

In 1952, polio paralyzed more than 21,000 Americans and killed more than 3,000. But thanks to researcher Jonas Salk, the vaccine was discovered and studied among 1.3 million children. They did testing of thousands of kids across the United States before they injected all of us. It was proven safe. The last case of wild polio found in the United States was 1979. That is over 40 years ago.

Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., has spread conspiracy theories to discourage uptake of the measles vaccine, for example, including traveling to Samoa to spread lies about its safety, fueling an outbreak that took 80 lives—80 lives in Samoa.

Before the measles vaccine, 48,000 people were hospitalized each year in the United States, with thousands experiencing life-threatening brain swelling. By 2000, measles was officially declared eliminated because of vaccines.

Mr. Kennedy's dangerous anti-science views don't stop with these obvious vaccines that have helped America. He also targeted the fluoride in drinking water. We have been adding tiny bits of fluoride in our drinking water for over 70 years in the United States. We have tested every way you can imagine—as we should—to make sure that it is safe for all of us to drink. And the tests come back suggesting it has always proven its safety.

Why do we do it? It reduces cavities in teeth dramatically. A little bit of fluoride can go a long way in that regard. It has changed dentistry since I was a kid. Going to the dentist used to be a not very welcome adventure, and kids went regularly with cavities galore. I was one of them. But the fluoride in water changed things for my own children and grandchildren. It is safe, and it helps.

But Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., doesn't accept that. He wants to contest fluoride in drinking water. This man is not a scientist; he is a political figure. I have known him for many years. He has no special knowledge or authority when it comes to these issues and, sadly, buys into a myriad of conspiracy theories.

Let's be clear. There is no evidence that current recommended levels of fluoride cause any harm. On the flip side, it has been established, as I said, for over seven decades, that it helps prevent cavities and dental surgeries in children.

God forbid we ever encounter another pandemic or infectious disease threat. Do you really want this vaccine denier, Robert Kennedy, Jr., at the helm?

I issue a challenge to my 99 Senate colleagues. Go ask your local children's hospital if they think this nominee, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., would help or harm the way they work to treat our children. I know what the answer is going to be.

The U.S. Senate is better than this. I urge my colleagues to think twice before voting for this irresponsible nominee. The impact on the public health of

America could be devastating, and we have to accept the responsibility that this is the wrong nominee for this critical Agency.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BRITT). Without objection, it is so ordered.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I want to open with a few words on the announcement from China by DeepSeek.

Today's announcement from China has been called AI's "Sputnik moment" for America. This announcement is precisely why I made AI a top priority in the last Congress and will continue to do so. Our competitors are going to use every single opportunity to overtake the United States' lead on the technologies of the future, particularly AI. And if Congress does not lead the way, we are going to fall behind.

So I hope our bipartisan efforts on AI, which made some progress last year, will continue and even in a more robust way this year.

BIRD FLU

Madam President, next, on the price of eggs, earlier today, I was in Upstate New York at two beloved family-owned diners, Alton's near Buffalo and Jines in Rochester, to call for an all-hands-on-deck approach to stop the spread of bird flu and prevent higher egg prices.

Far too many families across New York and across the country—far too many—have been shell-shocked by higher egg prices as more bird flu outbreaks continue to happen, but so far, it seems President Trump has not enunciated any plan to address the bird flu outbreak. He spent his first week pardoning insurrectionists and firing government watchdogs instead of focusing on things ordinary Americans care about, like the price of groceries.

The President owes the American people some answers. What is he going to do about the price of eggs that has been exacerbated by bird flu? When hundreds of thousands and even millions of chickens die, they lay fewer eggs, and when there are fewer eggs, the price goes up.

The problem is reaching crisis levels. In November, a dozen eggs cost approximately \$4 in a grocery store in New York—already too high. It used to be \$2 a year earlier. Now that same dozen eggs costs \$6, and experts believe that the price of eggs could increase as much as 20 percent more this year if outbreaks continue, meaning that the same dozen eggs would be \$8.

Every day, we hear about the spread of bird flu. Last week, farmers on Long Island had to slaughter 100,000 ducks—Long Island is one of the duck-pro-

ducing capitals of the country—in response to another outbreak.

So, President Trump, what is your plan to stop the spread of bird flu?

The more bird flu spreads, the higher egg prices will go and the less money there will be in people's pockets for rent and gas and other expenses. We need some action.

Now, luckily, we have some resources available. Last year, I helped secure over \$300 million in Federal funding ahead of the new administration to keep the government laser-focused on ending the bird flu crisis. Should the \$300 million prove insufficient, I will keep working in a bipartisan way to push for more Federal resources in the upcoming budget negotiation.

One thing is certain: We have a lot of budget cutters out there, none with a sharper ax than Russell Vought. The Trump administration and Mr. Vought should not try to impound these congressionally approved funds, because we know Mr. Vought wants to impound in many, many places and not spend money where it is needed.

This is a small but classic example of how the Federal Government's action, not inaction, can get your prices lower. Real action—spending the \$300 million we put in the budget in December and more funds if needed—can reduce bird flu. The Department of Agriculture knows how to do it. It can help farmers reduce the bird flu in their flocks and get our prices of eggs back down again.

Let's get to work. The money is there and ready to be used. We need the Federal Government to work overtime with experts in the coming months to keep the outbreak in check and keep grocery prices in check for families.

INSPECTORS GENERAL

Madam President, on the IGs, last Friday, while most Americans were asleep, President Trump conducted a midnight massacre of many of the Federal Government's nonpartisan, independent watchdogs. The President did not notify the Congress of his decision as is required by law. The President did not offer any substantive explanation for these firings. Instead, the President simply said these positions were "terminated—effective immediately."

This is a chilling, potentially unlawful decision by the President. It is a reminder that if there is anything President Trump fears most, it is accountability. He likes to talk about one thing and then another and then doesn't like to be held accountable. When people stand up to President Trump, when people present him with facts and evidence that he doesn't like, his solution is to fire them and replace them with loyalists. I fear that this is what will happen here.

Purging the government of its independent watchdogs begs an obvious question: What is the President trying to hide? What does the President not want the American people to see? Does the President want to avoid accountability for the impoundment of congressionally approved funding? Does he

want to hold up foreign aid as blackmail without getting caught? Does he want to eliminate the scrutiny of improper government contracts? An independent inspector general could prevent many of these abuses.

An inspector general's job can be boiled down to two words: "transparency" and "accountability." That is what President Trump is apparently afraid of, but it is something most Americans want to have in their government.

JANUARY 6

Madam President, for all the talk President Trump does about standing up for law and order, he spent the first few days in office doing the opposite—pardoning lawless rioters who invaded the Capitol and attacked police officers on January 6.

Today, I am joining all 47 of my Senate Democratic colleagues in introducing a resolution condemning the pardoning of individuals who were found guilty of assaulting Capitol Police Officers on January 6. Senator MURRAY will seek the passage of this resolution this week. I hope our Republican colleagues will join us in condemning these pardons. Many of them saw the violence of January 6 firsthand. I did. This should be an easy resolution to pass.

By handing out these pardons to convicted criminals, President Trump is effectively saying: If you want to attack our brave police officers, that is OK. You are exonerated.

The President is saying: Do you want to try to thwart our democracy? Fine by me.

The President is saying: Do you want to break the law and engage in political violence? Be my guest.

One individual who received a pardon—listen to this—one individual who received a pardon was convicted of seditious conspiracy. A few days after the attack, he said:

[His] only regret is that they should have brought rifles.

That man is being pardoned. What a disgrace.

To repeat:

[His] only regret is that they should have brought rifles.

And President Trump pardoned him. Who could believe that? Who could believe that in America, that would happen? A few years back, no one would have even imagined. That is in some ways how our country has deteriorated, with President Trump doing what he is doing.

The people who invaded the Capitol on January 6, whether they engaged in violence or not, committed a very serious crime. There is no gray area here, especially not when it comes to people who attack police officers. The pardons must be condemned by the Senate, and Democrats will try to do that through our resolution this week.

CABINET NOMINATIONS

Madam President, on nominations, this week, three of the President's

most controversial nominees will testify before Senate committees—Kash Patel, Tulsi Gabbard, and Robert Kennedy, Jr. All three nominees have deeply troubling backgrounds and equally troubling views. If Pete Hegseth's nomination process was any indication, these controversial nominees can expect to face immense scrutiny from both sides of the aisle and from the American people.

Americans deserve to know: Will the Trump administration strengthen our health and security or strengthen big drug companies and pseudoscience? Mr. Kennedy's hearing will give us answers.

Also, we have to know from Mr. Kennedy: Does he want to eliminate lifesaving vaccines that have saved the lives and health of so many—so many—millions of children in the United States and around the globe?

Americans also deserve to know: Will the FBI focus on public safety and the rule of law or focus on Donald Trump's personal grievances? Mr. Patel, in his hearing, will give us answers.

Americans need to know: Will the Trump administration protect us from foreign adversaries and deal in truth and facts when it comes to classified intelligence—if there were ever a need for a fact-based Agency, it is the intelligence Agencies which gather information to keep us safe—or will these Agencies be turned to give shelter to conspiracy and misinformation in our intelligence? Ms. Gabbard's hearing will give us some very important answers here.

The people entrusted to oversee matters of public health and law enforcement and classified intelligence should be beyond reproach. Their qualifications should not be in doubt. But President Trump seems to have chosen three deeply unqualified, deeply untrustworthy individuals to these positions. Like Mr. Hegseth, it is hard to imagine that they are the best for the job or even close to it.

INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

Madam President, today is International Holocaust Remembrance Day. We commemorate it because it is the 80th anniversary of the liberation of the few Jews who survived and were imprisoned at Auschwitz.

Never again can we allow anti-Semitism or any other form of hatred to fester and grow in the way we saw during the Nazi regime. We must always tell the truth about what happened to the Jewish people 80 years ago. We can never allow history to be forgotten, shunned, or deliberately erased.

It saddens me that this year, Holocaust Remembrance Day comes at a time of rising hatred against Jewish people, especially here in America after October 7.

Just yesterday, I visited a popular Israeli restaurant a few blocks from my home in Brooklyn. It is called Miriam. The night before, the restaurant and its owners were the victims of a despicable act of vandalism. Their windows were smeared with red paint and

defiled with messages of hate. The attack happened simply because the owners are Jewish, just because the owners are Jewish. That is anti-Semitism, pure and simple, and we must condemn it together forcefully.

As ugly as this incident was, I was inspired by how the owners and the community responded. They chose to leave the vandalism up for a day so that people and the media could see the dangers of letting anti-Semitism gain strength. Many in the area stopped by for lunch, offered to help with the cleanup, or just shared a message of support. I went and visited the restaurant in the evening with an order to go. That is New York at its best when these neighbors look after each other in the face of hate.

We must never, never fail to condemn anti-Semitism wherever or whenever it rears its ugly head. It comes now in many new dimensions. Some people seem impervious to things that seem to many Jewish people as being outright anti-Semitic. We have to be so vigilant. That is the best way to honor what Holocaust Remembrance Day represents.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RESOLUTIONS SUBMITTED TODAY

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the en bloc consideration of the following Senate resolutions, which were submitted earlier today: S. Res. 39, S. Res. 40, and S. Res. 41.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolutions en bloc.

Mr. BARRASSO. I ask unanimous consent that the resolutions be agreed to, the preambles, where applicable, be agreed to, and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, all en bloc.

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

The resolutions (S. Res. 39 and S. Res. 40) were agreed to.

The preambles were agreed to.

(The resolutions, with their preambles, are printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

The resolution (S. Res. 41) was agreed to.

(The resolution is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.