

trade wars sends the stock market plunging and lets billionaires like Elon Musk take a chain saw to people's benefits?

Americans look at this chaos, they are worried, they are troubled. So what do they do? They say: I better keep some money in my pocket because who knows what is going to happen next and what will hurt me next. This fall is the lowest level of confidence in 12 years. This fall is the lowest level since January of 2021 and the lowest level that we have seen in so long, all because Donald Trump is creating chaos in the economy. And Americans are worried and afraid. When they are, they spend less money, they hire less, and the economy shrinks.

More and more people are learning that Donald Trump and his leadership in the economy—or lack of leadership—is far too erratic, far too chaotic, far too unpredictable. And many of us fear—many Americans fear—it is only the beginning.

VOTING RIGHTS

Mr. President, on voting rights, yesterday Donald Trump escalated his attacks on the bedrock of American democracy. Without a shred of authority, Donald Trump issued an Executive order that will, effectively, coerce States to institute policies that will prevent millions of American citizens from voting.

Let us be very clear: This is an assault on democracy. Donald Trump's order has nothing—nothing—to do with election security. It is an illegal power grab.

We all support safe and transparent and secure elections, but what Donald Trump is doing is making it harder for citizens to vote. He is fanning the flames of election denialism—nothing new to him—claiming without any evidence—without any evidence—that elections are rigged and the system is broken. Every single election authority says this is false.

We all know that if Donald Trump is anything, he is an election denier. He hates the idea of free and fair elections. This is another dark and twisted example of Donald Trump's lawless campaign to recreate America into his personal kingdom.

I am confident the courts will look at this power grab and quickly deem it unconstitutional.

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

Mr. President, on Social Security, yesterday, the Senate Finance Committee heard from Frank Bisignano, who has been nominated by Donald Trump to lead the Social Security Administration.

To confirm Mr. Bisignano as the head of Social Security is like hiring an arsonist to run a fire station. His claim to fame is cutting and shrinking the companies he has been a part of.

A "yes" vote on Bisignano is a vote to cut Social Security. I say to my Republican colleagues: If you vote yes on Bisignano, you are voting to cut Social Security.

The Senate should oppose his confirmation. Mr. Bisignano would be a disaster because, at this very moment, in fact, because of what Trump has already done, the Social Security Administration is in crisis. Yesterday, Senate Democrats released a report detailing exactly what is happening now to the Social Security Administration and how Americans are going to suffer. Up to 60 percent of all regional offices are shutting down, dozens of field offices will be closed, and 7,000 workers are being laid off—12 percent of the entire staff. Cutting staff means people with disabilities could be waiting up to 3 years—3 years; disabled people who are entitled to Social Security, 3 years—to get their benefits. The wait time over the phones will explode. Seniors are already having to wait over 2 hours—sometimes longer, it is reported—to get someone on the phone.

Why are they doing this? Why are Donald Trump and Elon Musk doing this? The goal of Trump and Musk is clear: Destroy Social Security from within. Make it so unworkable, so inefficient that Donald Trump has a pretext to cut benefits and privatize the program.

Republicans are saying it loud and clear, and Donald Trump said it in his address to the joint session: This administration, the Trump-Musk administration, is going after Social Security. And why are they doing such a horrible thing? To cut taxes for billionaires like Elon Musk.

Senate Republicans should be using their majority to protect Americans' benefits, not to destroy them. Senate Republicans should be demanding that Elon Musk reverse the firings of the 7,000 staffers, reopen the field offices, and restore the phone services. Senate Republicans haven't done any of that. It is shameful, and they are complicit in destroying Social Security the way Musk intends to do.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 10 minutes, followed by Senator CRUZ for up to 10 minutes, prior to the scheduled rollcall vote.

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

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I traveled last week to visit with over 150 members of our Wyoming Army National Guard. They are stationed in Jordan and in Syria, and they are a long way from home—nine time zones away from Wyoming. They are there to keep our country safe and free.

One year ago, our adversaries were growing bolder, stronger, and more aggressive. That was a year ago. Today, America is stronger, safer, and much more secure. President Trump is restoring peace through strength. This is a dramatic change from what we saw in the previous administration.

Within days of taking office, President Trump began freeing American

hostages—Marc Fogel, Keith Siegel. Almost a dozen former hostages who were held by our adversaries are now safe on American soil. President Trump is bringing American citizens home.

He is also bringing America's enemies to justice. Let's look at the recent precision strike in Yemen against the Houthi terrorists. Remember who the Houthis are. They are Iran-funded terrorists. Their official slogans say "Death to the United States" and "Death to Israel." They are a direct threat to the American people and specifically to our servicemembers and to American trade.

Since October 7, 2023, the Houthis have attacked U.S. Navy ships 174 times. They have attacked U.S. commercial ships 145 times. Iran provides them with high-tech missiles and precision-guided drones.

These attacks continue. Why? Because Joe Biden and the Democrats were weak, and Joe Biden, their President, projected weakness. President Trump is strong, and he projects strength. President Trump responded firmly with overwhelming strength.

I am grateful for our servicemembers who carried out the attacks.

President Trump sent a clear message to the terrorists: Stop or get destroyed. He also sent a clear message to Iran: You will not escape accountability.

This is a remarkable change from his predecessor. Joe Biden appeased Iran. His administration gave Iran \$100 billion in sanctions relief. President Trump is keeping up maximum pressure on Iran, and the Houthi strike proves it.

President Trump knows that Iran is responsible for the chaos in the Middle East. Since taking office, President Trump rightfully has hit Iran with 94 new sanctions. President Trump also placed sanctions on Iran's so-called ghost fleet. These are the oil smugglers who move Iranian oil to China. These sanctions against Iran help put communist China on notice. These fleets are moving Iranian oil and selling it to China at a discount, making Iran richer and making China more powerful. Remember, 90 percent of Iran's exports of oil go to communist China. We saw a lot of it under the last administration. As the Wall Street Journal editorial board recently wrote, "[T]he Iranian oil-export problem is really a Chinese import problem" because they are getting the cheap oil. President Trump is responding firmly to this new axis of evil.

Here in the West, President Trump is taking historic action against the killer cartels. He recently designated killer cartels as "foreign terrorists." With this designation, he can move more aggressively to deport illegal immigrant criminals who are members of these deadly groups.

The President of the United States is our Commander in Chief, and President Trump takes the role seriously. He is

reestablishing our military as the most lethal and intimidating force in the world. Under the Trump administration, recruitment has surged to its highest level in 15 years. This is important because history teaches us an important lesson. And what is that lesson? Weakness invites conflict. Strength deters war. When our military is prepared, America is strong and projects strength.

President Trump is also the best chance for peace between Russia and Ukraine. Both Russia and Ukraine must come to an agreement on a lasting cease-fire. President Trump and his administration are pursuing an end to the killing and to the bloodshed.

In the Middle East, peace and prosperity are also necessary. That begins with American support for Israel. The Senate should confirm Governor Mike Huckabee to be America's Ambassador to Israel.

Overall, President Trump is off to a strong start. His swift actions are making America safer and stronger. Fully restoring peace through strength, however, requires congressional action as well. In the Senate, Republicans are preparing legislation to do just that. Republicans will rebuild our military, improve military readiness, expand shipbuilding, and invest in the newest technologies to keep America safe, and that includes an Iron Dome for America. All of this makes our military more lethal.

Americans strongly support these policies. They know that this is the path toward safety and security. Republicans are going to bring back peace through strength. We will get 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. CRUZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SHEEHY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF AARON REITZ

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, it is a distinct honor for me to speak today on behalf of Aaron Reitz as he continues through the confirmation process to serve as the Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Legal Policy at the U.S. Department of Justice.

Throughout his career, whether in law, government, or on the battlefield, Aaron has earned the respect and the admiration of all who have had the privilege of working with him.

I have worked closely with Aaron day-to-day, and I can attest to his exceptional career, unrelenting commitment, and strong moral values. He is an ideal candidate for this position.

The Office of Legal Policy is integral to the Department of Justice. It is the cornerstone of the Department's most

significant policy initiatives and serves as a key driver of its legislative and programmatic agendas. OLP plays a critical role in facilitating the relationship between the executive and the legislative branches, particularly regarding legislation, regulations, policies, and judicial appointments.

Aaron possesses the vision, the experience, and the leadership needed to excel in this role, and I have no doubt that he will lead the office with the same dedication he has shown throughout his career.

But before diving into his professional credentials, it is important to highlight that Aaron is more than just an outstanding legal expert. He is a dedicated family man. He is blessed and fortunate to have his wonderful wife Meredith and four beautiful children. All of them have much to be proud of.

Allow me to share a few highlights from Aaron's distinguished career, which demonstrates why he is so well-qualified for the position.

Aaron graduated magna cum laude from Texas A&M University, where he earned the role of Regimental Commander at the Corps of Cadets. Following his education, Aaron served with distinction as an officer in the U.S. Marine Corps. During nearly 5 years of Active Duty, he deployed to Afghanistan's Helmand Province, where he worked alongside the Afghan National Army, leading logistics in one of the world's most challenging environments. He didn't merely oversee operations from behind a desk; he led from the front, ensuring mission success and safeguarding the lives of our troops in a combat zone.

Aaron then attended law school at the University of Texas, where he served as President of the Federalist Society's student chapter, and he also served as the editor in chief of the Texas Review of Law and Politics, and then he clerked at the Texas Supreme Court.

After completing his military service in law school, Aaron continued his leadership in the legal and public policy fields, working in private practice and later as deputy attorney general for legal strategy in the Office of the Attorney General of Texas. While serving in the Texas Attorney General's Office, Aaron was instrumental in shaping the State's most important legal and policy initiatives.

Beyond his professional accomplishments, Aaron stands out for his ability to build consensus, unite people, and navigate complex situations with poise and effectiveness.

I have witnessed this firsthand while he served as my chief of staff here in the Senate. Aaron's contributions have been indispensable in advancing my legislative agenda, which includes securing the U.S.-Mexico border, protecting children from online harm, and expanding our economy through investments in semiconductor manufacturing and tech infrastructure. He also

played a key role in the efforts to build critical bridges across the Rio Grande River, and he was instrumental in shepherding the Justice for Jocelyn Act. His deep involvement with my Judiciary Committee team will serve him well when he is confirmed for this position.

Now to the heart of why Aaron is the best candidate for Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Legal Policy. OLP is vital to the Department of Justice, as it shapes and executes the Department's most important priorities. Leading this office requires someone with experience managing complex, cross-departmental initiatives, and a proven ability to get things done at the highest level. That is Aaron.

Aaron has a demonstrated ability to lead and coordinate efforts that have meaningful, measurable impacts, whether in the courtroom, on Capitol Hill, or within a broader policy landscape. His extensive experience across legal, governmental, and political sectors, combined with his exceptional team-building skills, make him very well-qualified for this role.

But beyond his professional qualifications, what truly sets Aaron apart is the strength of his character. He is a man of faith, family, and unwavering principles. He stands firm in his commitment to doing what is right, even when faced with challenging circumstances. His integrity is evident in all his actions.

With his leadership, Aaron will be an invaluable partner to Attorney General Pam Bondi. I have every confidence that OLP will continue to advance the Department's most important policy priorities under his guidance, ensuring that they are grounded in justice, fairness, and the rule of law.

I strongly support Aaron Reitz's nomination. He is the right person for this critical role, and I am confident that he will bring the same dedication, leadership, and integrity to the Office of Legal Policy that he has demonstrated throughout his career.

I urge my colleagues to support his nomination, and I look forward to the outstanding work Aaron will continue to do in continued service to our Nation.

WAIVING QUORUM CALL

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to waive the mandatory quorum call with respect to the Reitz nomination.

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

VOTE ON BISHOP NOMINATION

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Bishop nomination?

Mrs. MURRAY. 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 executive clerk called the roll.