

What does this mean? Organizations I am aware of, like Metropolitan Family Services in Chicago, lost \$3.7 million overnight. These funds had been providing mental health training and job skills to hundreds of individuals who are most likely to perpetrate or be victims of violence. We went right to the source.

Because of these initiatives, homicides in the city of Chicago have decreased by 50 percent since 2021. But now, just a few days before the start of summer months when gun violence will be at its peak, neighborhood organizations across the country, including Chicago, have had the rug pulled out from under them.

Does Attorney General Bondi really think that eliminating these grants will stop the violence?

Ignoring reality won't stop the bloodshed that will occur without these funds.

Does President Trump really think that cutting this funding makes America safer?

The next time the President or any of his friends goes to FOX News or some other news source and starts scapegoating Democrats for gun violence in Chicago, they should remember that the President and his billionaire cronies eliminated the successful bipartisan grants.

To make matters worse, the Trump administration doubled down on its decision to rescind another billion dollars in school mental health grants, which were also passed into law in the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act.

There is a detention facility in the city of Chicago for teenagers awaiting trial charged with serious crimes, violent crimes. Some of them are being charged with murder. They wait months, sometimes years, for their trial. I visited that facility. And, of course, it is a detention facility, a correctional institution, but it is also a high school. These teenagers from all across the city of Chicago, waiting for trial, go to school in classrooms, eat in cafeterias, and, of course, stay on the premises.

I asked the teachers and counselors at this facility for teenagers who have been involved in violent crime: Who are these kids? You must get to know them in this facility. What is their background?

Well, one counselor I remember said: Senator, virtually every mental health challenge you can think of, we see in these kids. They came to the Earth in the usual way, but something happened in their lives that changed them. But there is one thing that they virtually all have in common: They are all victims of trauma, witnessing murders, having someone they love lost to gunfire. It is the kind of thing that can change a life for the better or for the worse, and, in this case, many of them are being changed for the worse. And so counseling them and working with them to conquer these haunting experiences in their lives is central to putting them on the right track.

Now, we have a decision by this administration to cut back on school mental health grants. That was part of a bipartisan solution to deal with gun violence. After any mass shooting, many are quick to explain away the tragedy as just a mental health issue, not a result of the fact that America has too many deadly weapons. Yet barely 100 days into this administration, they have dropped any pretense about mental health in dealing with gun violence. Apparently, preventing gun violence by providing treatment to children is just too much for them to take. At one time, this was part of the bipartisan solution.

In Illinois, tens of millions of dollars in school mental health services have now been canceled, forcing students to face the future without this counsel. One program had brought graduate psychology students to low-income elementary, middle, and high schools to provide treatment services to students and bolster the mental health workforce.

Another initiative in Lake County, IL, received nearly \$6 million in Federal funds to recruit and train mental health providers to work in the schools. In an outrageous and unsubstantiated justification, the Department of Education claimed that these funds "violated the letter or purpose of Federal civil rights law" or "undermined the well-being of students these programs are intended to help." There is no evidence of that.

Where is the outrage from those who joined in this bipartisan response several years ago and took great pride in it? Democrats and Republicans finally agreed on something.

Mental health counseling of children that are most vulnerable is a way to reduce gun violence. I still believe that to this day, and yet the Trump administration says: No, we are not going to invest in that.

Do you know what is going to happen? There will be more gun violence and terrible, outrageous events like we have seen so often. Innocent kids will die. Innocent people will die. And people will say: We just need more mental health counseling.

Keep in mind that this administration just eliminated the funds for it. What are they thinking? Where is the outrage from my colleagues on the other side of the aisle?

I saw the press releases from our Republican colleagues celebrating the funding that was originally created. Now, silence. That silence is shameful.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I rise today to seek the confirmation of Retired Army CPT Sam Brown to be the Department of Veterans Affairs Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs.

President Trump nominated Captain Brown for this important position.

Sam Brown demonstrates a history of service, love of country, and commitment to serving other veterans. A West Point graduate, Afghanistan combat veteran, husband, and father of three, Captain Brown understands the sacrifices the men and women of the U.S. military and their families make every day and is well-qualified to undertake the significant responsibility of being the Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs.

The National Cemetery Administration's mission is to honor the memory of our Nation's veterans by caring for their final resting places and providing services to their surviving loved ones. Captain Brown, if confirmed, will fill this position with the utmost respect, honoring and remembering those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice.

More than 4 million Americans are interred in NCA's 156 national cemeteries. Kansas is home to 3 of those cemeteries, where more than 62,000 Kansas veterans and their family members are buried.

Another responsibility of the National Cemetery Administration is safeguarding the veterans' legacies by documenting their stories. In doing so, NCA helps to make certain that no generation of Americans forgets the sacrifices made for our freedoms.

Mr. President, notwithstanding rule XXII, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of the following nomination: Executive Calendar No. 85, Sam Brown, to be Under Secretary of Veterans Affairs for Memorial Affairs; that the Senate vote on the nomination, without intervening action or debate; that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, the chairman and I share a bipartisan commitment to putting our veterans first, including providing them with the kind of memorial and cemetery recognition that they have well earned. There is no difference between us on that point.

And I think we also share a belief that Members of the U.S. Senate have a duty—it is a constitutional duty—to hold accountable the executive branch and demand information from the executive branch to perform our obligations of oversight and scrutiny.

I think we also share a respect for Sam Brown's service to our Nation. As a veteran—as a decorated veteran—who has earned appreciation for his service, the kinds of qualifications he brings to this office are impressive. But this nominee was advanced out of committee by a 10-to-9 vote. So it is clear he does not have unanimous support.

He said, when he was asked about whether he would support the Trump administration's plan to fire nearly

one-fifth of the VA's workforce, including many who are veterans themselves—in fact, one-third of the VA's workforce are veterans:

We owe it to the Secretary in good faith to hear his full plan, which none of us have heard yet.

That is really the point. This issue is bigger than Sam Brown. It is about information that has been denied to our committee and to us as Senators.

The Secretary of the VA is actively working to undermine our bipartisan oversight efforts. Cuts have been made to contracts that delivered critical support and services to veterans. Despite multiple bipartisan requests, the Secretary refuses to share the list of canceled contracts. Thousands of VA employees have been bullied, driven off their jobs, or fired by Elon Musk and Secretary Collins. And there are plans to fire 83,000 employees, and we haven't seen those plans. All the Secretary has told us is that it is his goal and he will accomplish that goal. He denied us that basic information.

So I have said I am opposing this nomination until we are given the information and disclosure we need to do our jobs. The Secretary has issued a pause on rulemaking that effectively halts efforts underway to provide veterans, including K2 veterans suffering from radiation exposure, the benefits they desperately need, or PFAS victims or other victims of toxic exposure. And he has refused to indicate when this so-called pause will be lifted or whether it is permanent.

Again, we have a job to do, and we have a right to demand—in fact, the Constitution requires that we make that demand—the VA must be transparent and accountable. Instead, the Secretary has come before our committee. He dissembled, he obfuscated, he has attacked anyone who questions him, and he denies us the basic information—denies the American people the information—that he owes us.

My request is simple. If the President or my Republican colleagues believe that a certain nominee is a priority, come clean with the American people. Give us the information we need. What contracts have been canceled? Who is impacted by that action? What research has been stopped? Who has been fired, and who will be fired? What is the plan? Address the unprecedented levels of obstructionism from this administration and give the American people, including our Nation's veterans, the full and public debate they deserve.

For these reasons, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, on the last Monday of May—less than 2 weeks away—we observe Memorial Day. As Americans, we gather at cemeteries and memorials worldwide to honor the courage, sacrifice, and legacy of the men and women who served and are now in their final resting place.

With the approach of Memorial Day, the U.S. Senate has the responsibility

to honor the servicemembers who died in service to our Nation. And we can, in part, do so by confirming a qualified leader as the Under Secretary of Memorial Affairs, CPT Sam Brown. We can do that while we wait for other things to occur. These things are not mutually exclusive. Captain Brown could begin to perform the duties of his office.

I urged my colleagues to do so today. Those laying of our veterans to rest with honor, serving their families with dignity—it is not a Republican or a Democratic issue—and our committee has worked side by side over a long period of time in that manner.

I am discouraged that we cannot work in that manner today to confirm this qualified and capable leader for the National Cemetery Administration. That position is responsible for carrying out our Nation's most solemn responsibilities in burying our veterans. It is incumbent upon us to confirm a nominee to lead the NCA and to lead it well. I believe CPT Sam Brown would do just that.

In his testimony before the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Captain Brown shared his story of suffering excruciating burns in the line of duty in Afghanistan. He recounted how, in the midst of his suffering and anguish, he heard his gunner shout the words: Sir, I've got you, as he worked to extinguish the flames, ultimately saving Captain Brown's life. That declaration of rescue, that cry for support, that message of hope is the same message of hope that Sam Brown will take with him to the National Cemetery Administration.

Under his leadership, NCA will be there to tell veterans' family members and loved ones: We've got you.

The National Cemetery Administration puts veterans first. Sam Brown will put veterans first. And it was my hope that this body could come together to put veterans first today.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I respect the points that my colleague from Kansas has just made as chairman. We have worked together in a bipartisan way. I hope we will continue to work together to make sure that the National Cemetery Administration is given the resources it needs and the personnel that are required to make sure this Nation honors our veterans.

As we speak, members of that workforce, the National Cemetery Administration, have been fired or are being fired or will be fired. Resources may be strangled. We deserve to know—we need to know—to honor our veterans. That is the information we are demanding from this Secretary of the VA.

I respect the assurances that Sam Brown will do his job. But when he was asked specifically at his hearing whether, if directed by the President to take action that would break the law,

he responded that he could not “imagine a scenario where the President would ask me to do anything unlawful.” We know the President has asked members of this administration to do unlawful actions.

But the main point is bigger than Sam Brown. What are the resources that are being withheld in both workforce and dollars to expand our cemeteries as is required to make sure we provide places that honor our veterans? This basic information is an absolute prerequisite for us to do our job and assure that veterans are really honored on this Memorial Day and every day of the year.

We owe our veterans that honor—honor with action—every day, not just Memorial Day. Americans who lay wreaths this Memorial Day are entitled to know what dollars, what commitments, what plans there are for our national cemeteries. We need and deserve that disclosure.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

WAIVING QUORUM CALL

Mr. MORAN. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call with respect to the Rigas nomination be waived.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the rollcall vote scheduled to start at 11:30 start immediately.

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

VOTE ON MACGREGOR NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the MacGregor nomination?

Mr. BARRASSO. 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. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. JUSTICE), and the Senator from Alabama (Mr. TUBERVILLE).

Further, if present and voting: the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM) would have voted “yea.”

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Delaware (Ms. BLUNT ROCHESTER) and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) are necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 54, nays 40, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 250 Ex.]

YEAS—54

Banks	Boozman	Capito
Barrasso	Britt	Cassidy
Blackburn	Budd	Collins