

Why have we let education sink to the level that it has?

I think the bottom line of all of this is that the American people, I think, are catching on. And Mr. Musk—I must thank him because he has made it very clear. We are living in an oligarchic form of society.

If anybody out there thinks Mr. Musk is running around out of the goodness of his heart trying to make our government more efficient, you have not a clue as to what is going on. What these guys want to do is destroy virtually every Federal program that impacts the well-being of working people—Social Security, Medicare, the Postal Service, public education, you name it—so they can get huge tax breaks for the rich and eventually make government so inefficient that they will have the ability as large corporations to come in and privatize everything that is going on.

So this is a pivotal moment in American history, and I sense that the American people have had it up to here. They are prepared to fight back. They do not want a government run by billionaires who have it all, whose greed is uncontrollable.

We have in Vermont and I think all over this country a serious problem with addiction, with drugs, people drinking too much alcohol, people smoking too many cigarettes. The worst form of addiction this country now faces is the greed of the oligarchy. You might think that if you had \$10, \$20 billion, it would be enough—you know, kind of enough to let your family live for the next 20 generations—but it is not. For whatever reason, for whatever compulsive reason they have, these guys want more and more and more, and they are prepared to destroy Social Security, Medicare, and nutrition programs for hungry people in order to get even more. That, to me, is disgusting.

Now we are at a pivotal moment in American history. Now, having been all over this country, many parts of this country, I am absolutely confident that the American people—and I am not just talking about Democrats, who are as complicit in the problems that we have right now as are Republicans. We have a two-party system which is basically corrupt.

You have Mr. Musk over on the Republican side saying to any Republican who dares to stand up and defy the Trump agenda: We are going to primary you. On the Democratic side, you have AIPAC and you have other super PACs saying: You stand up for working people, you are in trouble as well. We have a corrupt campaign finance system in which billionaires are able to buy elections. And that is why, all over this country, people are not happy with our two-party system, the Republicans and the Democrats.

So this is a pivotal moment in American history, but we have had difficult moments before. I am confident from the bottom of my heart that if we

stand together and we do not allow some rightwing extremists to divide us up by the color of our skin or our religion or where we were born or our sexual orientation—if we stand together, we can save this country, we can defeat oligarchy, we can defeat the movement toward authoritarianism, and, in fact, we can create an economy and a government that works for all, not just the few.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

RECOGNIZING WOWO RADIO

Mr. YOUNG. Mr. President, I am so glad the junior Senator from Indiana occupies the chair as Presiding Officer at this time because it was 100 years ago next week that “The Voice of a Thousand Main Streets” first began broadcasting from the second floor of the Main Auto Supply Building in downtown Fort Wayne, IN—an area that the Presiding Officer knows well.

On March 31, 1925, at 500 watts, 1320 on the dial, the voice of the Midwest, WOWO Radio, hit the airwaves. In Indiana, from such humble beginnings, great things often rise, and those distinctive call letters, “WOWO,” endure today.

In fact, over the past century, through good times and bad, Hoosiers in the northeast part of our State have turned on and tuned in to WOWO radio. Although the number on the dial has changed, the studio was moved, the station’s wattage has expanded, and the world of media has evolved, Hoosiers still listen to WOWO today.

WOWO is not just a radio station in this community; it is the community’s radio station, one it has loved and taken care of for 100 years now. Its programs didn’t just entertain Fort Wayne but became part of its culture. Its personalities didn’t simply report the news but made history.

During the Great Depression, WOWO turned Fort Wayne into a midwest hub of country music and helped Hoosiers escape from hard times, if only for an hour.

After Pearl Harbor, WOWO provided desperately needed updates as they arrived over the wire with word of the progress of the war effort to the families of the 12,000 soldiers from Fort Wayne fighting overseas.

No matter the era or the decade, WOWO always looked out for its audience. It brought them the local news, helped them stay informed and engaged. Every morning, the legendary Bob Sievers called the Fort Wayne Police Department before going on the air.

When the station moved to the Gaskins Building on Washington Boulevard, where there were no nearby windows, a reporter ran down the hall, climbed out on the fire escape, and looked to the sky to determine the weather. The Gaskins Building is now gone, but, as WOWO listeners know, the station still reports the weather from its “world famous fire escape.”

During the events that defined the last century for people in and away from northeast Indiana—from the blizzard of 1978 to that terrible September morning in 2001, from the thrill of the Moon landing to the loss of the space shuttle Challenger—listeners can still remember not just where they were when they heard the news but how they heard it: from WOWO through the radio in the car, on the kitchen table, in their classroom.

During tough times, WOWO provided welcome distractions. The audience could tune in to the “Hoosier Hop,” where local talents Nancy Lee and the Hilltoppers played and Kenny Roberts yodeled. They could visit the Little Red Barn on a farm down in Indiana for the latest in ag news. “Modern Home Forum,” hosted by the fictional Jane Weston, offered cooking lessons. Broadcasts of Komets and Pistons games brought the people of Fort Wayne together around their beloved hockey and basketball teams. The innovative and much imitated “Man on the Street” and “One Moment” programs turned the shows’ listeners into stars.

If a member of the Fort Wayne community lost their dog, WOWO could help them find it. If they fell on hard times, it offered them a hand up.

In the 1940s, the station created the Penny Pitch, encouraging listeners to contribute pocket change for a disabled young man so he could realize his ambition of pursuing a career in journalism. The annual drive still raises money to provide resources to charities across northeast Indiana. Last year, the Penny Pitch raised over \$135,000 for Habitat for Humanity of Greater Fort Wayne.

Throughout WOWO’s history, many of its personalities became household names across northeast Indiana. Broadcasters like Bob Chase, who served our Nation in World War II and then served WOWO listeners as sports director and the voice of the Komets hockey team for over six decades, were beloved figures. More recently, Charly Butcher, Patrick Miller, and Kayla Blakeslee became well known and trusted by the WOWO audience. Brian Ford, WOWO news director, recalled that as a child, when the sky grew dark and storms neared, his grandmother would simply say: Turn on WOWO.

When news breaks, good or bad, at home or far away, at the beginning of another day in Fort Wayne, and the world turned beyond it, families still find WOWO on their dial or on their phones.

So today, I join my fellow Hoosiers in marking this milestone, offering WOWO and its staff past and present congratulations on creating a truly remarkable bond with their audience and for serving fellow Hoosiers with news and entertainment.

Oh, about that call sign—it is a bit counterintuitive, perhaps, but back in 1925, the “W” in “WOWO” designated the station’s location east of the Mississippi River. The other three letters

didn't stand for anything; they were just catchy.

At the time of the station's founding, a newspaper reported that WOWO "expects to become a familiar voice of the middle west despite the low wave length. The trick call letters, it is believed, will add to the novelty of the plant." The station's leaders were right on both accounts.

A listener contest later determined that "WOWO" would stand for "Wayne Offers Wonderful Opportunities." But "WOWO" will never be just call letters. If you grew up in its listening range, you know what it stands for, what it means, and what it has meant to north-east Indiana since that first broadcast a century ago.

I have no doubt, however much change that time and technology may bring, a hundred years from now, WOWO will remain on the air and remain an important part of the fabric of northeast Indiana.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, Social Security is under attack. It is under attack from Donald Trump. Social Security is under attack from Republicans. Social Security is under attack from Elon Musk. Social Security is under attack from greedy billionaires who want to loot Americans' hard-earned money to line their own pockets.

Trump, Musk, and DOGE know they can't come right out and cut Social Security. That would be wildly unpopular. Instead, they are revving up their chain saw—cutting staff, reducing services, closing offices, and lying about the program, finding so-called fraud where no fraud exists.

Here is their reckless roadmap: first, lie about the program to undermine it with the public; second, use those lies as an excuse to gut Social Security and cut benefits; and third, raise the retirement age and privatize Social Security, handing your benefits over to Wall Street—making the billionaires richer and our seniors poorer. It is a very shameful plan.

Now cue Elon Musk and his DOGE lackeys who descended on the Social Security Administration, claiming there are millions of dead people over the age of 150, over the age of 200, over the age of 360 years. They are claiming that people born in 1665 are claiming Social Security benefits, that they are fraudulently applying for benefits. The only problem with what they are saying is that none of it is true. They are just lying.

Former inspectors general and Social Security Administration leaders have never found any of this phantom fraud—none of it.

But following the Trump playbook, Musk, DOGE, and Republicans have repeated this lie over and over again. Again, the key to their messaging on Social Security is lying about Social Security. That is their campaign plan.

So Trump, in his State of the Union, repeated the lie, telling the country that there were millions of people fraudulently receiving Social Security benefits. That is the Trump way: If at first you don't succeed, lie, lie again.

While Trump and Musk see 200-year-old ghosts—360-year-old ghosts—collecting Social Security benefits, they are gutting the Social Security Administration to the bare bones. That lie of massive fraud in Social Security is now their excuse to make changes that could force Grandma and Grandpa and people with disabilities to travel more than 100 miles to sign up for Social Security benefits. They want to make it as tough as possible for Grandma and Grandpa and for people with disabilities to collect Social Security—just make it something difficult.

The Social Security website crashed 4 times in 10 days this month. They are bringing all the DOGE boys who are supposed to be geniuses—AI, bringing efficiency to the government. The Social Security website crashed 4 times in 10 days just in the past month.

But Trump and Musk, they won't stop there. They are also cutting the phone lines. By the end of this month, telephone services could be eliminated at the Social Security Administration, with assistance only offered online or in person or at a field office. So good luck, Grandma and Grandpa. Sorry you didn't take that computer course 40 years ago. Sorry that you are 85 now. Can't call in any longer; you are going to have to figure out how to do everything online. It is just another way of making it harder and harder for people who are older to be able to collect.

The person running the Agency right now has already pushed out more than 12 percent of the staff, and he has admitted that the Agency's phone service "sucks." That is what he said, talking about his own work at the Agency. Yeah, you did such a great job on it that now you yourself say that the phone service sucks. Excellent work. You are deliberately trying to make the system fail.

And he said the quiet part out loud, that Musk and DOGE are the ones really in charge at the Social Security Administration. And they have one primary goal right now: find fraud, despite the truth that they have not reported any yet because there is so little to find at the Social Security Administration.

But by hollowing out the Agency—cutting staff, closing offices, and making it harder to access benefits—the Trump administration is effectively cutting Social Security benefits. But if you complain too loudly, the Trump administration might just accuse you of being a fraudster as well. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, another billionaire, said last week that his 94-year-old mother-in-law wouldn't complain about missing her Social Security check and that the only person who would complain would be a fraudster themselves, because they would be so upset, the fraudster.

But his 94-year-old mother-in-law wouldn't complain. Maybe if everyone had a billionaire as a son-in-law, maybe you wouldn't complain. But that is not 99.999 percent of all people receiving Social Security benefits. They would be very concerned if that check did not, in fact, arrive. Maybe if your son-in-law is a billionaire, you can afford to miss a check.

But how out of touch can Lutnick be because, without Social Security, more than 22 million people would be thrown into poverty. Get that number? Without the check they get each month, 22 million Americans would go into poverty. That includes over 16 million seniors, including 268,000 in Massachusetts and nearly 1 million children. Nearly one in four people drawing Social Security rely on it for 100 percent of their income.

Let me say that again because it is very important to internalize the reality of our country in 2025: One in four people receiving a Social Security check rely upon it for 100 percent of all of their income. If that gets stopped, people don't have access to it, those people immediately go to poverty because they are living check to check.

And more than two-thirds of seniors rely on it for the majority of their income. That would have been my mother and father—my father who drove a truck for the Hood milk company. They were dependent upon Social Security. There was not a big pension in the old days, so you needed Social Security just to make it by week by week, month by month.

And 55 percent of all Social Security beneficiaries are women. This increases to 66 percent for beneficiaries aged 85. Two-thirds of all people receiving a Social Security check over 85 are women. That is who they are playing with here. They are truly playing with Grandma, her life, her security, what she earned, what she deserves. Social Security would do to women—who only still earn 82 cents to a man's dollar and live longer after retiring—they would perform an enormous disservice for all of those women. A greater proportion of women's retirement income comes from Social Security.

For the millions of seniors that rely almost entirely on Social Security for their income, a missed check means missed meals, missed medications, missed rent payments. That is who they are in our country right now.

Social Security is not rife with fraud. It is not a Ponzi scheme, as Elon Musk has said. It isn't something that can just be "turned off," as Trump's acting director threatened to do in response to a court order blocking DOGE access to your private Social Security information. He threatened to turn it off unless all this information about every one of us in the Social Security system was turned over to DOGE. Well, where we all worked, the income that we earned, every single job—that is all there in order for Social Security to make the right decisions about how big