

them was dangerous, that they would behave recklessly, and unfortunately—unfortunately—we were right.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Mr. President, now on Social Security, what is happening at the Social Security Administration is an utter travesty, and Senate Republicans are doing nothing—absolutely nothing—at all to stop it.

As we all know, Social Security is among the most beloved programs that have ever existed in American history, but right now, Donald Trump and Elon Musk—two billionaires, one of them the richest man on Earth—are taking a chain saw—a chain saw—to Social Security. This is one of the darkest examples of Donald Trump's attempt to erode away the American dream. He and Musk are rigging the system more and more in favor of billionaires while stealing from working people in order to cut taxes for the rich.

Let's be very clear. What is happening right now to the Social Security Administration is already a benefit cut. They are shutting off phone lines, closing down field offices, firing staff by the thousands, adding red tape—not reducing red tape, adding red tape—with burdensome new rules. Wait times to talk to someone over the phone are now 2 hours, and in some cases, people wait for 4 or 5 hours. This is not efficiency; it is sabotage.

What Musk and DOGE are doing is a classic hostile takeover. They are swooping in, cannibalizing Social Security from within, and then they will sell what is left for parts.

Make no mistake, if the American people don't believe this is coming directly from Donald Trump, just listen to his address to Congress, where he spent a full 10 minutes spreading lie after lie after lie about fraud, about checks to people who are 150 years old. This is a lie that Trump's own Acting Commissioner has said is false.

What Senate Republicans are allowing to happen to Social Security is deeply immoral, and their silence is an absolute disgrace.

Today, the Senate Finance Committee will hold a hearing on the nomination of Frank Bisignano to lead the beleaguered Social Security Administration. Someone with Mr. Bisignano's background is the last person we need at the Social Security Administration. The Agency is standing on a knife's edge, and now Republicans want to appoint someone famous for shrinking the organizations he has led.

Mr. Bisignano's nomination should go no further after today's hearing. If Republicans care one bit about seniors and their benefits, they should immediately reject his nomination and stand up to DOGE.

A "yes" vote on Bisignano is a vote to cut Social Security. Let me say it again. A "yes" vote on Mr. Bisignano is a vote to cut Social Security, plain and simple.

During today's hearing, we need the answers to some very important ques-

tions—not just from the nominee but also from our Republican colleagues themselves. Do Senate Republicans and Mr. Bisignano agree, for one, that Social Security is a scam like Elon Musk and Donald Trump said? Do they agree with Secretary Lutnick that if seniors miss benefits for 1 month, they will be perfectly fine with it? Do Senate Republicans and Mr. Bisignano plan to do anything—anything at all—to reverse the profound damage that is happening right now to the Agency?

Time is short to stop permanent damage to the Social Security Administration. If Republicans continue to do nothing, the political backlash will be unprecedented.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, you know better than anyone, having just won election to this body, that Americans elected Republicans all across the country to get our country back on track. That is what this last election was about, and Republicans are keeping our promises.

Today, more Americans say our country is on the right track than they have said for the last 20 years, and that is because President Trump and Republicans' commonsense revolution is working.

By contrast, what we see with the Democrats—they have abandoned all common sense. The American people are resoundingly—amazing numbers—according to a recent poll—CNN did a poll. They are no friends of Republicans. What did they say? They said that only 29 percent of the American people view the Democratic Party favorably. Even worse, according to a recent NBC poll, only 27 percent of Americans had a positive view of the Democrats.

The Democrat approval rating is at its alltime low in the history of polling in this country. Why is that? Well, let me tell you. It is because Democrats in this body—in this Senate—are taking positions and continuing to take positions that are truly radical. Democrats in this body support people who support terrorism. That is who they side with.

They refuse to protect women in sports. Eighty percent of Americans say we need to protect women and girls in sports against biological men.

Democrats refuse to stand with Israel.

Democrats, through their votes, are trying to support higher energy prices, not lower energy prices. It was inflation which cost them the election—the open borders and the high prices of the last administration. Democrats are refusing to protect taxpayers.

In terms of specific wasteful Washington spending that we have been seeing, Democrats are refusing to allow us to remove some of this wasteful Washington spending. They want Americans to pay higher taxes—\$4 trillion in in-

creased higher taxes is what they are hoping for at the end of this year.

The minority leader, who just spoke, appeared last week on a television show called "The View." What did he do? He spent his time attacking not the abuses against America but against hard-working and successful American families—people who just want to keep more of their hard-earned money; people who don't want to see the government waste it, fritter it away, as we have seen from these examples and lists of money being spent in ways you just wouldn't think makes sense to anyone.

The minority leader had nothing good to say about the innovators or the job creators, the hard-working Americans who make this country great.

Over the last 4 years—the 4 years of the last administration—wasteful spending caused the worst inflation in 40 years. Democrats raised our taxes. They took our money, and they spent it recklessly.

Today, Democrats are pulling out all the stops to block our bold Republican agenda. This is an agenda that the American people support. How do they do it? They don't have the votes in the House. They don't have the votes in the Senate. They don't have the White House. How can Democrats and their radical views be reflected in what is happening in this country? You know they are doing it through radical district court judges.

That is what the American people are hearing about today in the news—radical district court judges who oppose President Trump, oppose his agenda. How many district court judges are there in the country? The number is 677. That is how many there are in the United States. Last week, 1 of them—1 of the 677, just 1 of them at the district court level—ordered a nationwide ban to stop deportation of illegal immigrant gang members. This is wrong. One district court judge in one district court out of 677 of these district judges is saying "stop" for the entire country.

Well, these gang members, these illegal immigrants, they are part of a criminal group, and it is a criminal group designated by President Trump as terrorists. They are murderers and rapists. They are drug dealers. They threaten the safety and security of every American community.

Last month alone, there were 15 nationwide injunctions issued against the Trump administration by who? By activist district judges from Washington to Seattle. These activist district judges think they know better than the American people. Their radical order blocks signature pillars of our Republican agenda, the agenda the American people voted for in November.

These radical activist judges are protecting criminals, they are protecting terrorists, and they are after people that we know we need out of the country—they want to keep them here. They are against accountability. It is clearly an effort by the Democrats and

their activist judges to try to undo the will of the voters.

Let me be very clear. When partisan, unelected district court judges try to micromanage the President of the United States, that is not judicial review, it isn't checks and balances, it is purely partisan politics, and it is wrong. Radical district judges are not going to succeed in blocking Republicans from getting this Nation back on track.

I applaud President Trump. He is fighting to uphold the rule of law. He is appealing these bad rulings. He is representing the values of the American people.

Let me go back to where I began. Last week, NBC reported Democrats are at the lowest level of support in the history of polling. At the same time, more Americans say that our country is on the right track than they have in the last 20 years. The Republican agenda for America continues to be popular.

Americans want to escape the last 4 years of high prices and open borders. Republicans' shared agenda will deliver safer communities, secure borders, affordable prices, and peace through strength. Republicans are committed, Mr. President, to getting America back on track.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, let me take you back to January of 1985.

Ronald Reagan had just begun his second term as President, and one of his policy priorities was to include the abolition of the Department of Education. What did it finally take to get him to back down from that commitment? Congress. Congress stood firm to protect this vital Agency in 1985.

In a letter to Senator Orrin Hatch, a Republican Senator from Utah, President Reagan said that, although he wanted to dismantle the Department, "the proposal has received very little support in Congress," and because of the lack of support from Congress, which would be necessary, of course, to close down the Agency, President Reagan decided not to proceed with his plan.

Sound familiar?

That is because, currently, another Republican President, who ran on the slogan of "making America great again," has suggested abolishing the Department of Education—only this time, he is not consulting with Congress; he is taking steps to do it. Last week, President Trump signed an Executive order to close down the Department of Education.

Demolishing the Federal Agency dedicated to the success of our next

generation is shortsighted and deeply damaging to the future of this country. Families, schools, and young people in my State of Illinois and across the Nation depend on the Department of Education. In Illinois, the Department provides critical annual funding for K-through-12 schools to meet the needs of 4,000 schools and more than 2 million students. This includes \$652 million in annual Federal funding for nearly 300,000 kids with disabilities.

I can remember a time when I went to school, and it was rare that you saw a disabled child in school. I don't know where they were—they were being hidden or something or held back—but they certainly weren't being given the opportunities they have today.

That also includes \$778 million in annual funding for schools enrolling 1.3 million students from low-income backgrounds and so much more. These are kids who are attending schools which aren't in the best and wealthiest neighborhoods. They have got good families who care about their educations, and we give them a helping hand to make sure those kids have a fighting chance.

President Trump has repeatedly promised to "send education back to the States," but State and local funds already account for the vast majority of K-through-12 education funding, and States and school districts decide what is taught in schools, not the Federal Government.

Cuts to Federal education programs and funds will hurt the Nation's students and the communities they live in. Shuttering the Department of Education threatens funding for low-income students and special education, and it makes uncertain the future of Federal student loans and Pell grants.

We all know what a Pell grant is. It is an opportunity for a child from a family of modest means to finally go to college. Funding degrees with these Pell grants opens the door for opportunity. It prepares these students to be part of the future workforce and the economy, and it allows America to continue to compete on the global stage. In Illinois, 226,000 students receive \$1 billion in Pell grants to afford higher education—a program that has received bipartisan support.

So what does President Trump plan on doing with these student loans if he abolishes the Department of Education?

Well, they made a proposal. They want to shift the administration's loan program to the Small Business Administration—a separate Agency—while, at the same time, the President and the DOGE folks have planned to fire 40 percent of the Federal employees at the Small Business Administration.

So follow the bouncing ball here. He wants to eliminate the Department of Education and call into question the administration of a program that literally millions of students rely on to go to school, and he is going to shift the responsibilities for administering

that program to the Small Business Administration, which is not a large Agency. At the same time, he is going to cut the number of employees at the SBA by 40 percent.

Do you have any idea what is going to happen as a result of that? Most people know. It is going to be an administrative disaster.

Donald Trump is not trying to move education back to the States. In a real-life shell game, he is moving pieces around until we lose sight of the ball and, in the process, making drastic changes to our education system.

This administration will not stop in its relentless effort to weaken America's public schools. Before signing last week's Executive order, President Trump made significant staff cuts at the Department—already one of the smallest Agencies. He fired more than half the staff at the Department of Education.

Why does he need this money that he is going to bring back to the Treasury by firing these people? Because, of course, he needs to pay for tax cuts for wealthy people. We have seen it before. In President Trump's first administration, he had the distinction of having created more national debt in 4 years than had any previous President. He is out to set a new record this time. It is not that he is just for tax cuts; they have to be tax cuts that really favor the wealthiest taxpayers in America. That is just wrong.

He has fired employees at the Office of Federal Student Aid. He has slashed the staff at the Office for Civil Rights. This means students applying for financial aid will have to wait longer to learn whether they can afford to go to college. It means students defrauded by predatory for-profit colleges won't see the student loan relief they are entitled to.

What am I talking about here?

You can tell the story of for-profit colleges and universities with two numbers: 8 and 30. Eight percent of the graduates of high school in America end up in for-profit colleges and universities, but 30 percent of all the student loan defaults are these same students.

Why this difference, this disparity? They charge too much for tuition. They offer far less education than promised, and the students are often defrauded in the process.

Historically, they have turned to the Office for Civil Rights in the Department of Education to get forgiven some of the loans they have incurred because of the fraudulent conduct of these schools. Now, of course, in closing the Department of Education and closing the Office for Civil Rights, it denies them their opportunity and their day in court. It means weaker enforcement of Federal laws passed by Congress to protect students from marginalized backgrounds and students with disabilities, and it means the students and families with open cases in the Office for Civil Rights are unlikely to see any resolution.