

expired or recalled drugs. When she was fired—simply on the basis of being a probationary employee—she was in the final stages of buying a house. Disabled veteran, doing work responsibly and well, about to buy a house—suddenly, she has no income.

Let me read a few more lines about her:

To make matters worse, the VA didn't provide her with a form required to file for unemployment benefits, and she had to withdraw from that home purchase. "Everything was going smoothly, like it was supposed to," she said, until the sudden termination left her feeling humiliated and lost. "Nobody knew anything. It was just heartbreaking." Cole's supervisors, again, tried to help her preserve her job to no avail.

Let's be clear: This administration's actions have a real lasting impact on veterans' care and benefits despite Secretary Collins' blatantly disingenuous claims that there have been none, there will be none. Elon Musk should know what those consequences will be, and Secretary Collins should be transparent with the administration and with us.

These heartbreaking and heartless cuts will destroy lives and livelihoods. VA Secretary Collins, Musk, and Trump are prioritizing a "fire first, analyze later" mindset and strategy at the expense of the very people they are supposed to serve—people who served and sacrificed for us: America's veterans. It is unconscionable. It is unwise and ineffective. It is immoral.

I will say this in closing: Nobody is claiming—certainly, I am not—that there isn't waste that we can eliminate, that fraud or abuse shouldn't be pursued. In fact, if this administration were serious about fraud and abuse and waste, they wouldn't have fired Mike Missal, the inspector general, whose service under both Democratic and Republican administrations has been exemplary.

He has been saluted and praised in Republican administrations, as well as Democratic, by my colleagues on the Republican side, as well as ours, but he was fired inexplicably, inconsistently with the goal of eliminating waste and fraud. It belies their claims and pretensions to want to eliminate abuse and fraud and waste to fire the watchdog who would call it out, investigate it, and refer it for prosecution as he has done saving tens of millions of dollars for taxpayers and benefits for veterans.

He has served both Republican and Democratic administrations, and there is nothing partisan about anything that I have said here, about the impact on veterans, the cruelty, and deeply heartbreaking consequences of these actions.

My Republican colleagues should join us when we begin next week with floor speeches and unanimous consent requests and the hearings—shadow hearings—that we will conduct and other actions that we will undertake in this call for accountability—a call for action.

Nothing partisan should deter them from joining us. This responsibility is

one that we share in this body to highlight and call out and call off the Musk-Trump disastrous and disgraceful cuts in benefits and healthcare for our veterans.

We are hearing from veterans, and again, I encourage my colleagues to hear more directly, immediately, personally from them. I invite Secretary Collins to join me in a townhall as soon as possible.

I invite him again, as I did in a letter recently, to appear on April 2 before a shadow hearing we will conduct in this Capitol. He can explain himself. He can tell me why I am wrong but, most important, he can answer to our Nation's veterans who deserve and need better from this administration.

America's veterans deserve nothing less than for every single Member in this body to call into question these damaging policies. They deserve nothing less than the gold standard in healthcare, as well as full and complete benefits of the PACT Act and in every other respect, the respect and responsibility that we have. To disrespect them is un-American.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

WAIVING QUORUM CALL

Mrs. BRITT. I ask unanimous consent to waive the mandatory quorum call with respect to the Faulkender nomination.

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

NOMINATION OF AARON REITZ

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, the Senate will soon vote on the nomination of Aaron Reitz, President Trump's nominee for Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Legal Policy.

Simply put, Mr. Reitz's nomination is a danger to the rule of law. At his confirmation hearing, I asked him a very simple question that should be a softball for any nominee seeking Senate confirmation.

When I asked him whether an elected official should be allowed to defy a Federal court order, Mr. Reitz said, "There is no hard and fast rule about whether in every instance a public official is bound by a court decision."

I was disgusted to hear these words come out of the mouth of a nominee aspiring to hold a key role at the Department of Justice.

Mr. Reitz's failure to unequivocally commit to following Federal court orders even prompted my colleague Senator KENNEDY to admonish Mr. Reitz, "Don't ever, ever, take the position that you're not going to follow the order of a federal court. Ever."

I couldn't agree more.

Despite that sage advice, Mr. Reitz repeated this equivocation in answers

to written questions, stating that, "Parties to litigation are bound by the lawful holdings of their respective court in most circumstances," but not all circumstances.

This administration has continued to undermine our system of checks and balances by pushing the boundaries of executive power, and, in turn, chipping away at the authority and legitimacy of the judicial branch.

Mr. Reitz has made clear his intent to aid the President in pursuing this agenda, regardless of whether it is in accordance with judicial orders.

But that is not my only concern with Aaron Reitz. He has attempted to hide his disturbing views on many topics, deleting approximately 4,000 social media posts. Nothing was off-limits in the posts the Judiciary Committee uncovered.

Reitz has condemned millions of Catholics and Christians who supported President Biden, writing that there was, "no excuse" for their vote.

He openly opposes the legality of same-sex marriage, calling the Obergefell decision, "anti-const[itutional]" and a "low point in SCOTUS history."

Mr. Reitz also has aligned himself with Matt Walsh, a self-proclaimed "theocratic fascist," who believes that, "the LGBT left indoctrinates and recruits children."

And despite the protections enshrined in the 14th Amendment, Mr. Reitz incorrectly wrote, "Friendly reminder that 'birthright citizenship' is not a thing."

Before Derek Chauvin was convicted of murdering George Floyd and despite the video footage of Chauvin kneeling on Mr. Floyd's neck for over 9 minutes, Mr. Reitz wrote, "No question in my mind that Chauvin is not guilty."

That is simply an offensive statement. Several Republican Members of the Senate rightfully spoke out about this horrific crime.

Even after Chauvin was convicted, Mr. Reitz called the jury's decision, "a bogus guilty verdict."

I guess it should come as no surprise that Mr. Reitz's disrespect for the finality of court orders is matched by his disrespect for the finality of a jury's verdict.

Mr. Reitz's online commentary demonstrates his penchant for fringe policy positions and extreme ideologies.

His failure to comply with Federal court orders should cause great concern for all of us who believe in our constitutional order, built on the foundation of three coequal branches of government.

Failing to unequivocally commit to following Federal court orders should be disqualifying for any nominee before this body.

Mr. Reitz is not fit for a role within the Department of Justice, particularly not one in which he will be charged with developing and implementing the Department's legal policy initiatives and vetting candidates for Federal judgeships.

I ask my colleagues to join me in opposing this nomination.

VOTE ON REITZ NOMINATION

Mrs. BRITT. I know of no further debate on the nomination.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

Hearing none, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Reitz 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 bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Mississippi (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Arizona (Mr. GALLEGRO) is necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 52, nays 46, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 147 Ex.]

YEAS—52

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

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
Duckworth	Murphy	Warnock
Durbin	Murray	Warren
Fetterman	Ossoff	Welch
Gillibrand	Padilla	Whitehouse
Hassan	Peters	Wyden
Heinrich	Reed	
Hickenlooper	Rosen	

NOT VOTING—2

Gallego Hyde-Smith

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BANKS). 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.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the

Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 51, Michael Faulkender, of Maryland, to be Deputy Secretary of the Treasury.

John Thune, Mike Crapo, Roger Marshall, Shelley Moore Capito, Tommy Tuberville, Jim Justice, James Lankford, John Barrasso, Markwayne Mullin, Tim Sheehy, Mike Rounds, Todd Young, Kevin Cramer, Ted Budd, Roger F. Wicker, Katie Boyd Britt, David McCormick.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Michael Faulkender, of Maryland, to be Deputy Secretary of the Treasury, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Mississippi (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Arizona (Mr. GALLEGRO) is necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 52, nays 46, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 148 Ex.]

YEAS—52

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

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
Duckworth	Murphy	Warnock
Durbin	Murray	Warren
Fetterman	Ossoff	Welch
Gillibrand	Padilla	Whitehouse
Hassan	Peters	Wyden
Heinrich	Reed	
Hickenlooper	Rosen	

NOT VOTING—2

Gallego Hyde-Smith

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 52, the nays are 46.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Michael Faulkender, of Maryland, to be Deputy Secretary of the Treasury.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

CONSUMER FINANCIAL PROTECTION BUREAU

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, the bill that Senate Republicans have brought to the floor today and which we will vote on sometime soon is the latest example of the "great betrayal" in action.

On the campaign trail, Candidate Donald Trump promised that he was going to help Americans deal with their pocketbook issues, kitchen table issues, and he said that on day one—day one—he was going to bring prices down; that he was going to bring down costs for American families. Well, costs are going up, and President Trump and Republicans are taking actions that will raise those costs on the American people even further, and today's bill is exhibit A.

I want to take a step back and put this bill that we are considering today in context. You know, one of the infuriating experiences that so many American consumers have is the mountain of junk fees they face. These are hidden fees that are sometimes in very fine print in contracts. They are all these fees that get added to their bills, where they really have no idea what additional value they are getting for those fees because often there is no additional value for that fee or that the additional value is minuscule in comparison to the fee they are being charged. So people pay these fees and grind their teeth and essentially get ripped off. We also see many predatory lending practices, where financial interests prey on those who are living paycheck to paycheck.

So, years ago, after the financial crisis of 2008, Congress created the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau—also known by its shorthand CFPB—to help protect American consumers from a whole range of predatory practices. Senator WARREN was one of the people who thought of establishing that important consumer protection Agency. Now she is the ranking Democrat on the Banking and Housing Committee, on which I am privileged to serve.

Since its creation, the CFPB has gone after all sorts of fraudsters, all sorts of con artists, all sorts of people who try to find different ways to cheat American consumers out of their hard-earned money. They have been successful, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. They have returned over \$21 billion to American consumers who have been cheated out of their hard-earned money. In other words, they brought lawsuits to go after these fraudsters or changed practices in order to make sure that people could keep more of their hard-earned money. That includes \$71 million that was returned to my constituents in the State of Maryland who were ripped off.

Along the way, the CFPB made some powerful enemies, and many Republicans have been trying to dismantle the CFPB for years. Now they have Elon Musk to help do their dirty work.