

administration, I have no doubt we are going to see many more deportations.

As we work to deport Hamas affiliates, my bipartisan No Immigration Benefits for Hamas Terrorists Act would block any migrant tied to Hamas from entering our country. And my No Flights for Terrorists Act would put anyone on the no-fly list if they have called for violence against the Jewish people or pledged allegiance to a foreign terrorist organization.

At the same time, President Trump is vowing to pull Federal funding from schools that fail to protect Jewish students from discrimination. Just on Friday, his administration canceled \$400 million in grants and contracts with Columbia University. That is a good start to accountability.

Right after October 7, I joined Senator TIM SCOTT in introducing the Stop Anti-Semitism on College Campuses Act. This legislation would rescind Federal funding for any university—any university—in this country that authorizes, funds, or facilitates events that promote violent anti-Semitism.

With such widespread failure from our Nation's colleges and universities to protect Jewish students, there are billions of dollars on the line. One thing should be clear: With President Trump back in the Oval Office and Republicans in the majority, pro-Hamas activists and colleges are going to face accountability. And if you are visiting our great Nation and supporting terrorism, please know this: You will be deported.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

#### GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, let me be perfectly clear for my colleagues: Democrats want to immediately pass a clean 4-week CR. No one wants a shutdown. We should get this done immediately.

Right now, we should be hard at work negotiating bipartisan funding bills that help folks back home in all of our States and make sure that our constituents—not Trump and Musk—have the biggest say in how their taxpayer dollars are spent.

That is what I have been focused on for months now. In fact, I actually wanted to get our funding bills done all the way back in December, but Republican leadership in the House wanted to kick the can down the road to March. Well, we spent these past few months working hard, getting close to a deal. And we should see that work through, especially when the alternative bill is a bill that will seriously undermine the ability for all of us—all of us—to use our power to fight for our communities. I hope my Senate colleagues would agree that power is worth protecting.

Unfortunately, Speaker JOHNSON has made clear he is content to sit on the sidelines and actually even cheer while two billionaires fire veterans; choke off resources to rebuild roads and bridges; cancel research on cancer, Alzheimer's

disease, and vaccine hesitancy; dismantle the Social Security Administration; and spark a trade war that is raising prices and driving us toward a recession.

But there is still time for us here to choose a different path, a bipartisan path, that gives our constituents—our constituents, each and every one of us—a voice in this process.

Right now, instead of working with Democrats to fund the government, invest in the middle class, protect Congress's power of the purse, and put out some of these fires, House Republicans are rolling over for the billionaire arsonists by rolling out a slush fund-filled, yearlong continuing resolution that empowers Trump and Musk to pick winners and losers with your taxpayer dollars.

House Republicans didn't just walk away from Democrats at the negotiating table. They are trying to give up Congress's seat at the table, all together, with a partisan bill that writes Trump and Musk a blank check, short-changes families and America's future, devastates our Nation's Capital, and painfully slashes critical domestic priorities like lifesaving medical research, construction of VA hospitals, and so much more.

House Republicans didn't merely refuse to address the lawlessness we have seen from Trump and Musk. They would actually empower it with this bill because the House Republicans' bill fails to include the typical, detailed spending directives—the basic guardrails—that Congress provides each year in our funding bills. In other words, instead of writing a bill that gives our communities what they need, they wrote a bill that turns many of our accounts into slush funds and gives the final say over what gets funding to two billionaires who don't know the first thing about the needs of our working families. So that is problem No. 1 with this CR—and it was a completely avoidable one.

House Republicans could have worked with us to include the standard bipartisan spending directives that are included every single year. But House Republican leadership decided to throw in the towel on the hard work of negotiating and on the hard work of governing and making sure their constituents' voices are reflected in our funding bills. Tearing down those guardrails was a choice they made, and it is a dangerous one.

We have already seen how far President Trump and Elon Musk and Russ Vought are willing to twist and outright break our laws to suit their will. But House Republicans are setting them up to make everything so far look like child's play, because this slush fund CR surrenders more power over Federal funding to the very people who are already abusing the power they have to steal from our constituents.

This bill is a green light for Donald Trump and Elon Musk to redirect fund-

ing to their own pet projects; to force States and communities to abide by their directives; and slash, burn, and zero out programs that our families count on.

They could use the flexibilities being granted to them to override our constituents' priorities. Clean energy investments could become a payday for fossil fuels. Money meant to stop fentanyl and opioids could fuel private prison operators and Trump's mass deportations.

This bill will let them pick which Army Corps, which transit, which military construction projects move ahead and which grind to a halt.

And when it comes to programs that rural communities rely on, which do you think will get funded? Housing? Utilities? Small business support? Well, do you know what? It would all depend on who Trump wants to punish or extort.

When it comes to medical research, are we going to spend precious research dollars curing Alzheimer's disease? Are we going to help the Fred Hutch Center in Washington State fight cancer? Are we going to work to develop a universal flu vaccine? Are we going to support maternal and women's health research? Congress would usually have a say. But this CR tells RFK, Jr., exactly what Trump promised: "Go wild on healthcare." You have got a free pass from House Republicans to commandeer hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars and set them on fire, relitigating disproven theories about autism and sowing distrust about vaccines amid a measles outbreak that is killing children.

Or if Trump wants to rip away resources from our public K through 12 schools and leverage Federal dollars to make them rewrite history, this CR could help them do that—to say nothing of the broad power he would have to cut off funding to schools like our HBCUs or eliminate funding that thousands of colleges and universities rely on to provide financial aid to students.

When it comes to the FAA, House Republicans gave up on writing detailed instructions for how the budget must be spent in favor of just letting Trump shovel tax dollars at Elon Musk's Starlink.

When it comes to our Tribes, they would let Trump manipulate the formulas that dictate how much money our Tribes get for everything from housing to road maintenance to law enforcement.

Our public lands, those are now President Trump's personal prerogative, as he will have under this CR near absolute discretion over which Land and Water Conservation Fund acquisitions and which public lands deferred maintenance projects get funding.

That is a tremendous amount of power to give to a President who has shown he is completely willing to abuse his existing authority.

For the record, the Federal funding for many of the programs I have just

mentioned makes up massive percentages of many of our State's budgets.

It takes no imagination—none—to consider how Trump would use this new authority to threaten and bully States across the country. You do what he says, or he blows up your entire State budget.

We all know full well how the President is looking to pick fights with our States and with our Governors, and this bill allows for him to use the full force of the government to try and win those fights.

But that is far from the only problem with this bill because this bill also seriously shortchanges our families, our small businesses, our country's competitiveness, and our security. In fact, it makes major cuts to domestic spending.

Nearly 2 years ago, after bruising negotiations between House Republicans and the President, a law was passed that set spending levels for fiscal year 2024 and fiscal year 2025. I didn't care for those levels, not by a long shot. But, nonetheless, there was an agreement and a starting point for us. But this bill now from the House Republicans reneges entirely on that agreement. It cuts nondefense funding by \$15 billion relative to that agreement, and it even cuts defense spending by nearly \$3 billion relative to the FRA level for 2025.

Those aren't just numbers on a page. Those are real investments that our constituents are being robbed of in this bill.

Despite what House Republicans would like you to believe, as a long-time appropriator, I can tell you, this is not a clean CR. A clean CR would not slash funding for Army Corps construction by 44 percent. That means halting progress on major hydropower projects, dredging for ports in red and blue States, and more.

This CR is not clean. It would cut by nearly 50 percent funding for medical research, funding for medical research into treatments and cures for dozens of diseases and conditions specifically affecting our servicemembers and their families. It would create an utterly massive hole in the NIH budget, reducing funding for lifesaving cancer research and the discovery of cures for diseases by more than a quarter of a billion dollars. That is what this CR does.

Or a clean CR wouldn't do what this bill does to cut VA construction or nuclear arms controls or election security.

Let's not forget, this bill forces rural development programs to absorb a \$34 million effective cut and decides who suffers. And it effectively endorses the Trump administration's plans for significant staffing reductions and, worse, customer service at Social Security.

The only increase for Social Security in this bill is to go after fraud and further Elon Musk's lies—his lies—about Social Security. It doesn't provide one additional dime to improve customer

service—something our constituents asked for. It doesn't reduce how long it takes to process benefit applications or to address the average, by the way, 1½ hour wait now to talk to someone on the phone. And that, by the way, is if you are the lucky 40 percent of the people who get through at all.

The House CR will mean that Musk and Trump are going to continue to fire workers and shutter offices. And it will be seniors and people with disabilities and their family members looking to Social Security in a moment of need who will pay the price.

Let's not ignore the massive shortfall in funding for new NOAA satellites or the serious risk of setting back weather predictions that every part of our economy hinges on.

Then, of course, there is the \$700 million shortfall in this CR at HUD—at Housing and Urban Development—which means 32,000 fewer families getting help to keep a roof over their head.

Then there is this inexplicable fact that this CR actually blocks the District of Columbia from spending its own money for the fiscal year we are already 6 months into. That change, by the way, won't save the Federal Government a penny, but it will force DC to lay off police officers and teachers halfway through the year.

I could spend hours right here on the floor talking about what we lose out on, what our constituents lose out on with this CR and what is at risk with this flat funding and the major cuts.

When House Republicans refuse to write serious funding bills that strengthen our investments, they are putting people in danger—in danger—by undermining food safety, rail safety, workplace safety, and public health. They are doing nothing to help our families afford groceries or heating and cooling or get high-quality healthcare. There is nothing to fight fentanyl and opioids, build roads and bridges, and clean up our waters. There is nothing to improve access to healthcare for our rural areas, or uphold our responsibility to our Tribes, or advance cutting-edge tech, and so much more.

I would just note, we have never funded the Department of Defense through a yearlong CR. Never. What we are talking about here is irresponsible on multiple levels. It is irresponsible in the cuts that it makes to things like medical research, VA hospital construction, and so many other investments in our communities.

It is irresponsible in the glaring problems it ignores, like the recent natural disaster, or China's aggression abroad.

And it is irresponsible in the additional power that it gives the President at the expense of Congress and at the expense of the people we all represent.

I don't come here with rose-colored glasses. It is not that I thought this process would ever be easy—certainly not while the President lets the richest man in the world break our government—but I do continue to believe that

it is our responsibility, as lawmakers, to ensure that our constituents' voices are heard and that Congress asserts its power.

It shocks me that any one of us here would even consider trading our power to help people in exchange for an empty promise. It shocks me that any one of us would be so eager to help an administration that is so dangerously willing to extort people, even lawmakers, to its own end.

Trump and Musk have made it painfully clear they want the exact power that this type of CR would give them. They want every Member of Congress, every Governor and mayor, every CEO, every Head Start program director to come groveling before them to get their funding turned back on.

That is not how this should work. That is not how this should work in America. They want you to come hat in hand and maybe—maybe—they won't fire as many veterans in their State. If you ask Elon really nicely and you also don't ask too many questions about his billions of dollars in conflicts of interest, maybe he won't kill the lifesaving research happening in your State; maybe he won't choke off the funding to the hospital your constituents need; maybe he won't pull the plug on those critical dam repairs the Army Corps was working on in your State. What sort of a deal is that, and what do they think is going to happen next?

Perhaps it is because I am one of the few preschool teachers here in the Congress, but I don't think enough of my colleagues have read "If You Give a Mouse a Cookie" because I have to think the lesson would be pretty darn relevant to what happens if you give a billionaire a slush fund—they just keep taking more.

And that is exactly what this bill does. It takes Federal funding and the money and the programs meant to help our constituents and gift wraps it for Trump and Musk to pick winners and losers, whether that means doling out stacks of cash to their billionaire buddies in their own company or whether that means punishing political enemies by cutting off money to blue States or blue cities.

And, look, just because you are a Republican and maybe you think you have an in with Elon's DOGE squad, don't think that means your constituents are safe because when your constituents are on the line, don't be surprised when Trump's rage at some mayor or Governor who puts your State's interests ahead of the President's ego wins out over any sense of obligation to thank you for giving him all this power in the first place, or when Elon Musk—the richest man in the world—stops making lame social media posts for long enough to hear you out. Don't be surprised when Musk values another billion dollars for one of his companies over the workers in your State he is firing left and right or the programs he is eliminating.

Look, my colleagues, this is not how it should be. Our constituents—our constituents—elected us to be their voice in Congress, not their voice on the phone with Elon Musk, but that is what House Republicans want to reduce us to.

My message here today to all my colleagues is that it doesn't have to be this way. Despite what Trump and Musk would have you believe, the choice is not simply between writing them a blank check or shutting down the government. Anyone who tells you that is flat wrong. We—we—have agency here. We have the power of the purse. We just need the common sense to use it. The path forward is not complicated. It is not unconventional. It is simple. We pass the short-term CR that I introduced the other day; we finish negotiating our bipartisan funding bills. By the way, that is not some impossible dream. We have done it before. In fact, we do it every year, even when it is incredibly hard. We were actually incredibly close before Republican leaders in the House left the negotiating room.

But we still have time to defuse this and to get back to the serious work writing bills that actually fund the programs our families rely on and actually make sure those funds get to where we—we as elected Members of Congress representing our constituents, our taxpaying constituents at home—where we intend them to go. We all agree Congress has the power of the purse, don't we? I am pretty sure that is a bipartisan principle. So we here in Congress should be able to find a bipartisan way to say that.

The true focus for me is transparency and accountability. No one has really explained to me why transparency is now a redline. How has that suddenly been too much to ask? I thought DOGE was all about transparency. I thought the whole idea was to hold government accountable. I thought we wanted to stop waste and fraud and abuse, not empower it and dismantle bipartisan guardrails.

Well, I just want to work that basic principle—accountability—into our bill, and I am open to different ideas on how we do that. I always have been.

By the way, while we are at it, it would seem like a pretty basic step in transparency and accountability for Elon Musk to come before a congressional hearing. So when are we going to work that out because I think at the barest minimum, it should be before we pass the CR that gives more power to him, not after.

So I strongly oppose the CR the House sent over. I hope my colleagues do the same. Defend your constituents. Defend your constituents, your taxpaying constituents, by protecting veterans, by defending cancer research, by the other investments and making sure that the infrastructure projects actually are built in your State. Defend your power as a Senator. Vote down this partisan bill that turns the gov-

ernment into a piggy bank for billionaires.

Let's immediately pass a short-term CR to prevent a government shutdown and finish writing those bills that keep our government working for the American people and to make sure our constituents have a voice in this process. I introduced a short-term CR to do just that. Democrats stand ready to work with Republicans to immediately get them done.

We are at a real turning point for how things will go. Isn't it worth taking a bit more time, working together a bit longer, and doing everything we can to keep us on a bipartisan path and to make sure we—we, each one of us—protect our power of the purse, our power to be a voice for the people back home? Especially when we are so close. Especially when I think we all know that it is going to lead to a much better outcome for our constituents that we represent, for the people who sent us here to fight for them, who trust us to work together, as we have in the past, to make their lives better—even when the work is hard.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MORENO). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### VOTE ON SONDERLING NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Sonderling nomination?

Mrs. BRITT. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH) is necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 53, nays 46, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 119 Ex.]

#### YEAS—53

Banks	Graham	Moreno
Barrasso	Grassley	Mullin
Blackburn	Hagerty	Murkowski
Boozman	Hawley	Paul
Britt	Hoeven	Ricketts
Budd	Husted	Risch
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Rounds
Cassidy	Johnson	Schmitt
Collins	Justice	Scott (FL)
Cornyn	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Cotton	Lankford	Sheehy
Cramer	Lee	Sullivan
Crapo	Lummis	Thune
Cruz	Marshall	Tillis
Curtis	McConnell	Tuberville
Daines	McCormick	Wicker
Ernst	Moody	Young
Fischer	Moran	

#### NAYS—46

Alsobrooks	Hirono	Sanders
Baldwin	Kaine	Schatz
Bennet	Kelly	Schiff
Blumenthal	Kim	Schumer
Blunt Rochester	King	Shaheen
Booker	Klobuchar	Slotkin
Cantwell	Lujan	Smith
Coons	Markey	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Merkley	Warner
Durbin	Murphy	Warnock
Fetterman	Murray	Warren
Gallego	Ossoff	Welch
Gillibrand	Padilla	Whitehouse
Hassan	Peters	Wyden
Heinrich	Reed	
Hickenlooper	Rosen	

#### NOT VOTING—1

Duckworth

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. CAPITO). Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The Senator from Louisiana.

#### GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, I want to talk about two subjects today. First, I want to talk about assets. We have been talking a lot about spending and the Federal budget and tax dollars. But there is another side to the ledger that sooner or later, in my judgment, we need to talk about.

Here is what I am getting at: Twenty-five percent of the land in the United States of America is owned by the Federal Government—25 percent. In some States, it is a lot more than 25 percent. That is just an average. It is 620 million acres.

Now, if you inherited 620 million acres, what would you do? Well, the first thing you would do is you would be careful to conserve it out of respect for the land. You would want to make sure that the land wasn't contaminated; that it is properly fenced. You would want to preserve it.

Second thing you would do is say: Well, how can I monetize this property? I have 620 million acres here. I am land poor. What can I do to have the land generate some income?

Under our Federal Government, the Bureau of Land Management is responsible for managing the 620 million acres. And the charge to our Bureau is to do a couple of things: No. 1, conserve the land; No. 2, make sure—because it belongs to the American people—make sure that people have an opportunity to recreate on the land; and, No. 3, see if you can manage the land in a way to generate cash.

Why is that important? Why is that especially important right now? Our debt is \$36.5 trillion. What does that mean? I mean, we throw around this figure of a trillion. We can hardly get our mind around it—at least, I can hardly get mine around it. Our debt is so high, and we are paying so much interest that the debt grows by \$1 trillion every 100 days. So this \$36.5 trillion figure, 100 days from now—a little over 3 months—it is going to be \$37.5 trillion. That is how fast the debt is growing.