

11 countries, including Afghanistan—here is the part that is so terrifying—with no exception for Afghans and their families who qualify for the special immigrant visas or are awaiting evacuation. That is really unconscionable.

Although the Taliban leadership issued a so-called general amnesty for former officials in the U.S.-backed government more than 3 years ago, the reality is that the U.N. has reported what we knew would happen—at least 200 killings of former Afghan officials and members of the Afghan Army who were trained and equipped by the United States. The Taliban, of course, has also reneged on its pledge to uphold the rights of women, including allowing girls to attend school. Today, the situation that faces Afghan women and girls is literally no better, regrettably, than under the Taliban before the U.S. occupation.

The Trump administration's termination of USAID's assistance programs in more than 100 countries, including Afghanistan, without any meaningful review, has caused people everywhere to doubt that they can rely on the United States. We are putting our reputation in jeopardy.

President Trump and Secretary Rubio provided, literally, no credible explanation and justification, in clear violation of Congress's intent, with the destruction of these USAID Programs. But by abandoning thousands of Afghans who do face persecution if forced to return, we reinforce those doubts. And by doing so, we encourage those who have long seen the United States as a world leader and as a partner to look for more reliable partners elsewhere. That is bad for our national security.

President Trump's January 20 Executive order triggered a 90-day review of our Refugee Admissions Programs. In February, a Federal court did issue a nationwide preliminary injunction prohibiting the implementation of the order. But despite that, despite that court order, the Trump administration issued termination orders to refugee resettlement agencies in States around this country. Again, this is going to affect these folks who work for our government, our soldiers, our diplomats, and our intelligence officers. We owe them. There is no justification for us to abandon them.

I am really concerned about the administration's, what I see as an increasingly brazen flaunting of court orders. I think all of us in Congress should condemn any deviation from abiding by court orders by the administration.

I hope the administration's review of the refugee admissions is not another pretext review like we had supposedly of the USAID Programs. It cannot be an excuse to manufacture a false justification for abandoning the victims of our nation-building debacle. We have to take ownership of what it is we did.

We have to meet our commitments to people who helped us in our efforts in Afghanistan.

This must be an opportunity to expedite—expedite—the resettlement to the United States of these Afghan refugees who trusted in us and whose lives are very much at risk.

TARIFFS

Mr. President, it was a relief, I think, to all of us that the President announced that he was going to pause for 90 days these tariffs that have caused so much turmoil and havoc. It is only a pause, and it also continues tariffs with Canada and Mexico that continue to create enormous havoc for us in Vermont and, I think, for many States in the country as 34 of our States have as their major trading partner the country of Canada.

There is enormous back-and-forth in the car industry, as the Presiding Officer knows better than anyone that these tariffs are very detrimental to. What we saw in Vermont—in talking to our businesses, in talking to our farmers, in talking to folks who have utility bills at the end of every month and whose electricity comes from Canada, and in talking with folks who in the northern part of the State get their gasoline from Canada shipped down to Vermont to gas stations where they go to get it, and our home heating fuel and the disruption and the threat to businesses and the erosion of trust that had been built up for decades—centuries—between Vermont neighbors and Canadian neighbors—was unfathomable.

I am relieved that the President has paused the tariffs, but I am appalled at the manner in which the President and his economic advisers are proceeding without any coherent rhyme or reason or justification for these tariffs on Canada that hurt us so much.

I am going to urge that the administration back off on tariffs that serve no useful purpose but absolutely and directly and immediately are going to do so much harm to Vermont farmers, to Vermont manufacturers, and to Vermont utility customers.

We are struggling in Vermont—folks who work really hard to pay their bills—and the idea that, by Executive action, we would increase the costs of so many families and businesses is totally unjustified. My hope is that all of us here whose constituents face the same repercussions of these reckless tariffs will speak out on their behalf so that folks and businesses can have some security at the end of the month and are not going to have a big spike in their expenses.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, Donald Trump is trashing our economy.

First, Donald Trump imposed across-the-board tariffs. Then, just a few hours ago, he dropped those tariffs to 10 percent on everyone and moved the tariffs up to 125 percent on China, up from 105 percent yesterday. Now there is confusion. There is chaos. No one knows what the tariffs will be tomorrow or the next day or next week or next month.

But here is what we do know: Are prices still going up? Yes. Are businesses still wary about investing? Yes. Are millions of working people still worried about their jobs and millions of small businesses still worried about closing shop? Yes.

Right before Donald Trump declared that some of his tariffs were off again, he sent out a message to his billionaire buddies. He posted “THIS IS A GREAT TIME TO BUY!!!” Was that market manipulation? Was it corruption in plain sight? We need an independent investigation into market manipulation because Americans need to know whether President Trump or anyone in his administration manipulated the market to benefit their donors all while they are working for the American people and while small businesses and those working families are paying the price.

It is a disaster, but here is the thing: Republicans in Congress have a chance to stop him right now. If they do nothing, they, along with Trump, are responsible for the fallout. Congress could end this dangerous trade war right now by passing my bipartisan resolution with Senator RON WYDEN to turn off the fake emergency authority that Donald Trump is using to impose his worldwide and chaotic tariffs.

So I have a simple question for the Senate: Why aren't we passing this resolution this instant?

Let's take a step back and talk about what has happened since Trump imposed his illegal, across-the-board tariffs 1 week ago today. Americans' retirement accounts took a hit. Businesses started hiking prices, and many are preparing for layoffs. Consumer confidence hit its lowest point in years as millions of Americans wonder will they have a job in 3 months' time. Economists have said that if we continue down this path of uncertainty, recession is inevitable.

We have actually seen this before—in 2008 during the mortgage meltdown and in 2020, as we were hit by a once-in-a-century virus. But this time, there is no mortgage meltdown; there is no virus. No, the crisis is entirely the fault of one person: Donald Trump.

This might be the first time in history that the actions of a single man have destroyed so much economic value around the planet. If we do not reverse course, this catastrophic mistake will seriously hurt people, seriously hurt small businesses, and seriously hurt the United States' position in the world.

We all know what is happening. It isn't possible to turn on a television or check your news feed without seeing it. Every single elected Republican in Congress knows what these tariffs would mean for people—from farmers who are pleading for help as they brace for the trade war, to seniors who are on the verge of retiring and now having to scramble to figure out how they can work longer, to workers who don't know how many more paychecks they will get before being laid off.

I know there are people who say tariffs are always a bad idea. I don't agree. I have long argued that smart tariff

policy can be an important tool to help grow domestic industries, an important tool to help support good jobs, and an important tool to promote the development of critical supply chains here at home.

For three decades, politicians from both parties have worked together to cut bad trade deals—trade deals that sold out American workers and promoted offshoring. Entire communities across this country were hallowed out, and American families across this country were left in the wreckage.

We owe it to these communities, we owe it to these families to forge a new path forward on trade, one that invests in American workers and American industry. We owe it to these communities to integrate tariffs with other economic tools to encourage domestic production and good jobs right here in the United States of America. But everyone knows that the kinds of tariffs that Donald Trump is putting in place will not do that. They aren't strategic; they are just plain dumb.

It is widely reported that the math behind this brilliant tariff scheme looks exactly like it came from someone typing a bunch of basic questions into ChatGPT and using the resulting bogus numbers to slap tariffs on essentially every country in the world, including a group of islands whose only inhabitants are penguins. Plagiarizing an AI chatbot's idea of a rational tariff policy and using it then to blow up the world economy would make a very funny movie—if real people's livelihoods weren't at stake.

Trump's on-again, off-again, on-again, off-again, on-again, off-again tariffs are not encouraging businesses to develop plants in the United States. Instead, they have the opposite effect—they scare off investors.

Donald Trump's on-again, off-again tariffs won't bring back manufacturing jobs. Instead, companies are cutting manufacturing jobs, and factory productivity is declining across the country. These tariffs are job killers no matter the sector.

As much as Trump loves taking credit for investments that were announced before he took office, the reality is, layoffs are now at the highest they have been since the start of the pandemic and first-quarter hiring plans are at a decade-plus low.

Let me say that again. The tariffs are scaring off investors. They are not bringing back manufacturing jobs, and layoffs are on the rise.

That is a lot of bad news all at once, and believe it or not, there is more bad news. Donald Trump's tariffs will also be used as an excuse by companies to jack up prices and rip off American families.

The Chairman of the Federal Reserve said that Trump's tariffs will mean higher prices. Then he gave an example from the first term of the Trump administration when tariffs on washing machines led to companies hiking prices on washing machines. OK. We

understand that, but the damage didn't stop there. Those companies also hiked prices on dryers even though there were no tariffs on dryers. Why? Because they knew American consumers would just assume those prices also went up because of tariffs.

Now imagine what companies can get away with when the President is loudly yelling about putting 10 percent tariffs on everyone, everywhere, everything, all at once, and threatening to do more and at rates that make no sense, and he could change again at any moment. It is not just a killer for honest businesses; it is also going to be a field day for companies that want to juice their profits with just a little price gouging.

CEOs are already talking about it. Here are some quotes:

We have planned to raise prices to offset.

Another:

We will pass through that price.

Can they be any clearer? They are already telling us that they don't just pass along cost increases that they face; they are saying they will use tariffs to push prices higher and higher.

Right now, every economic indicator is flashing red. Every community around the country is ringing the alarm bell. People understand that if we do not put an end to this chaos once and for all, we are headed for an economic disaster.

As it turns out, even Senators are raising the alarm.

Senator JOHN KENNEDY said:

Tariffs are like whiskey: A little whiskey, under the right circumstances, can be refreshing—but too much whiskey, under the wrong circumstances, can make you drunk as a goat.

Go, JOHN.

Senator THOM TILLIS said:

Anyone who says there may be a little bit of pain before we get things right needs to talk to my farmers who are one crop away from bankruptcy.

Senator TED CRUZ said he was not “a fan of jacking up taxes on American consumers.”

Yes, no surprises here. These Republicans all know what is happening. They just refuse to do anything about it. They sit on their hands while millions of Americans across the country are sitting at home wondering when Republicans in Congress are going to step up and do something.

A few Senators have commented, but so far, we have seen no action—none—from Republican leadership. Republican Senate leadership knows how bad the tariff situation is, but it is just the same old cowering before Donald Trump.

Senate Majority Leader JOHN THUNE and Speaker MIKE JOHNSON could hold a vote immediately to shut off these tariffs and end the chaos. They could stand up to Trump and stand up for their constituents. They could demonstrate to the world that Congress has a role to play and can put some curbs on President Trump's tariffs by whim. But apparently Majority Leader THUNE

is in no hurry. He said earlier this week that he would just wait to see what is happening.

Senator MIKE JOHNSON has said:

We are going to give [Trump] the space necessary to do it and we'll see how it all develops . . . it's only been a week.

Yes, it has only been a week. And in that week, capital markets around the world have lost trillions of dollars in value, working people and seniors have seen their savings decimated, people have already started getting pink slips, prices are already going up. And THUNE and JOHNSON's own constituents are urging their Representatives and their Senators to fight back, but so far, they do nothing.

Farmers like Rodney Koch, who grows soybeans in Garretson, SD, are worried that tariffs “will hurt our pocketbooks.” Can Leader THUNE explain to farmers in his home State why he is sitting on his hands while Republicans put their livelihoods at risk?

Business owners in Louisiana say they are bracing “for price hikes from Trump tariffs.” Can Speaker JOHNSON explain to his constituents back home why he is sitting on his hands as their costs go through the roof?

Republican leadership knows how bad this is, but they do nothing. Normally, that would be it. There is nothing that the minority party, the Democrats, could do about it. But with Senator WYDEN's and my bipartisan resolution, Republicans cannot stop us. We can force a vote on the tariff question. Republicans cannot stop us from forcing a vote, but they can delay us, and that is what they are doing. Instead of passing a bill to save our economy, instead of reassuring both Americans and people around the world that there are some limits on what Donald Trump can do in terms of jerking tariffs up and down and sideways and on and off—instead of doing that, the Senate is about to vote to put a career Wall Street suit in charge of the SEC. But it is not just any Wall Streeter. This is a corporate guy, Paul Atkins, who actually has a track record on financial crashes.

The Republican nominee for Chairman of the SEC was a member of the SEC during the years leading up to the 2008 financial crisis. His track record in the runup to the crash was impeccable: Mr. Atkins sat on his hands—no acknowledgement that the crash was coming, no steps to avoid the crash, no push to help out families or small businesses once the crash hit. Instead, Mr. Atkins took votes while he was on the SEC that directly contributed to the crash.

Even today, despite all of the evidence about how loose regulations triggered a crisis that cost 10 million families their homes and put millions more out of work, Mr. Atkins has 20/0 hindsight about his mistakes. Apparently, he thinks that the only thing we did wrong in the runup to the 2008 crash was not to remove more rules from the giant banks so they could have loaded up even faster on more risk, taken

out of work, Mr. Atkins has 20/0 hindsight about his mistakes. Apparently, he thinks that the only thing we did wrong in the runup to the 2008 crash was not to remove more rules from the giant banks so they could have loaded up even faster on more risk, taken more profits, and then needed a bigger bailout.

Once he left government, Mr. Atkins moved to a long career helping billionaire scammers like Sam Bankman-Fried get even richer.

Getting Mr. Atkins confirmed instead of stopping the economic chaos—this is the priority for Republicans in Congress right now. Put another fox in charge of the henhouse while the whole farm could burn to the ground.

So that is the Republican plan: Ignore the economic chaos happening around us, confirm a guy who helped cause the last crash, and then go on vacation for 2 weeks. If the Republicans do that, it will be a month before Congress can vote to reverse the President's disastrous tariffs and demonstrate to the world that there are some limits on his ability to cause economic chaos.

The Republican approach is reckless, it is dangerous, and most of all, it is cowardly. Trillions of dollars in wealth evaporated last week. Who knows how much irreversible damage will be done to our economy in a month or in 90 days when Trump decides to put these tariffs back on, back off, back on, and back off. Does anyone want to find out? I certainly don't.

This kind of uncertainty is enormously damaging to our economy. In the meantime, all that happens is that CEOs continue to bow and scrape to Donald Trump at black-tie galas, hoping to secure loopholes for their own companies.

Congress has the tools to put a stop to this. We need to act now to stop the chaos. Senator WYDEN's and my bipartisan resolution would turn off the emergency, bogus declaration that Donald Trump is using. It would demonstrate that Congress is willing to stand up and say that Donald Trump will not have the magic wand to continue to turn tariffs on and off at whim. I urge my Republican colleagues to join us and to vote down the President's abuse of emergency authorities.

Republicans in Congress have a choice to make. They can continue to bow down to Donald Trump while he sabotages our economy, or they can stand up for the American people who elected them.

Every Democrat is ready to go. We are ready to vote to end this destructive tariff war, but we need Republicans to stand up and show some courage.

If Republicans don't step up and our economy falls off a cliff, we will know who is responsible. If Trump's tariff games of "on-again, off-again" crash our economy, we know which Republicans will be responsible. If Trump's tariff games lead to layoffs around the

country, we know which Republicans will be responsible. If Trump's tariff games force small businesses to close their doors, we know which Republicans will be responsible. If Trump's tariff games hurt our farmers, we know which Republicans will be responsible. If Trump's tariff games force retirees to have to get out and find work, we know which Republicans will be responsible.

We know who is responsible, and it is every single one of these cowards who will not take the blowtorch out of Donald Trump's hands. These Republican Senators understand that what is happening is not normal. They understand that we are in an extremely dangerous moment. They understand that if Congress does not act, Americans of every class, every race, every age, every religion, every region of the country, and every political party will suffer. This is the time for Republicans to act.

Donald Trump's friends at Mar-a-Lago may flatter him over candlelit dinners and tell him he is all powerful, but Donald Trump is not a King, and Congress is not powerless. We can act to stop him, and that is exactly what we should do.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. JUSTICE). The Senator from Massachusetts. Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The Senator from Washington.

TARIFFS

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I come here today to urge my colleagues to vote no on the nomination of Mark Meador to be the FTC Commissioner. But before I do that, I did want to take a moment and talk about today's actions that happened when the President created a 90-day pause on the tariffs, taking the temperature down a bit.

I definitely want to thank my House colleagues Representative BACON and GOTTHEIMER for introducing legislation similar to the Trade Review Act of 2025 that we have introduced here in the Senate.

And while we have seen America on a roller coaster the last couple of days, I think it also is a reminder that we need to continue to play this oversight role. If you want to have the ability not to have the roller coaster ride we have been on, the best way to do that is to make sure that Congress continues to play a role in this very important policy. So I appreciate all my colleagues, and I appreciate my House colleagues for their leadership.

NOMINATION OF MARK MEADOR

Mr. President, I wanted to take a minute to talk about why consumers

depend on the FTC: obviously, to protect them from scams and fraud, to make sure that markets are fair and competitive; and every day the FTC stands up for the American consumer by dealing with anti-competitive problems like the grocery mergers that we saw which were a big issue in the State of Washington. Those grocery mergers would have increased grocery prices.

They are also in charge of fighting for kids online, fighting scammers to prevent people from profiting off of our veterans, our elderly. They are also in charge of taking on the PBMs, the pharmacy benefit manager middlemen, who have driven up drug prices, including the cost of insulin. And they have challenged those who are using monopolistic powers to create other monopolistic, well, price rises, and, obviously, limiting consumers on their choice.

So Congress created the FTC 100 years ago to be that body of bipartisan experts, people who can create and operate independent of the whims of a President. A Commission that can answer to us by making sure that they are independent, and this is why this nomination has become so important.

The independent bipartisan structure of the Agency ensures that all viewpoints in making a decision—not just those of the President of the United States—are heard. And it means that as these Commissioners work overtime, they gain expertise in the issues of the day before the FTC.

And 90 years ago, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the law that affirmed that the FTC Commissioners should be protected and removed only for cause.

Since that ruling, the FTC has flourished as a consumer protection watchdog, independent of the influence of the President, until now.

On March 18, 2025, President Trump illegally fired the Democratic Commissioners Rebecca Slaughter and Alvaro Bedoya from the FTC Commission, leaving the Commission with only Republican Commissioners and destroying the Agency's longstanding independence.

It is clear that this administration doesn't want the watchdog that I would like to see protecting consumers. If he wants a merger to be approved or if he wants an investigation to be dropped, then you can threaten to fire Commissioners if they vote against your will.

And if you want to investigate a company owned by a political opponent or a corporate competitor, you just have to direct the FTC to do that investigation.

So this is why we need an FTC to be above this kind of action. We need an FTC that is a group of nominees, approved by this Congress, voted on by our colleagues, and that no matter who is in the White House or who controls Congress, we have FTC members.

Mr. Meador, at his hearing, declined to defend the FTC's need to remain independent. He also declined to address the Department of Justice's reversal on its position of a decades-old