

in order to increase their dominance in the market. By 2010, they had become the source of 85 percent of the global rare earth element supply and the source of 95 percent of the processed rare earth elements.

This is a storyline that has become all too familiar regarding a plethora of American industries that have been offshored to China and has done nothing to make us safer and more prosperous. In fact, the opposite is true; it has made us less safe and threatened our economy as well as our national security.

At this time, China is involved in what some might call old-fashioned mercantilism when it comes to these critical minerals. They will do anything to preserve their near-monopoly on processing these rare earth minerals that are vital to everything in modern life.

In my tour of the MP Materials factory, I learned that, basically, China will give away their product rather than have to compete on a level playing field, mainly to undermine any effort for us to establish an alternative processing operation here in the United States.

But the good news is that this rather grim picture does not have to be where the story ends. The Trump administration has made securing our supply chains for critical minerals a top priority, and I am one of their strongest partners in this effort.

American companies, with Texas presences like MP Materials, have been a critical part of that strategy, and it is a step in establishing a stable and secure alternative to China to supply these minerals to industries and manufacturers across our Nation.

In fact, MP Materials has recently halted exports of rare earth concentrate to China and accelerated their production in the United States.

But here is where I think most people miss the real story. Yes, there has been a lot written about critical minerals, including rare earth elements, but the focus is not so much on mining these essential elements or materials, it is actually processing them that is turning them into functional units. And China does about 90 percent of that in the world.

I am grateful to the President for recognizing the importance of this issue. Last week, he signed an Executive order on unleashing America's offshore critical minerals and resources, which directs the Secretary of Commerce to expedite the reviewing and permitting process to mine in deep seabeds.

In addition, the order directs the Interior Secretary and the Energy Secretary to work together to identify new partnership opportunities with the private sector and allied nations to continue developing these critical mineral capabilities.

This Executive order will dovetail with legislative efforts that we are working on here in the Senate. I have

introduced legislation that would address this issue called, unsurprisingly, the Critical Minerals Security Act. This legislation would require the administration and subsequent administrations to create a process to assist U.S. companies wishing to divest from critical mineral operations in a foreign company to identify a purchaser who is not an adversary.

With China as eager as ever to buy up all the critical mineral operations in neighboring countries, if an American investor is looking to sell their interests in critical minerals, my legislation would help them avoid selling their assets to a foreign adversary, particularly to China.

This legislation also directs the Secretary of the Interior to create a strategy to collaborate with our allies and partners to advance mining refining, separation, and processing technologies as well as sharing our intellectual property.

We know there is one thing that China hates to do: It is to play by the rules. They refuse to do so. They are absolutely ruthless in stealing American ideas and technology whenever they can. This legislation will help direct our allies and partners to get ahead of them by working together to share resources and intellectual property to develop and process these critical minerals.

It is no secret that China poses the greatest strategic threat to the United States and indeed to world peace. They are working in concert with other adversaries of the United States today to try to undermine the West, including the United States.

It is imperative for the United States to ensure that our supply chains for rare earth minerals are secure.

From iPhones that allow us to send and receive emails and text messages to cars that we drive to work or take our children to school, even the drones that now increasingly deliver our "snail mail," rare earth minerals are critical to modern life—again, very analogous to what advanced semiconductors proved to be in recent years.

President Trump has brought this issue to the forefront of our national conversation, and I am eager to take up that conversation and to work with my colleagues here on both sides of the Capitol, on both sides of the aisle, to deal with this critical vulnerability.

I look forward to working with him and all of our colleagues to help make America great again by ensuring that America, once again, leads the world in not just the mining but the refining and processing of these critical minerals.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION FIRST 100 DAYS

Mr. KING. Mr. President, almost 75 years ago, the junior Senator from Maine rose in this Chamber to deliver a speech from her heart about a crisis

then facing our country, a crisis not arising from a foreign adversary but from within, a crisis that threatened the values and ideals at the base of the American experiment.

Senator Margaret Chase Smith's "Declaration of Conscience" turned out to be one of the most important speeches of the 20th century and defined her for the ages as a person of extraordinary courage and principle. And here she is with her famous red rose that she always wore on her lapel.

Now, I should admit upfront that I worked for Candidate Bill Hathaway, who defeated her in the election of 1972. But she and I made it up years later when I was producing a documentary on her life for Maine PBS. In fact, as we began the project, I was so worried that she might resent my having worked for her opponent, so I sent her a letter confessing my role in her last campaign.

Her response was pure Margaret Smith:

Dear Angus King, it is perfectly alright with me that you once worked for Mr. Hathaway. Yours sincerely, Margaret Chase Smith.

Simple as that.

In working together on the documentary, she shared some fascinating background on this famous speech, including that she drafted it by hand at her kitchen table in her hometown of Skowhegan, ME, on Memorial Day weekend of 1950.

After returning to Washington a couple of days later, she steeled her resolve and headed to the Senate floor. As luck would have it, when she got to the trolley from the Russell Building, there next to her sat Senator Joe McCarthy, who was the subject of the speech.

"Why are you looking so serious, Margaret," he asked her.

"Because I'm on the way to make a speech, Joe, and you're not going to like it."

She told me that she was so nervous about the speech and the breach that it would make in her relationship to the then-powerful Senator McCarthy—this was the height of the Red Scare in the 1950s, remember—she told her chief aide, Bill Lewis, who was up in the Press Gallery, not to hand out the copies of the speech until she started speaking on the floor because she was afraid she might lose her nerve. But she went through with it, and the rest is quite literally history.

Here is how Margaret Chase Smith began that speech:

Mr. President, I would like to speak briefly and simply about a serious national condition. It is a national feeling of fear and frustration that could result in national suicide and the end of everything that we Americans hold dear. It is a condition that comes from the lack of effective leadership either in the legislative branch or the executive branch of our government.

Remember, this is Margaret Chase Smith. These are her words, 75 years ago.

She continued:

I think that it is high time for the United States Senate and its members to do some real soul searching and to weigh our consciences as to the manner in which we are performing our duty to the people of America and the manner in which we are using or abusing our individual powers and privileges.

Later in the speech, here is one of her conclusions:

It is high time that we stopped thinking politically as Republicans and Democrats about elections and started thinking patriotically as Americans about national security based on individual freedom.

I think that is very important, Mr. President.

She said:

It is high time that we stopped thinking politically as Republicans and Democrats and started thinking patriotically as Americans about national security based on individual freedom. It is high time that we all stopped being tools and victims of totalitarian techniques—techniques that, if continued here unchecked, will surely end what we have come to cherish as the American way of life.

Senator SMITH's speech had plenty of criticism for the Democratic administration at the time, but the real focus of her urgent plea to her colleagues was the actions of Senator Joseph McCarthy, whom she never mentioned by name in the speech, by the way. But Joseph McCarthy had embarked upon an anticommunist crusade in a manner that threatened the principles of free speech and the rule of law embedded in our values as a nation and in our Constitution. In other words, it wasn't McCarthy's anticommunism she objected to; it was the manner in which he carried it out.

I fear that we are at a similar moment in history. While today's serious national condition is not involving the actions of one of our colleagues, it does involve those of the President of the United States.

Echoing Senator SMITH, today's crisis should not be viewed as a partisan issue. This is not about Democrats or Republicans or immigration or tax policy or even the next set of elections. Today's crisis threatens the idea of America and the system of government that has sustained us for more than two centuries.

Again, this is not about the President's agenda, although, yes, I do disagree with most of it; it is about the manner in which he is pursuing it, which includes ignoring the Constitution and the rule of law. And it is this roughshod nonprocess that endangers all of us—all of us—his detractors and his supporters alike.

What is at stake is simple and, in fact, was the driving force behind the basic design of our Constitution: the grave danger to any society of a concentration of power in one set of hands—the concentration of power in one set of hands.

The paradox at the heart of the structure of any democratic government is that power is given to the government to protect and serve the people, but at the same time, the people

must be protected from that same power being used against them.

Madison put it clearly in the 51st Federalist:

But what is government itself—

Madison said—

but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men—

And, of course, it would now be men and women over men and women—

the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself.

A dependence on the people—

He was talking about elections—

is, no doubt, the primary control on the government; but experience has taught mankind the necessity of auxiliary precautions.

Precautions that go beyond regular elections. The most important of these "auxiliary precautions" is the explicit separation of powers between the Executive and the legislature, which is at the heart—at the heart, at the very heart—of our Constitution, better known as checks and balances.

My fear is this phrase "checks and balances" has become such a cliché that we don't recognize it as the fundamental premise of our constitutional system.

There is nothing new, by the way, about the recognition of the danger of concentrated power. The ancient Romans summed it up with a simple question: "Quis custodiet, ipsos custodes?" or "Who will guard the guardians?" How do we control the government that we have created to keep it from abusing the people?

Another way to define this danger is a universal principle of human nature: All power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

It is important to emphasize that the danger I am describing here isn't based upon institutional jealousy of Senators worrying about the President taking some of their power or a loss of the prerogatives of the Senate or the politics of Democrats and Republicans. It is about the violation of the very deliberate division of power between the legislature and the Executive, which is, as I said, at the heart of our Constitution. It is there for a reason: to see that the power is not concentrated in one set of hands. And this is the most important bulwark between our citizens and—let's call it what it is—tyranny.

Again, Madison warned us in no uncertain terms, this time in the 47th Federalist:

The accumulation of all powers, legislative, executive, and judiciary, in the same hands . . . may justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny.

Madison's word, "tyranny."

Later in the same essay:

There can be no liberty where the legislative and executive powers are united in the same person.

"There can be no liberty where the legislative and executive powers are united in the same person," and yet this "accumulation of all powers"—the term that Madison used—is exactly what is happening today before our very eyes. Although many in this body, unfortunately, seem determined to ignore it, deliberately ignore it, the evidence is everywhere: from the elimination of congressionally established Agencies to the withholding of appropriated funds—an appropriations bill, Mr. President, by the way, is a law; it is not a suggestion to the Executive about where he or she should spend money, it is a law to be observed—to issuing Executive orders purporting to be law in place of legislation, to sidestepping, if not ignoring, court orders.

This President is engaged in the most direct assault on the Constitution in our history, and we in this body, at least thus far, are inert and therefore complicit.

It is worth pausing for a moment to look at the terms of article II, which outlines the powers and responsibilities of the President—article II of the Constitution. At the outset, we have to remember that the Declaration of Independence was directed specifically at the depredations of the British King, and later, the Framers had recently come through a brutal 8-year war against that same King. It is clear that a monarchy was exactly what the Framers were trying to avoid in the structure of the new government, and it explains the limited powers granted to the President in article II.

So let's look at article II. In light of this antimonarchical intent, article II only gives the President 1½ unilateral powers. The unilateral power is the power to issue pardons. That is something the President can do without any check or balance. The half unilateral power is the role as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces in wartime, but even that is constrained by the reservation to the Congress of the power to declare war.

With these two exceptions, all the other powers in article II granted to the President—appointment of judges, Federal officials; making treaties with other countries; vetoing legislation—are all bounded in some respect by the requirement of congressional assent.

I want to repeat, article II is not a broad grant of authority to the President. It is anything but. It is a restriction on the powers of the President.

And here, I think, is the most important phrase in article II. The principal responsibility of the President is spelled out in the last paragraph of article II: The Chief Executive "shall take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed"—"shall take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed." It doesn't say only the laws he agrees with or that he has any power whatsoever to make laws. His job is to execute the laws passed by Congress without exception—a responsibility this President is spectacularly failing to meet,

to “take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed.”

While this is the most serious breach of our constitutional order, the administration has also taken a series of apparently unconnected actions which, taken together, spell out our rapid path toward one-man rule—or tyranny, as Madison would say.

In the style of the Declaration of Independence, here is a partial list—only, where the Declaration says “he,” it is referring to the King of England. “He” as used in my list refers to the President.

Here is the list:

He has enabled the random firing of personnel throughout the government without regard to the importance of the job or the qualifications of the individual, which has severely compromised the ability of the affected Agencies to carry out the purposes Congress intended—the very antithesis of faithfully executing the laws.

He has enabled the dismemberment of Agencies providing essential services to the American people, most particularly in the Social Security and Veterans’ Administrations, by people who literally don’t know what they are doing—again, in violation of his responsibility to faithfully execute the laws creating those Agencies and programs.

He has systematically—early in the administration—fired independent inspectors general throughout the government whose job it is to find fraud, corruption, and malfeasance in Agency programs, in clear violation of Federal law and apparent intent to govern without constraints.

He has used the power of the government to threaten, intimidate, and extort private law firms for the supposed offense of representing clients he doesn’t like—an exercise of governmental power nowhere found in the Constitution and a clear violation of the very structure of our legal system.

He has used the power of the government to threaten and intimidate former government officials based upon actions and statements with which he disagrees, thereby sending the message throughout the government that pleasing the President is more important than telling the truth.

Again, he has no such power over the Constitution, and the result of this abuse of his office is the opposite—the opposite—of faithfully executing the laws.

He has openly threatened media platforms, particularly television networks, with license revocation or other punishment for airing content he doesn’t like, in clear violation of the First Amendment, which is one of the fundamental bulwarks of our freedoms. For a President of the United States to threaten a media firm with revocation of their license or other kinds of punishment because they publish content he doesn’t like—that is the antithesis of the First Amendment.

By the way, the compromise of the free press has been a sign of incipient

despotism throughout history and right up to today.

He has used the power of the government, including the impoundment of congressionally appropriated funds and threatening tax-exempt status, to threaten and intimidate private universities in order to force them to adopt policies to his liking—again, a power found nowhere in the Constitution, nowhere in article II.

He has enabled a national program of arrest and deportation of individuals in this country with no due process whatsoever. And even when it is admitted that at least one such individual was sent to a foreign prison by mistake, he has refused to make any effort to return that person to his home, despite court orders—including a unanimous order of the United States Supreme Court—of him to do so.

This entire process is a violation of the 5th, 6th, 8th, and 14th Amendments. It certainly is not consistent with his obligation to faithfully execute the laws.

He has openly suggested the possibility of sending U.S. citizens to a foreign prison for undefined crimes, thereby placing them outside the reach of our criminal justice system, including the constitutionally guaranteed right to counsel.

He has abused the limited powers delegated to him by Congress in connection with tariffs and trade by declaring emergencies where none exist and singlehandedly plunging our economy into chaos and risk of inflation, unemployment, and possible recession—a perfect example of the dangers of one-man rule.

The Constitution specifically delegates to the Congress, in article I, section 8 clause 3, the power over trade and commerce among nations. Congress delegated that power to the President under certain limited circumstances, that of an emergency, not that the President can define an emergency however he wants.

I live in Maine. We are on the border of Canada. There is no emergency that justifies the imposition of tariffs with Canada. If he wants to propose a tariff against Canada or Britain or any other country, he should come here, because that is our responsibility. We should debate it; and chances are, we can come up with a more rational solution than the one that was presented to the country several weeks ago.

He has also attempted to cut off funds to a single State, my own, because he took personal umbrage at our Governor’s refusal to bend to his policy preference, which was inconsistent with the law of our State.

Our Governor’s position was not on the issue of trans athletes. It was on the issue of State and local control, which is the basic bedrock of our representative form of government.

Tellingly, during that exchange, he said something really amazing and revealing. The President of the United States said:

We are the law.

That is more fitting to a king than to a President. “We are the law.”

By the way, an Executive order is not law, despite what this President seems to think. An Executive order is not law. The Constitution does not give the power to the President to unilaterally decide what the law is. Again, his job is to faithfully execute the laws that are made here in this building.

This “we are the law” comment is a clear statement of an intent to govern as a sovereign without regard to the Constitution or the rule of law.

In a field that I have some specific knowledge of, he has compromised national security by dismantling those Agencies charged with defending our Nation against the clear and present danger of cyber attacks and firing many of the individuals—with no stated cause—who are best suited to mount that defense.

He has further compromised national security by alienating our allies with his unlawful and indiscriminate imposition of tariffs, which has severely undermined confidence in our country, again, acting far in excess of the limited power over trade delegated by Congress.

I have served for the past 12 years on the Intelligence and Armed Services Committees, and I have come to realize that our asymmetric advantage in the world is allies. China has customers. We have allies. To alienate our allies without good reason, with no emergency, with no consultation with Congress, with no consultation with the Foreign Affairs Committee, with no consultation with much of anybody, that I can tell, is a serious compromise of our national security, both in terms of our intelligence capability but also who will come to our aid in a time of trouble.

This is not a complete list. It does, though, present a disturbing and dangerous pattern. This President is attempting to govern as a monarch, unbound by constitutional restraint or by law, not as a President subject to the constraints of the Constitution or the rule of law.

Again, this isn’t about his policies, whether they be mass deportation or trans athletes, trade and tariffs, or the appropriate levels of staffing of the Federal Government. Reasonable people can discuss those, work out policies, and find what the law should be. It is not unilaterally in the hands of the President to make those decisions.

No. The issue before us we can no longer avoid is the manner in which he is pursuing those policies, which violates both the spirit and expressed terms of our founding document.

Again, this isn’t about observing the boundaries prescribed by the Constitution just to check the appropriate boxes. This is about preserving boundaries to protect ourselves and our people from the abuse that inevitably—invariably—flows from the unbridled concentration of power.

To those who like the policies of the President and are, therefore, willing to ignore the constitutional means of effectuating them, I and history can only say: Watch out. Today, the target may be the undocumented or Federal workers, but tomorrow, perhaps, under a different king President, could be you.

Once this power is concentrated into one set of hands, it is going to be very difficult to get it back, and it could turn that power against anybody who displeases the monarch.

So what can we do? What are the guardrails? How can we buttress? It is important. The first guardrail is the Congress itself, the part of our government actually empowered to define policy, appropriate funds, oversee the actions of the Executive. But, unfortunately, the majority in Congress has thus far wholly abdicated these fundamental responsibilities and thus far shown little inclination to even recognize the danger, let alone take action to confront it.

We could reclaim our power, however, by pulling back the trade authority—there is a bill to do that—instituting vigorous oversight of the activities of DOGE to determine to what extent their actions compromise the congressional intent, or holding the President's nominees and his prized tax bill until he seizes his attempts to make policy unilaterally, including compounding Congressionally authorized and appropriated funds.

You know, do our job. That is the simple solution. Do our job.

The second guardrail is the courts, which are generally holding up their end of the constitutional bargain. But they read the press just as we do, and they need to know we are ready to re-assume our powers and responsibilities. As easy as it may be for us to rely entirely on the courts to save us, that is a copout. Reclaiming power must be a joint project.

The final guardrail is the people, who more and more are speaking up in rallies, in correspondence with us, in town meetings, and in conversations at the grocery store. But their only real power, the midterm elections, don't happen for 19 months. And in the meantime, the burden falls back on us.

I don't think we have 19 months, given what has happened in the first 100 days. We need to act now before the awesome power of the United States Government is consolidated into one set of hands. When that happens, there may be no going back.

No. We here in this body can't escape the responsibility of our oath. Each of us swore, mind you, to "support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic" and that we would "bear true faith and allegiance to the same." The "same" being the Constitution.

Clearly, the Framers knew that someday, there might be domestic enemies of the Constitution and made it our literally sacred obligation to defend the Constitution from those domestic enemies.

I should mention that Joe McCarthy primaried Senator Margaret Chase Smith a few years after her speech as punishment to standing up to him, but to no avail. She crushed her opposition and won going away.

With thanks to Margaret Chase Smith for her example and inspiration, this is my "Declaration of Conscience."

I don't relish this moment, but I feel I have no choice but to call out the clear implications and dangers of what is happening—what is happening day by day—before our eyes.

To do otherwise, to keep silent, would be to compromise what I believed about our country since my first civics class in high school and at about the same time when I watched my dad risk his career to fight for justice and the rule of law.

So here I stand.

Abraham Lincoln came to the Congress in the midst of the Civil War at a time when our forebearers—like us—were reluctant to face the responsibilities that had been thrust upon them. At that critical moment, this is what Abraham Lincoln said:

Fellow-citizens, we cannot escape history. We of this Congress and this Administration, will be remembered in spite of ourselves. No personal significance, or insignificance, can spare one or another of us. The fiery trial through which we pass, will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation.

"The fiery trial through which we pass, will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation."

Mr. President, I deeply hope that in the midst of our fiery trial, we will choose honor and the Constitution.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, my colleagues, you are going to hear a lot of stories about the first 100 days of President Trump's second Presidency, and, indeed, there are a lot of stories.

There is a story of incompetence. We are dealing with multiple measles outbreaks all across the country.

There is a story about abdicating our responsibility to lead around the world. Vladimir Putin is laughing at us as Trump goes about the business of handing Ukraine to a brutal Kremlin dictator.

There is a story of transferring wealth from the poor and the middle class, through massive cuts to Medicaid, to the very, very wealthy, who are asking for another massive tax cut.

But I would argue that the most important story to tell is a story of corruption—a story of mind-blowing, massive, scalable corruption. That story is important because we are watching the theft of taxpayer money by the decision of the Republican Party to look the other way as Donald Trump essentially monetizes, at scale, the White House and the powers given to him by the Constitution and the American people in order to enrich himself and his friends.

And if we don't tell this story and if we don't mount a national, bipartisan, apolitical resistance to this thievery, to this corruption, and it becomes normalized as just a part of doing business in America, a normal facet of residence in the White House, then shame on us because our democracy will not survive this level of corruption, graft, and graft.

So I am going to try to tell the story really quickly. I have got two charts, and this is hard to read. These words are really small because, you know, over the course of 100 days, there are 40, 50, 60 different individual acts of precedent-breaking corruption.

And that is intentional, because what President Trump is trying to do is engage in so much public corruption that you just become normalized to it, that you stop paying attention to the corruption because is it—can it be—corruption if it is just playing out in public? He is trying to make you think that this stuff happens all the time behind the scenes, and, now, all that is different is that you are seeing it publicly.

But that is not true. This is not, actually, how government works, and I refuse to accept that, just because the corruption is happening in public, in front of the cameras for everybody to see, we should accept it.

OK, I am going to try to do this: I am going to try to do this as quickly as possible. I am just going to highlight for you maybe the 40 most egregious examples of corruption in the first 100 days, but this is just the tip of the iceberg.

So, on January 6—this is before Trump is even sworn in—Amazon, which has a ton of business before the incoming Trump White House, pays \$40 million to the Trump family to license a documentary, a series, about Melania Trump—just a cash payment from a company that has huge interests before the incoming White House to the Trump family.

On January 17, a few days before Trump is sworn in, maybe the most corrupt act in the history of the White House: This is the creation of the Trump meme coin. This is just a backdoor way for anybody with business before the Trump administration to send him millions of dollars in total secret.

Trump doesn't disclose who buys the coin. He launders his income from the coin through an unregulated Chinese exchange. He promotes the coin on his social media feeds.

In the first minute of trading, one buyer—and what we know is, this was likely a Chinese individual—purchases 6 million coins, sending the price through the roof and immediately making a ton of money for Trump, who makes money off of every transaction. Trump knows who this person is, no doubt, but American citizens do not.

All right, on January 20, he is now sworn in, and he fulfills a campaign promise to the oil and gas industry. There is a report from the campaign

that said they came down to Mar-a-Lago, I think, and said: We will give you a billion dollars in campaign contributions.

This is not me alleging this. This is an open report.

The oil and gas industry says: We will give you a billion dollars in campaign contributions if you do what we want when you are sworn in.

And the day he is sworn in, Trump issues an Executive order gutting environmental rules so that the oil and gas industry can start making bigger amounts of money.

On January 25, Trump eliminates the inspectors general, the ethics officials in government, and whistleblower offices. It is a late-night purge; so you know it is fishy. On January 25, 17 inspectors general get fired, clearing the way for the President to engage in even more corruption—because that is what the inspectors general do: They sit in these Agencies, and they look for corruption.

Now, the inspectors general are gone. They are just gone. But that is not good enough because, on the same day, Trump fires the head of the Office of Special Counsel. Why would you do that? Well, that Office is an investigative and prosecutorial Office that works to end government and political corruption and protects government employees who become whistleblowers. That office is gone now, along with all of the whistleblowers.

Two days later, Trump illegally fires NLRB member Gwynne Wilcox. This effectively shuts down—illegally—the NLRB for a period of time. Why is that important? Because the guys who are standing behind Donald Trump on Inauguration Day, people like Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos, are being investigated at the moment by the NLRB for massive workplace violations. Now the NLRB is shut down—a big gift to the people who financed Donald Trump's inauguration and stood behind him to give him political endorsement and cover on his Inauguration Day.

On January 31, a trend begins. Enforcement actions are paused against Trump loyalists.

This is Representative ANDY OGLES from Tennessee. He was being investigated for illegal or potentially illegal loans made to his 2022 campaign. But right after Representative OGLES introduces a bill to amend the Constitution to allow Trump to serve for a third term, what happens? Trump makes the investigation go away. As you will see, Trump's justice system will often look the other way if you cheat or steal but you are a friend of Donald Trump's.

At the same time, another of Trump's friends, his IRS nominee, Billy Long, gets his donors—almost all of them have direct interest before the IRS—to pay off his six-figure campaign debt. It is a fabulously corrupt thing to do, but it is just all normal now. So when Trump is showing you the way, then the folks who work for him follow suit.

All right. We will jump to February now, February 4. We are into, what, week 2 of the Trump White House. Trump hauls the PGA and the Saudi Government into the White House to broker an agreement between the two rival golf leagues so that Trump can make more money hosting golf tournaments. He is in business with one of these entities, the Saudi-owned LIV league.

In a normal world, the President of the United States wouldn't be in business with any foreign government, but the President is. And not only is that OK, but it is also apparently OK for him to bring the golf league that he is in business with into the White House and pressure the other golf league, the rival golf league, to cut a deal. And guess what happens? The PGA, which had long said they were not going to host events at Trump's courses, after being hauled into the White House, looking the President of the United States in the eye—somebody they clearly have to do business with—they announce that they are going to start allowing their tournaments to be held at Trump courses—big benefit to Donald Trump's personal bottom line.

On February 6, 2 days later, Trump ends the criminal enforcement of the Foreign Agents Registration Act. Do you know what this is? You should. It requires people who are being paid by foreign governments to register. It is no longer going to be enforced. So now members of the Trump administration can get backdoor payments from foreign governments, and nobody is going to enforce the law.

This isn't theoretical. There were people who got arrested for doing this exact same thing—getting paid by foreign governments while working for the Trump administration in term one. He wants to make sure it is not a problem in term two, so he pauses enforcement of the actual act.

Four days later, Trump eliminates the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. This is just a magnificent present to all of his billionaire enablers because this is the Agency that stops big businesses—banks, other financial firms—from ripping off consumers, and now it is just shut down.

The same day, DOJ drops charges against Eric Adams in a mind-blowingly public and brazen quid pro quo. Adams says he will pledge loyalty to Trump. He is going to support Trump's political priorities in New York City. Trump drops the corruption charges against Adams.

Just like the Ogles case, the door is now wide open to engage in corruption or criminality as long as you support Donald Trump.

The thing that makes this one so egregious is that Adams and the White House go on TV to announce the corrupt deal, and they don't hide it. They just say that Adams is now supporting Donald Trump, and we are now going to drop the charges against him. And everybody gets the message: There is a

lot of stuff I can get away with as a corrupt official as long as I am in bed politically with Donald Trump.

On the same day, February 10, DOJ pauses enforcement of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. This is the law that stops American companies from bribing foreign governments in order to get business. On February 10, Trump suspends enforcement of an antibribery statute, paving the way for his friends in corporate America to start bribing foreign governments again.

Two days later, the State Department forecasts that they are going to dramatically upscale the amount of money that they are going to send to Tesla. This is the first time that Elon Musk shows up in this story. By February 12, Elon Musk is pretty well embedded in the White House, and, guess what, the State Department is now going to spend \$400 million for armored Teslas—its largest expected contract in the upcoming year.

On February 12, the same day, Musk infiltrates the Department of Labor and OSHA, giving him exclusive, secret access to labor law violation data against him and his competitors. It is unethical and corrupt, but this stuff is happening every single day.

A few days later, on February 15 and 16, Musk now starts really testing the limits of what his boss will let him get away with. He fires a specific set of regulators at the FDA that are reviewing one of his medical products, Neuralink. The message is clear: You got to do right by my applications or you risk getting the ax too.

Three days later, on February 19, Trump's new U.S. attorney for Washington, DC, Ed Martin, starts to use his government power to harass Trump's critics. He launches something called Operation Whirlwind, and he is pretty unapologetic about the fact that this is going to be an enforcement operation against anybody who just seeks to get in the way of DOGE. He doesn't say it is going after people who are acting illegally; he says anybody who tries to stop or protest or harass DOGE's work is now going to be the subject of Operation Whirlwind. He starts trolling critics of DOGE online. The U.S. attorney for DC is now just trolling DOGE critics online, obviously threatening criminal enforcement.

See what is happening here? We are 30 days into the administration, and everybody in Trump's world, including the supposedly independent U.S. attorneys, are getting the message that it is now part of your job if you work for Trump to use your government powers to either enrich yourself or Trump or to help Trump politically.

On February 21, 2 days later, the FCC drops a major investigation into a company called Robinhood. Why does this matter? You guessed it—this firm donated \$2 million to Trump's inauguration fund. Thirty days later, the SEC drops an investigation into that firm. Put a pin in that because you are going to hear stories like it over and over again.

Throughout February, we watched the rich guys that are surrounding Trump come up with new ways to monetize their positions.

Kash Patel is a perfect example. He is the nominee to head the FBI—maybe the most important independent Bureau of the Federal Government—and while he is going through that process, he is selling merchandise online, ranging from T-shirts to playing cards, with the proceeds supposedly going to whistleblowers' education and defamation cases.

On February 26, news breaks that the FAA is considering giving a \$2.4 billion contract to Elon Musk's Starlink. But it is not like a regular contract that is up for bid; it is a contract that was already awarded to one of Musk's competitors, Verizon, and word leaks that the White House is thinking of just ripping the contract away from Verizon because Verizon is not a political supporter of Donald Trump in the way that Elon Musk is, and just giving it to Elon Musk.

Now, that doesn't happen as reported. The contract has not been canceled yet. But there are regular reports of the administration still relentlessly attacking Verizon in a clear attempt to try to undermine their contract.

On February 27, the next day, Trump drops a lawsuit against Capital One. Why does this matter? Capitol One donated \$1 million to Trump's inauguration fund.

It is now just kind of automatic—you donate a big amount of money to Trump's inauguration, and you can ask him for something.

We are not done. That same day, the FCC drops a lawsuit against Coinbase. You have the story now. Coinbase donated \$1 million to Trump's inauguration fund. They are now told that it is OK to keep cheating consumers.

We are not done. On February 28, a day later, the DOJ announces that it would drop a complaint against SpaceX, Elon Musk's SpaceX, for labor discrimination.

Elon is like: Wait a second. All of these other big donors to your inauguration are getting out of jail free. I want my get-out-of-jail-free card as well.

He gets it from DOJ.

We are now into March. On March 1, a report breaks—this is maybe second to Coinbase, the most stunning act of corruption—on March 1, word breaks that Trump is selling meetings at Mar-a-Lago. On at least one occasion, Trump has charged guests \$1 million to dine with him at Mar-a-Lago.

According to the same report, business leaders can secure a one-on-one meeting with the President of the United States for a \$5 million payment to Donald Trump. If you were mayor of a medium-sized town and it was reported that you were selling meetings for like \$200, you would be arrested. You would be run out of town. But not Donald Trump. He is selling meetings for \$5 million, according to this report,

and because the corruption in this White House is daily and normal, he gets away with it.

On March 2, Trump launches the crypto reserve fund. This is going to involve government-taxpayer dollars purchasing and holding a variety of digital assets in a strategic reserve fund—a move that definitely inflates and protects Trump's investment portfolio, by now, you understand, very heavily dependent on crypto assets.

Now, this normally wouldn't be a problem because normally when somebody takes a high position like President or Governor or mayor, they divest from their own personal assets or they put it all in a blind fund. Trump does none of that. He is controlling his own assets and his family is controlling their own assets while he makes policy that benefits himself and his family financially.

On March 3, a really curious thing: DOJ intervenes in an obscure but open-and-shut 2020 Colorado elections case. This is the case of Tina Peters, who tampered with voting machines on Trump's behalf in Mesa County, CO. She was convicted by a jury of her peers, open and shut, but because Peters is a MAGA loyalist, now DOJ, on March 3, says it is going to step in and review the case because there are concerns about how it was prosecuted. This is just President Trump again clearly shielding those that violated the law to help him from consequences.

Same thing, different day—no, not even a different day. This is actually still March 3. Yuga Labs, a blockchain company, donated \$100,000 to Trump's inauguration fund. They now get in line. They get what everybody else is getting. The SEC closes an ongoing investigation into the company.

On March 4, DOGE lays off thousands of IRS employees. This is bad for a lot of reasons, but it certainly helps Trump's Mar-a-Lago friends because the IRS now cannot enforce the law against the big giant tax cheats in the ways that it could have when it had those personnel on the books. Mar-a-Lago is celebrating.

On March 4, the same day, word breaks that the Commerce Department is considering changes to a very specific rural broadband program and who is eligible. Why? Because Elon Musk wants to dominate that program. Under the program's original rules, Starlink was kind of capped at \$4.1 billion. This curious change now will allow Elon Musk's company Starlink to receive between \$10 billion and \$20 billion from the rural broadband program.

This is like a broken record, but 6 days later, the CFPB, which is basically shut down but exists in name only, drops a lawsuit against Bank of America and J.P. Morgan. Bank of America donated \$500,000 to the inauguration, and J.P. Morgan donated \$1 million to the inauguration.

On March 11, a day later, Trump and Musk hold this now very well-known

advertisement for Tesla on the White House lawn. This is just taxpayer dollars used to support the personnel at the White House and the White House being used to sell cars for Elon Musk. And the message, again, is pretty simple here: If you are loyal to me and you pay any kind of price for your loyalty to me, I will use government resources to help get you out of trouble, even including free advertising.

On March 19—we are 8 days later—the GEO Group donated \$500,000 to Trump's inauguration fund. This is a private prison company. The NLRB drops its investigation into this company.

I mean, it is really getting disgusting at this point. I mean, I don't know that there is anybody left that made a major donation to the inauguration fund that has not gotten their favor from Donald Trump.

On March 24, the Treasury Department guts something called the Corporate Transparency Act. This is the regulation that requires businesses to reveal their true owners to the government. These new rules now make it easier for billionaires to hide money, to avoid taxes, to engage in corruption—less accountability for corporations.

On March 25, a day later, the SEC reduces from \$125 million to \$50 million an existing fine. So this has already been litigated. This company, Ripple, a blockchain-based digital payment company, has been fined. Trump comes in and reduces the fine from \$125 million to \$50 million.

You know the story by now. These guys made a big investment in the inauguration. Most of these companies that got a "get out of jail free" or had their investigations terminated were giving \$500,000 or \$1 million. Ripple made sure they got it right. They made a \$5 million donation to Trump's inaugural fund, and they got their fine reduced by \$75 million.

On March 28, Trump pardons the founder of Nikola autos, one of his campaign megadonors. Again, this is a pardon for one of his major campaign contributors. When asked about the pardon, Trump said: They say the thing they did was wrong, but he was one of the first people who supported me for President.

He just tells you what he did. He said: Yes, they said what he did was wrong. He did something that was probably pretty wrong, but he supported me for President. So I am giving him a pardon.

I am not saying there hasn't been a lot of really bad stuff that has happened in the pardon program under Democratic and Republican Presidents, but let's just name it what Donald Trump named it.

April 8—we are into April. Trump issues an Executive order to expand coal mining, part of his downpayment on the promise he made to those oil executives. Shares of the company owned by Joseph Craft, the billionaire coal

magnate who helped lead those Trump fundraising efforts during the Presidential campaign, immediately shoot up.

On April 9, this really curious timeline of events plays out, which Trump posts on his social media:

THIS IS A GREAT TIME TO BUY!!!

A lot of his followers comply. They make investments in the market. There are reports and speculation that many of his inner circle might have done the same thing. A couple of hours later, he announces he is pausing most of his tariffs. The market shoots up. People who followed his directions online make a lot of money, and, potentially, other people who had access to that insider information might have made a lot of money as well.

On April 17, Musk steers billions of taxpayer dollars to something called the Golden Dome. Reuters, on April 17, reports that Elon Musk's rocket and satellite company, SpaceX, has emerged as the frontrunner to develop Trump's proposed Golden Dome. This is an ill-defined, technologically unproven defense system. It supposedly has a pricetag of hundreds of billions of dollars—money that now looks as if it will be funneled directly to Elon Musk. At this point, it is head-shaking.

On April 23—now he can do anything he wants. It is like he has just blown the lid off of any expectations about what a President can and cannot do to enrich himself. On April 23, a message appears on the homepage of the website for Trump's meme coin, declaring the top 220 meme coin holders would be invited for an exclusive dinner with Trump, and the top 25 coin holders—these are private investors in Donald Trump's financial empire—would get a "Special VIP Tour" of the White House.

After the message went up, the price of Trump's coin jumped by more than 50 percent. In the 2 days following the announcement of the "Special VIP Tour" in the "People's House"—the White House—Trump and his allies made nearly \$1 million in trading fees alone. They are just selling access to the White House out in the open.

On April 26, Trump's family—this is just last weekend—announces the launch of a private club called the Executive Branch, a new private club in Washington. The initiation fee is around a half-million dollars. It is advertised as a place where you can hold secret audiences with the Trump administration, as long as you pay Donald Trump's family and their financial backers over \$500,000 in membership fees. It has apparently already sold out.

This is not normal. None of this is normal. This is outlandish. This is illegal. This is unconstitutional, brazen corruption, and this is only the first 100 days.

I just detailed 40 instances of mind-blowing corruption in just 40 days, capped off by an attempt to just sell access to the White House to people

who put money in the pockets of Donald Trump's personal businesses.

Donald Trump wants to numb this country into believing that this is just how government works, that he is owed this, that every President is owed this—that the government has always been corrupt, and he is just doing it out in the open.

This is not how government works. This has been the story of his first 100 days, but it is our choice as a nation to allow it to be the story of the rest of his term. We need to expose what he is doing. We need to rally everybody, from the left to the right. Nobody in this country—whether you are a hardened conservative or a hardened progressive—should root for the President of the United States to be enriching himself off of this position. We need to rally this Nation against this corruption and bring it to an end because if Donald Trump gets what he wants and we just start allowing our government's leaders to openly steal from us during the first 100 days or for the rest of his term, then, I am telling you, American democracy is not going to survive.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CURTIS). The Senator from Idaho.

NOMINATIONS OF THOMAS BARRACK AND TILMAN FERTITTA

Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, on a more credible note, I hope, I am here to speak on two noms that we have coming up. There is going to be a vote on confirmation of Thomas Barrack to be Ambassador for Türkiye and a vote on Tilman Fertitta for the nomination to be Ambassador for Italy.

I want to speak first to the nomination of Thomas Barrack for Ambassador to Türkiye. As you know—as everyone knows—Türkiye is a critical U.S. and NATO ally. I use that word ally judiciously. They have been the recalcitrant ally, from time to time, lately and have been difficult. Nonetheless, we have gotten through those things, but it has been far from lock-step with America in supporting our mutual interests.

While Türkiye hosts NATO and American forces and has supported efforts toward peace in Ukraine, it has troubling—troubling—ties to Russia and Hamas. Türkiye also has a difficult track record on human rights and has repressed dissent both in and outside of its borders.

Mr. Barrack is the right man to tackle this challenging post. He will help President Trump and Secretary Rubio protect national security interests from the many threats we face. I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting the confirmation of Thomas Barrack.

Next, I want to move to the nomination of Tillman Fertitta for Ambassador to Italy.

Italy remains a close ally, an important partner in Europe, and is a special place for a lot of Americans. While there are deep cultural ties, there re-

main a number of areas where significant improvement is needed.

On trade, U.S. producers have a hard time getting access to the Italian market, in part because of EU regulations—certainly, not the fault of Italy. But, nonetheless, the difficulty is there. There are also domestic industries that find creative barriers to keep U.S. products out.

In the security space, Italy remains below NATO's 2 percent spending requirement. This is really hard to understand, based on both the challenges Putin has created for European security but also due to the substantial security threats Italy faces from the Mediterranean and from North Africa.

I am confident that Mr. Fertitta will help address these issues and ensure the U.S.-Italian relationship only continues to grow stronger.

I encourage my colleagues to support his nomination. I know this nomination vote is going to be a bipartisan vote, and there are certainly Democrats that feel very strongly about Mr. Fertitta for good reason. He is a good man. He deserves the vote. I hope everyone will join us in voting for this confirmation.

I yield the floor.

WAIVING QUORUM CALL

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

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

VOTE ON BARRACK NOMINATION

Mr. RISCH. I ask unanimous consent that we move immediately to the vote on the two nominations.

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

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

Mr. RISCH. 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 legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Colorado (Mr. HICKENLOOPER), the Senator from Maine (Mr. KING), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) are necessarily absent.

The result was announced—60 yeas, 36 nays, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 219 Ex.]

YEAS—60

Banks	Cotton	Hawley
Barrasso	Cramer	Hoeven
Bennet	Crapo	Husted
Blackburn	Cruz	Hyde-Smith
Boozman	Curtis	Johnson
Britt	Daines	Justice
Budd	Ernst	Kennedy
Capito	Fischer	Klobuchar
Cassidy	Graham	Lankford
Collins	Grassley	Lee
Coons	Hagerty	Lummis
Cornyn	Hassan	Marshall