

convictions—90 percent. Immigrants make up more than 40 percent of home healthcare aides and children's assistance, daycare. An outsized percentage of them and the agricultural workforce are undocumented. Immigrants are a key part of America's success story.

I do not want a single dangerous person to remain in this country or to be allowed to seek permanent residence here—period—but there are many who have been here for periods of time, who have paid their taxes, who have followed the law, and should be part of America's future.

Our Nation needs immigrants in many important places. Come to my State of Illinois and ask the agricultural organizations. They will tell you flat out that, without the assistance from migrants and immigrants, they just can't do their work. Whether they are running dairy operations, orchards, or regular agricultural pursuits, they need a helping hand, and many times, the only ones who will come to help them are those who come from other countries.

They put food on our tables, they care for our children, and they help care for our parents and grandparents. Many of these people are Dreamers who grew up alongside our kids and have gone on to serve our Nation as members of the armed services, as doctors, and as first responders. They believe in the American dream, and I will continue to fight to protect them for as long as I serve in the U.S. Senate.

There is no room in this country for dangerous people, but there is plenty of room for those who aspire to make this a better nation. We should be fair in making a distinction and in realizing the difference is significant.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, last night, incredibly and lawlessly, the Trump administration announced the virtual halt to all forms of Federal financial assistance. In an instant—one instant, one blink of the eye—in the dark of night, Donald Trump has shut off billions—perhaps trillions—of dollars that support small businesses, that support families, that support police officers and firefighters, that support hospitals and rural hospitals in particular, that support our localities, our States and cities, our schools, and so much more.

Why? Why did Donald Trump do this? Simple: to fund tax cuts for the ultrawealthy. This decision is lawless, destructive, cruel. The President must

rescind this order at once, and Congress must act if he refuses.

Make no mistake, this is Project 2025—Project 2025—by another name, and the danger of having someone like Russell Vought, the chief cook and bottle washer of 2025, in charge of OMB is frightening—frightening—to just about every American family in terms of what it could do to them.

When Project 2025 came out, it was so ridiculed that Donald Trump had to say: Oh, I don't know much about it. And now he is putting one of the main authors of Project 2025 in the place where he can implement all of these horrible, discredited, unpopular findings.

That is where they are headed, folk. That is where they are going.

Again, why are they doing it? So they can pay for tax cuts for the ultrarich by making these cuts on average American families.

This morning, I think every Senator's phone has been ringing off the hook—certainly, mine has—with non-stop calls from hospitals and police departments, volunteer firefighters, food pantries, drug treatment centers, on and on and on. If someone is going to say they are getting no calls, then they are just out of touch because it affects almost everything.

People are worried. People are scrambling. People are in panic mode, trying to figure out how this order is going to affect them. Hospitals with people on life support, food pantries that feed the hungry, police departments that patrol our streets—every one of them is worried because so many of them get Federal aid. If Federal funding is shut off, so many groups and institutions will be worried. Can they pay the rent? Can they pay their staffs? Can they keep their operations running?

Virtually, any organization—and there are millions—that depends on Federal grant money to run its day-to-day operations is now in danger. Nonprofits that help disabled veterans are now in danger thanks to Donald Trump. Funding that supports our Nation's mass transit, from one end of the country to another, is now in danger thanks to Donald Trump. Hospitals, particularly rural hospitals and community health centers, are now in danger thanks to Donald Trump. Meals on Wheels, in danger thanks to Donald Trump. Even smaller programs—and I am very proud of something I passed called the Nonprofit Security Grant Program, which protects synagogues and religious institutions from anti-Semitic attacks. We just had one in our neighborhood on Sunday. They are now in danger thanks to Donald Trump. Senior centers, law enforcement, firefighters, water districts, food pantries—all in danger because of Donald Trump.

Again, their master plan: to hurt average folks from one end of the country to the another—in red States, in blue States, in suburbs, in cities, in rural

areas. To take money out of their hides—all to pay for tax cuts for the ultrawealthy—is now becoming clear. It is now becoming clear.

The blast radius of this terrible decision is virtually limitless. It is American families who are going to suffer most.

American families should make no mistake: The money being stolen from them will be spent—just not on them. It is going to be spent on tax cuts for the ultrawealthy and the biggest corporations.

President Trump must reverse this course immediately. The Budget Committee should slow down its hearings with Mr. Vought until it fully comes out what they all intend to do.

The funding President Trump is halting is not optional. Congress has approved these funds, and they are law. The President does not, no matter what he thinks, have the authority to ignore the law and ignore Congress.

Let me be clear. This is not an isolated act, unfortunately. It comes a week after Trump pardoned violent criminals who sought to overturn our election and days after Trump fired independent watchdogs across the government in a naked attempt to shroud his actions from the American people.

I can assure every American that Democrats will pursue all available options, legal and otherwise, to halt this assault. I have talked to the attorney general of New York State, Tish James. She and her association—I believe she is the head of the State association, the State attorneys general association—are going to use all of their legal power to stop this illegal act.

I implore my Republican colleagues, who know in their hearts and their minds that this is a reckless and unconstitutional action, to speak up, to join us as Americans in defense of the law, but most of all, to protect our communities and to protect the American people from this awful announcement.

DEEPSEEK

Mr. President, on DeepSeek, when the Soviet Union launched Sputnik 1 into orbit in 1957, it ignited a space race between the two world's greatest powers, and America won.

Yesterday, we faced a similar inflection point between China and the United States. This time, the prize is not like Sputnik landing on the Moon; the prize is something so important—artificial intelligence.

The recent news from DeepSeek is being called AI's Sputnik moment for America. DeepSeek unleashed something few could have imagined—an AI chatbot that runs more efficiently and was developed at much lower cost than U.S. AI chatbots. Within hours of DeepSeek's announcement, their AI chatbot was the No. 1 downloaded free app on Apple's app store.

DeepSeek's announcement makes it all but official: China is catching up with the United States on AI. It is a wake-up call that Congress desperately

needs. If America falls behind China on AI, we will fall behind everywhere—economically, militarily, scientifically, educationally, everywhere.

China's innovation with DeepSeek is jarring, but it is nothing compared to what will happen if China beats the United States on the ultimate goal of AGI—artificial general intelligence. We cannot, we must not allow that to happen.

This is precisely why I made AI a top priority in the last Congress, with American innovation as my North Star, and I will continue to do so. What we do now on AI—the actions we take, the ways and amounts we invest, the innovation we spur—will definitely define the next decade of this technology.

I hope our bipartisan efforts on AI, which made some progress last year, will continue in an even more robust way this year. I stand ready to work with Republicans—this should be bipartisan—to pass legislation and make the investments necessary for the United States to win.

NOMINATION OF ROBERT F. KENNEDY, JR.

Mr. President, on RFK, Jr., tomorrow, Robert F. Kennedy will testify before the Senate Finance Committee on his nomination to become the next Secretary of Health and Human Services. I cannot recall a nominee more dangerous to the health of Americans than Mr. Kennedy.

HHS is an Agency that depends on science, evidence, and impartiality to ensure the well-being of over 330 million Americans. They ensure we eat safe food, purchase reliable medications, oversee Medicare benefits, and improve the use of lifesaving vaccines.

Mr. Kennedy, however, is unprepared. His positions have shifted from month to month, moment to moment. He is neither a doctor, nor a scientist, nor a public health expert, nor a policy expert of any kind.

When I met with him, he would not answer many questions directly, saying he would defer to the President, who also is hardly a health expert.

In fact, Mr. Kennedy has made a living not by promoting public health but by actively fighting it. He is the face of the modern anti-vaccine movement, responsible for spreading fringe and outright false beliefs about vaccines.

Of course, tomorrow, we will hear a very different Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. He will pretend as if he has now found religion on vaccines or that his words have been twisted unfairly or that he has never intended to say he is anti-vaccine. Nobody should believe this eleventh-hour conversion of Mr. Kennedy on vaccines. Instead, he should be held accountable for the misinformation he has spread for decades.

He must answer not only for spreading wild vaccine conspiracies but also for spreading many other outrageous claims over the years, from saying anti-depressants cause mass shootings to saying AIDS might not be caused by HIV and claiming COVID spared certain ethnic groups.

In fact, Mr. Kennedy should answer for the many conflicts of interest he holds with the anti-vaccine movement. According to his financial disclosures, he has made millions by recommending clients to law firms suing vaccine makers. In fact, this was the primary source of his income this past year.

A quote from the Wall Street editorial board—certainly no friend of Democrats—said it best:

The risk is high that Mr. Kennedy will use his power and pulpit at HHS to enrich his trial-lawyer friends at the expense of public health and medical innovation.

That is not some liberal publication; that is the Wall Street Journal editorial board.

Donald Trump promised to bring a golden age to America on day one, but if Mr. Kennedy is confirmed, it will be a golden age for pseudoscience and possibly even self-dealing in our government.

JANUARY 6

Mr. President, finally, on January 6, today, Senate Democrats will go to the Senate floor with a resolution that says something very simple: We condemn pardoning individuals guilty of assaulting Capitol Police. I thank my good friend PATTY MURRAY for leading this important resolution. No Republican should block it. It should be a no-brainer to say people who attack police don't deserve pardons.

By handing out these pardons to convicted criminals, President Trump is effectively saying: You want to attack our brave police officers? That is OK.

How are these pardons supposed to make Americans better off? How does pardoning lawless rioters help people with affording groceries or paying the rent or paying for medications? Pardoning rioters is not what Americans want the President to be prioritizing, even though it was one of his first acts. They want to see answers to the problems that impact them: inflation, good-paying jobs, and a better future.

Our Capitol Police, meanwhile, deserve nothing less than our full and steadfast support for everything they do to keep us safe every single day. The least—the very least—we can do for them as Senators is declare that those convicted of attacking Capitol Police officers do not—do not—deserve a Presidential pardon.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DAINES). The Senator from Hawaii.

NOMINATION OF ROBERT F. KENNEDY, JR.

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, if you heard your doctor say there is no vaccine that is safe or effective or there are much better candidates than HIV for what causes AIDS or school shootings started happening with the introduction of Prozac and other drugs—if your physician said any of those things to you, you would look for a new physician.

Yet, this week, my colleagues on the Senate Finance Committee and Health Committee are going to consider the nomination of someone who has not

only said all of those things and more, but, if confirmed, he would be responsible for the health and well-being of the entire Nation.

The unique threat that Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., poses to our country really cannot be overstated, and now it is up to us, the 100 Members of the U.S. Senate, to deny him the opportunity to use America as one big test lab for bygone diseases.

I want to explain what I mean by that. He thinks that FDA trials are not enough to determine the efficacy of a vaccine, and so he is suggesting that we use placebo in the population. What does that mean? Something might save someone's life, and something might be essentially a sugar pill, but you don't get to know.

There are international conventions against this approach. The Tuskegee experiments conducted by the U.S. Public Health Service were universally rejected, and the Congress banned this approach because you cannot withhold lifesaving care from anyone.

Now, if saying crazy things doesn't seem to be disqualifying for a nominee these days, I understand, but it is not just that he said crazy things or holds deranged views; it is that he has acted on them—it is that he has acted on them.

I want everybody to listen to exactly what happened in Samoa. Not 20 years ago, not 10 years ago, but in 2019, while he was chairman of an anti-vaccine group, he flew to Samoa because he sensed an opportunity to exploit people's hesitation about taking the measles vaccine. People were understandably worried after an accident involving improperly prepared vaccines killed two babies. It was a tragedy, and it was a costly mistake but not a reason to abandon the measles vaccine altogether.

But RFK sought to make people more afraid. He discouraged people from taking the vaccine because he wanted to run a "natural experiment" to see how people fared against the disease without protection. To see how people fared against the disease without protection? This guy is up for HHS, Health and Human Services? This guy just wants to see what would happen if we didn't give people the lifesaving protection that they need? He literally flew to the other side of the planet to turn people's fears into a data-collection opportunity.

For some context here, Samoa is a small country and had a population of around 200,000 people at the time. People knew each other, and word got around fast that Kennedy was in town saying a thing. So it was no small thing that this man from America with the last name "Kennedy," pretending to be a health expert, was there peddling all kinds of lies to prevent people from getting a lifesaving vaccine, and those lies spread fast. Vaccination rates plummeted, and within 5 months, Samoa had a measles outbreak. Some 5,700 people were infected with the