

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.

This number is so high and we are paying so much in interest that the debt accrues at \$10 billion a day—not million—\$10 billion a day; \$417 million it goes up an hour; \$6.9 million—let's call it \$7 million a minute. How long have I been talking, 3 minutes? The debt just increased \$21 million. And we have got to pay that money back. This is not funny money.

We are talking about how to start paying it back by reducing our spending. But there is another way; it is to generate income through our 620 million acres of land.

Take our national parks, for example. The first thing we want to do to our national parks is preserve them. I mean, they are beautiful. That is why they are national parks. We want to preserve them and respect them and protect them environmentally and otherwise. We also want to allow people to enjoy them.

We do that by telling folks: Come on in. You have to pay an entrance fee—but it is reasonable—if you want to come in and camp or just walk around and enjoy the scenery, go on a hike. That generates some money. You don't want the entrance fee to be too high, but you want it to be reasonable.

Some of our national parks actually allow mining, oil and gas production, and timber production, so that increases income as well.

I have seen an estimate from the private sector—there are several of these—that our public land, our 620 million acres, if we managed that land properly, could generate \$90 million in revenue. So \$90 million could be generated by our public land. How? Through a mineral harvesting, natural gas production, oil drilling, grazing for agriculture, hunting licenses, fishing licenses, and camping permits.

Do you know what? Our Federal lands actually generate money. We know the potential: \$90 billion a year. That would help us pay down this debt.

In 2023, our Federal lands actually lost money. They lost \$13 billion. We went from a potential of \$90 billion—according to land-use experts, that is what they ought to be generating—to a loss of \$13 billion. It is embarrassing.

I don't want to blame all of it on the past administration. It wasn't all President Biden's fault, but some of it was. Under President Biden—not him, but his people; he appointed them—they banned offshore drilling for most of America's coastlines. They prohibited mining on over a million acres of lands. They canceled leases for oil and natural gas production. They paused all new permits for LNG, which Europe is hungry for. They restricted hunting. They restricted fishing. They restricted hiking. And they buried our Federal lands in redtape. That is why we lost \$13 billion instead of gaining \$90 billion a year.

It doesn't have to be this way. All you have to do is look at the States. The States have State land. They don't have 620 million acres like the Federal

Government does, but they have got a lot of land. The States have worked very hard to increase the revenue on their State lands while preserving them.

Arizona, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico—all we have to do is copy them. Their activities, their preservation of their property, but their monetizing of their State lands has produced, over the past few years, an average return of \$14.51 for every \$1 those States have invested. So the States spend \$1 on their State land, they get back 15 bucks—pretty good return. They haven't sacrificed air quality. They protected their lakes and rivers, and they have preserved their State land.

The Federal Government, for every \$1 we spend on our public land, we get back 73 cents. So we put out a buck, and we get back 73 cents. You don't have to be Euclid to see that we are going backward here. We need to do better.

I know that the focus right now is on spending—it should be—and it is on designing a Tax Code that looks like somebody designed it on purpose—and it should be. All those things are important. But at some point, we need to recognize the enormous amount of assets that the American people own through their Federal Government and the fact that we are actually losing money by the way we are managing them instead of generating money.

Once again, you don't have to be an astrophysicist to figure this out. All we have to do is call Arizona, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, and probably West Virginia and just say: Would you all come up to Washington? We will buy you a soda and give you a nice hat if you will come on up here and tell us how you are doing it. And just copy what they are doing.

WOMEN'S SPORTS

Madam President, the second thing I want to talk about is less pleasant. But I don't mean it to be divisive. I don't.

There is a lady by the name of Laurel Libby—Laurel Libby. She happens to be from Maine. I love Maine—beautiful, beautiful State. She is in the State legislature. By all accounts, Ms. Libby is a very talented, accomplished legislator. She has beliefs, as we all do. One of her beliefs is that it is unfair to allow transgender women to play women's sports. In other words, Ms. Libby—I don't speak for her, but I have read her interviews—she believes it is unfair—fundamentally unfair, that it will destroy women's sports if transgender women—biologically males who identify as transgender women—are allowed to play women's sports. And she has said so.

In fact, she put up a Facebook post. The Facebook post highlighted a transgender athlete who 1 year placed fifth, I think, in the pole vault and then transitioned into—he placed fifth as a male athlete but then transitioned into a transgender woman and competed at the State level and came in first. She came in first. So when this

individual was a biological male and competing, the biological male came in fifth in the State competition. The biological male transitioned into a transgender female and participated—was allowed to participate by the officials in Maine—in the pole vault in the women's sports and came in first.

Ms. Libby thought that was really unfair, so she posted a picture of the athlete—the transgender athlete—when she was a biological male and currently when she has now become a transgender woman. She posted the picture. She didn't put any phone numbers, any addresses, or any of that. She posted the picture of the athlete side by side, before transitioning and after.

Here is what she said:

We have learned that just ONE year ago John—

The transgender athlete when she was a biological male—

was competing in boys' pole vault . . . that is when he had his 5th place finish.

Then she went on to say:

So all of this transpired in the last year, with the full blessing of the Maine Principals' Association.

Two years ago, John tied for 5th place in boys' pole vault. Tonight—

John, now Katie, because John has transitioned into a transgender woman—

Tonight, "Katie" won 1st place in the girls' Maine State Class B Championship.

Miss Libby thought that was unfair and so do many Americans. So do I, frankly.

Ms. Libby is in the State legislature, and her colleagues—Democrats, who are entitled to their opinion as much as Ms. Libby, who is a Republican, is entitled to hers—they got very angry. They wanted to throw her out. They wanted to throw Ms. Libby out of the Maine Legislature. They wanted to expel her, but they couldn't do it because that takes a two-thirds vote. They said: We are not going to expel her; we are going to censure her. That only takes a majority vote. But in censuring her, which they only needed Democratic votes to do, they added conditions that Ms. Libby could no longer vote and could no longer participate in any legislative committees. I guess she just has to sit there.

Well, that disenfranchises the constituents that Ms. Libby represents. And, frankly, they kind of went through the back door when they should have gone through the front door in a transparent way.

I am not here to try to meddle in the Maine State Legislature. Let me say it again, I love Maine. I think it is one of the most beautiful places in the world. And the way they handle their local politics is none of my business. That is not why I am here.

But I am here to say what Ms. Libby did—let me put it another way. Ms. Libby's belief about the fairness of transgender women participating in women's sports is based on science. It is. You may disagree with the science,