

by this young lady who brought her little girl with her, her 5-year-old little girl with her.

Here is what she said:

Cuts to medical research are not just numbers on a spreadsheet—they are stolen chances, unfinished stories, and futures left unrealized.

I plead with my Republican colleagues: Break your silence. Let us work together to ensure the chances for medical research are not stolen. These stories should not be left unfinished, and those futures should be realized. Let us protect medical research together. Medical disease doesn't care what your party is. It strikes at any and every family in America. Let's stand up for these families and their kids.

I yield the floor.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BRITT). The Democratic leader is recognized.

#### TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. SCHUMER. So just a few moments ago, I joined with my Senate Democratic colleagues to stand with a group of small business owners who are living every day—every day—with the wreckage of Donald Trump's economic agenda.

And let me tell you, these small business owners are not partisans—some of them support the President. Many of the business owners I stood with in New York support the President; but right now, all of them are watching their livelihoods go up in smoke.

Donald Trump's reckless trade war is economic arson, and it is Main Street that is getting scorched.

In a few weeks, Donald Trump's tariff tax has jackked up prices, smashed supply chains, and forced small shops to make impossible choices: raise costs on their customers, lay off workers, or shut their doors for good—which some, unfortunately, are doing. While Trump's billionaire buddies get private meetings to go beg for exemptions, America's small business owners are left out in the cold—forgotten, ignored. They don't have Donald Trump's phone number—nope.

As many know, this is National Small Business Week. Thirty-five million businesses in this country employ nearly 60 million Americans. And I heard my friend the Republican leader talk about it being National Small Business Week. Well, I would say to my Republican colleagues, if you really want it to be National Small Business Week, put our legislation on the floor that exempts small businesses from the tariffs. That will make small businesses happy. An idle celebration while they are being smashed with tariffs doesn't make them happy.

In rural America, small business is particularly important. They employ

more than half of all the workers. These small businesses are the heartbeats of our towns, our neighborhoods, and our economy, but the trade war jeopardizes these businesses. Over 80 percent of businesses say that thanks to Donald Trump's tariffs, they could be forced to raise prices for consumers, and many say they would lay off employees.

Protecting small businesses has never been a partisan issue. It shouldn't be now. It is national priority. But what do small businesses hear from Donald Trump? Well, you should have listened to him yesterday. When asked yesterday if he would consider relief for small businesses, the President waved it off. He said: They are not going to need it.

Utterly condescending. Utterly dismissive. Not going to need it? Tell that, President Trump, to the small business owners I just met with. Tell that to the nearly 370,000 workers at the smallest of small businesses who have already lost their jobs.

He is in a bubble. Donald Trump has no understanding of what small business people go through.

Senate Democrats are fighting back against Donald Trump's economic disaster. Today, my friend Senator MARKEY is introducing the Small Business Liberation Act, which I am proudly cosponsoring, to exempt small businesses from Donald Trump's destructive tariffs. This bill should not be a partisan fight. It should be common sense. When 72 percent—72 percent—of small businesses say that erratic tariffs are giving them economic whiplash, it is time for the Senate to act.

Last week, Senate Republicans had a chance to stop this trade war, but they chose to stand with Trump instead. Well, we are giving Senate Republicans another chance now—by working with us to take up the Small Business Liberation Act.

Senate Republicans' refusal to stop this trade war makes them just as complicit as Donald Trump. Small businesses are the backbone of this country. It is time for Senate Republicans to grow a backbone and defend small businesses from Donald Trump's tariffs.

Madam President, now on Trump and the Constitution, yesterday, Donald Trump was asked the easiest question in the world for a President. He was asked:

Don't you need to uphold the Constitution of the United States?

Donald Trump's answer:

I don't know.

It was appalling. He doesn't know if he is supposed to uphold the Constitution? He swore an oath to that effect. He might have forgotten that.

It is hard to imagine something more un-American than Donald Trump, the sitting President, saying that he doesn't know whether he needs to uphold the Constitution. As I mentioned, just over 100 days ago, he raised his

right hand and swore in front of the Nation to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution. But no President has done more to disregard the Constitution and buck the rule of law than Donald Trump, and now he plainly admits it, almost proudly.

One of the traits of a dictator is someone hostile to all forms of guardrails and accountability, who doesn't want to hear any dissent. Well, the Constitution is the ultimate guardrail, and Donald Trump thinks he doesn't need to obey it.

Donald Trump is the embodiment of what the Founders feared: a President hostile to the rule of law, scared of debate, scared of opposition. He can't stand the idea of something restraining his power, so instead he tries to crush anything he views as opposition. That is not strength; that is insecurity—deep insecurity.

Donald Trump is putting our Constitution through the shredder, and Senate Republicans are totally silent. They are complicit. They are watching the Constitution be ripped up. They say nothing—nothing.

Ten years ago, Republicans would have been up in arms—up in arms—over the idea of a sitting President saying he doesn't know whether he needs to uphold the Constitution. Even a year ago, Republicans would have been up in arms had President Biden said “I don't know” if he should follow the Constitution. So where—where—is the outrage from my Republican colleagues today?

This much is clear: You cannot be loyal to both Donald Trump and the Constitution. The two are like oil and water. The American people deserve to know where Republicans stand—with the Constitution or with Donald Trump as he rips it to shreds.

#### FAA

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, on Newark Airport, for months and now especially this week, Americans flying in and out of Newark Airport have experienced increasing delays and disruptions. Airlines are canceling flights. There is a shortage of air traffic controllers. They are relying on 1990s technology in 2025. One Newark air traffic controller even said that flying into Newark is “not safe.”

Keeping the flying public safe and our national air space efficient is the responsibility of Donald Trump's FAA. They are failing spectacularly. So today, I am demanding a full Inspector General Office investigation into what happened at Newark so these problems do not get worse or spread to other airports around the Nation. I am demanding that the OIG, the Office of Inspector General, investigate answers to these questions:

One, why were Potomac TRACON, Philadelphia TRACON, and New York TRACON—the control towers in Washington, Philadelphia, and New York—excluded from the FAA's list of hard-

to-staff facilities, even when there was a clear shortage?

They gave 13 other facilities bonus pay so they could attract more people. Why not New York, Washington, and Philadelphia, where it is worse?

Second, what is the plan to reduce decades-old technology, equipment, and infrastructure at our airports?

One of the reasons Newark had a problem was a copper wire burnt. Did they ever hear of fiber optics over there at the FAA?

Three, what is the plan to quickly fill critical leadership vacancies?

Members have been fired at the FAA, and others have quit out of just disgust. Well, there are a lot of vacancies, especially in the higher positions. We need to fill them. What is the plan?

Other airports across the Nation could see similar problems like Newark if the FAA does not take this investigation seriously.

#### NOMINATION OF FRANK BISIGNANO

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, finally, on Mr. Bisignano to be head of the beleaguered Social Security Administration, we all know that SSA—the Social Security Administration—is in a state of chaos, but instead of advancing someone who will bring order and stability to Social Security, Senate Republicans are backing a slash-and-burn, billionaire CEO who will only pour gasoline into the DOGE fires.

Mr. Bisignano has zero experience in government or with Social Security, but he has plenty of experience in cutting jobs and downsizing. He says of himself:

I am fundamentally a DOGE person.

That is who they want.

Madam President, American people, Republicans, you want someone who is a DOGE person in charge of Social Security? My goodness. I can't think of a worse Agency for Mr. "Slash-and-Burn" Bisignano to lead than the Social Security Administration. That is his nickname, "Slash-and-Burn."

Every single Senate Republican who votes yes on Mr. Bisignano is voting yes to put Social Security benefits in jeopardy. Voting yes on Bisignano means voting yes on continuing the wave of office closings and mass layoffs. What they are doing at Social Security—DOGE and the Trump people—they are afraid to say they want to kill it, so they try to strangle it—closed offices, longer wait times, phone lines disrupted, emails disrupted.

Mr. Bisignano's nomination is another reminder that Donald Trump's chaos is made possible thanks to the complicity of Senate Republicans. They could stop the attacks by DOGE if they wanted. They could halt terrible nominees if they wanted. But every Senate Republican, every time, who has a chance to side with the American people instead sides with Donald Trump. They are doing it again with Mr. Bisignano's nomination.

The Senate should reject the nomination of Mr. "Slash-and-Burn" or else the chaos we have seen from DOGE will only get worse.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

#### NOMINATION OF FRANK BISIGNANO

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I am pleased to supplement the remarks of our distinguished leader with respect to Social Security.

Rhode Island has I believe the largest participation per capita in Social Security in the country. Social Security is what brought American seniors out of poverty and into a distinguished and fair retirement, and it really matters that we defend it and that Social Security remain unbroken.

The threat is pretty clear. The President keeps talking about imaginary fraud. Why would you talk about imaginary fraud in a system unless you have some motive?

It wasn't just him. Elon Musk talked relentlessly about fraud in the Social Security system. The Secretary of Commerce went a mile out of his lane to add a shot at Social Security being riddled with fraud. Then the President went to the other end of the building there, stood at the rostrum of the House, and lied to the American people, flat-out lied to the American people about Social Security fraud. He let Elon Musk call it a Ponzi scheme as well.

This is a battering ram of misinformation and disinformation, and it doesn't happen without a motive. The motive here is to degrade public confidence in Social Security.

At the same time, you sent what I call your little "Muskrats"—you sent your "Muskrats" into Social Security to disrupt its operations. So you have the rhetorical attack happening over here, and then you begin to have Social Security fail because you broke it and get what has been referred to as an interruption of benefits—an interruption of benefits.

Then you also have your private equity people and your tech bros over there so that when the interruption of benefits happens, they can come in and swoop to the rescue of the problem that the administration caused, and next thing you know, what have you got? Privatized Social Security, with private equity guys and tech bros running the show because thousands of the employees who know how to run the Social Security Administration have been forced out.

That is the concern, and it is a very real concern.

I want to give Mr. Bisignano good marks for saying that he is not going there. He said that he will not privatize the Agency—will not. He said that under his leadership, the Social Security Administration will remain a government Agency and remain an Agency

that is run for the benefit of the American people and benefit recipients.

Now, the problem is, I find nominees' statements hard to believe up against the power of that pressure from the White House and from Musk and from the Secretary of Commerce and from whoever else is trying to accomplish the Republican extremist goal for decades of getting rid of Social Security. So I was a "no" vote in committee. I am going to be a "no" vote out here.

I hope very much that I am wrong, but I also hoped very much that Secretary Rubio would stand up for Ukraine and that he would be an anchor, as Secretary of State, to defend Ukraine against the predatory, brutal, criminal war crimes of Vladimir Putin. But what we have seen instead has been the "Putinization" of our strategy to Ukraine, and the Secretary of State has been entirely complicit in it, from all the signs that I see.

So when you have somebody who says one thing and, in the case of Secretary Rubio, who actually lived it—he was actually an ardent advocate for defending Ukraine. Then you get into Trump zone, and suddenly all your principles disappear, all your commitments disappear, and you just become a tool of the Trump political operation. I have seen that too often, so I am going to vote no.

We need, as a Senate, to send a clear message that Social Security is inviolable; that it is a promise amongst us all, as Americans, to protect our seniors, to protect ourselves when we get to that age; and that no one will be allowed to break it.

And one of the things I am going to ask is to make sure that we go into Social Security's databases and make sure that those "Muskrats," when they went in there, didn't do any permanent damage, didn't set off mines to go off later, and didn't leave backdoors for the information to be exfiltrated out to private sector folks for whom it is as good as gold.

I will say one last thing, and that is Mr. Bisignano said he would work with me on the benefits cliffs, where you are fine with full benefits, and then one little thing happens, you miss one little mark, and there is a complete crash. There is a better way to deal with it. Benefit cliff smoothing is a technical thing. He promised to work with me. I intend to hold him to that promise.

My friend Mr. CORNYN, the Senator from Texas, has been patiently waiting. So I yield the floor to him.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

#### DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, it looks like my timing is exquisite because I came down here to talk about something that I think has sort of fallen off the radar screen here in recent weeks, and that is the work of the Department of Government Efficiency,