential carbon emission-reduction projects."

Power Forward Communities is made up of five nongovernment organizations, including Rewiring America. The leadership of this group is full of familiar faces from past Democratic administrations. I will give you four examples: Shaun Donovan, listed on Power Forward's tax documents as the director and cochair, was President Obama's Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. Ari Matusiak, also listed as a director and cochair, served as Special Assistant to President Obama and Director of Private Sector Engagement in the Obama White House. The vice president of Rewiring America is Cammie Croft, Deputy Director in the Obama White House and Senior Advisor in the Obama Department of Energy. A name that is pretty famous to anybody in politics and really famous in Georgia is Stacey Abrams. The failed gubernatorial nominee that President Obama campaigned for is reportedly senior counsel for Rewiring America.

The FBI and the EPA Office of Inspector General must fully investigate this situation and determine where the money was used to line the pockets of well-connected Democrats.

As my oversight has shown, the legacy of the Biden-Harris administration's EPA will be one of unprecedented spending with no accountability and transparency. This blatant lack of discipline and lack of respect for the taxpayers' money enabled EPA's left-wing allies to profit at the expense of the American taxpayer. All the while, the Biden EPA obstructed my efforts to conduct independent and objective oversight.