

course, of those in their families who survived.

Of course, the search continues for many more, and we hope and pray more will be found alive. I thank all of the first responders on the ground. And we all hope for the best in the ongoing rescue and recovery efforts.

Now, when a tragedy as devastating as the one in Texas occurs, the American people deserve to know what happened, what more could have been done to minimize the tragedy, and what we can do better to prevent this from happening again. That means taking a close look what went wrong, if anything, at the Agency level. So, yesterday, I asked for an investigation into what role, if any, the administration's staff cuts to local National Weather Service stations played in preparedness and response to the Texas tragedy.

We also must look forward as communities rebuild, as families mourn. We must ensure the Federal Government has all the resources in place to aid those in need, and that means holding off against devastating cuts to Agencies like FEMA.

As recently as last month, Donald Trump talked about "wean[ing] off" FEMA and has toyed with eliminating the Agency entirely as soon as this year. That would be a mistake at any time, but in light of these horrible floods, it is unthinkable that Donald Trump would do something like put FEMA's future in doubt.

As communities rebuild, today would be a good day for Donald Trump to back away from his threats to dismantle FEMA. Any one of us who has visited these terrible hurricanes and floods and so much other in terms of natural destruction sees the job FEMA does. They are dedicated, they are hard-working, and they are there for people at the exact time people desperately need them. To eliminate this Agency? It speaks to someone who doesn't know anything about what they do.

We all know that nothing can bring back the lives of those who perished, but the administration can and must ensure it takes every step, including funding FEMA—not eliminating it, not cutting it in two-thirds, but funding it fully—the administration must do that to ensure that it takes every step possible to prevent a tragedy like this from happening again.

RESCISSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, the July work period and rescissions—this July 4, Donald Trump and Republicans wreaked havoc on our country. On a day when Americans are supposed to celebrate our independence and our blessings as citizens of this great Nation, Donald Trump signed one of the most destructive pieces of legislation in modern history—the biggest giveaway to billionaires ever, the biggest cuts to Medicaid, devastation to our healthcare economy and America's

clean energy economy, with millions of projected job losses—so many job losses that it could well cause us to fall into recession. When it is harder to find jobs, more people get fired, and prices go up.

This vote will haunt our Republican colleagues. It will haunt them every time a rural hospital closes. It will haunt them every time seniors are unable to get home care. It will haunt them as premiums go up, as the uninsured rates spike, as kids go hungry, as jobs disappear, and as our adversaries grow stronger while America grows weaker.

Frankly, many Republicans knew perfectly well their own bill would hurt people back at home. Yet they voted yes anyway. Why? It is simple to answer that. Why did they vote yes anyway when they knew it was wrong? Because they are afraid of Donald Trump.

Now we return to session at the start of a new work period. Very soon, Senate Republicans are expected to bring to the floor at Donald Trump's behest a so-called rescissions package that will gut critical investments in public broadcasting and weaken America's standing abroad, on a simple majority vote—not the 60 votes required traditionally as appropriations bills move forward. Will Senate Republicans bow down to Donald Trump yet again or will they actually show backbone and stand up for their constituents?

These investments were negotiated on a bipartisan basis between Democrats and Republicans as part of the government funding process, and with a simple majority vote, Republicans could take away the investments they all voted for—many of them voted for and renege on their word and spoil—the bipartisan appropriations process. That is a road Senate Republicans would be wise not to go down.

If Republicans cave to Donald Trump and gut these investments agreed to by both parties, that would be an affront—a huge affront—to the bipartisan appropriations process. It is absurd to expect Democrats to play along with funding the government if Republicans are just going to renege on a bipartisan agreement by concocting rescissions packages behind closed doors that can pass with only their votes—not the customary 60 votes required in the appropriations process. The 60-vote process almost always ensures bipartisanship.

Worse, there are alarming reports that Donald Trump plans to bring additional rescissions packages down the line to codify the DOGE. These rescissions may be small compared to the rescissions they will put on the floor later. Look at the new budget that Trump has proposed.

There have also been reports that OMB Director Russell Vought—and perhaps the President himself—promised hard-right Republicans in the House additional cuts on programs they detest as a way to secure the votes for their big, ugly bill. These cuts

may be unlawful if the reports prove true.

This is not a bait and switch; it is a bait and poison to kill. It is not a bait and switch; it is a bait and poison to kill. This is deeply troubling and will threaten to further poison bipartisanship—a crucial ingredient for this institution to function.

I urge Senate Republicans to press "pause" on their partisan rescission package and instead work with Democrats on a bipartisan appropriations process to fund the government. That bipartisan process has begun in the Appropriations Committee, and I am hopeful more progress will be made later this week as the committee begins their markups on the first three bills.

So, again, Senate Republicans have a choice to make. They can keep bowing to Donald Trump. They can continue walking on eggshells, trying not to upset him, giving him what he wants even at the cost of breaking the law and hurting the people back home. Or they can do their jobs. They can stand up to Donald Trump and reject this rescission package that would gut funding for critical programs with a simple majority vote. They can work with Democrats on a bipartisan, good-faith negotiation to fund the government later this year.

This is not just about one rescission package. This is not just about one appropriations process, as important as those are. This is about the role of Congress as a coequal branch with the Executive, as the Founding Fathers proposed. Most importantly, this is about protecting the well-being of Americans back home.

VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, the VA workforce—Donald Trump and Secretary Collins are manufacturing a cynical staffing crisis at the Veterans' Administration.

Earlier this year, we learned that Secretary Collins announced plans for a wide-scale, 80,000-plus employee reduction of the workforce at the VA, putting the well-being of our veterans at immediate risk. There was never any transparency for these plans, and many of the decisions were clearly done haphazardly, without thinking through the consequences.

Yesterday, the VA released another alarming announcement, saying they are on pace to lose 30,000 staffers without having to resort to a reduction in force—as if that made things better. They proposed 80,000, and because of huge pressure—mainly from our veterans and our veterans groups—they backed off. But make no mistake about it, a cut of 30,000 will decimate the ability of the VA to provide good healthcare to our veterans, who have risked their lives for us.

Secretary Collins is making the VA so toxic that workers are leaving on their own. The workers—I have talked

to so many of them—are dedicated to helping our veterans, and when they see the administration just slashing and burning the VA without any concern for the consequences or why people were fired—the bottom line is still this: Thanks to Donald Trump and Secretary Collins, tens of thousands of highly skilled workers are exiting the VA, and our veterans are the ones that suffer.

I have heard this from veterans over and over again. One story sticks out in my mind. A woman who served in Afghanistan got PTSD and was treated at the VA hospital near Buffalo, and then, because she saw the dedication of those VA workers, she became an employee. She worked really hard. She was dedicated to the veterans. She knew she could probably make more money in another job. But she got home one Friday night and saw on her computer “You are RIF’d”—which means you are fired—with no reason why and not even a chance to come back into the office to pick up her mementos she had there—pictures of her loved ones.

Donald Trump likes to pretend that he cares about our armed services members and veterans, but actions speak louder than words, and Donald Trump’s actions when it comes to sabotaging the VA are disgusting. And the worst part about what is happening at the VA is the timing. While Donald Trump creates a staffing crisis at the VA, his big, ugly bill will jeopardize Medicaid coverage for veterans as well as shut down hospitals that serve veterans and thereby put even more strain on the VA. It is a vicious cycle, a cynical double whammy where veterans pay the ultimate price for Donald Trump’s cruelty.

The administration should immediately reverse course and refill these positions and make sure the VA operates at full capacity.

NOMINATION OF BRYAN BEDFORD

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, finally, on the nomination of Bedford to the FAA, later this evening, Senate Republicans will vote to advance Donald Trump’s nominee to lead the FAA, Bryan Bedford.

To say that Mr. Bedford is a deeply flawed nominee would be putting it mildly. Throughout his career as an airline executive and during his hearing, Mr. Bedford has shown a callous disregard for the 1,500-hour rule and even refused to commit to protecting the rule if confirmed.

I worked long and hard with the families of Flight 3407, years ago, to establish the 1,500-hour rule after they lost all their loved ones on a tragic plane crash that occurred on a winter’s night in Western New York. They have worked so hard, and they are so proud of their accomplishments. In the face of unspeakable loss, they worked relentlessly to change America’s aviation laws to prevent a tragedy like that that happened to their families.

Today, the 1,500-hour rule is the gold standard for pilot training. So affirming the 1,500-hour rule should be the easiest thing in the world for someone nominated to oversee the FAA, but Mr. Bedford failed again and again to do so.

Weakening the 1,500-hour rule is dangerous and could cost lives. With aviation safety top of mind, Americans don’t want pilots with less training, which would happen if the 1,500-hour rule were not extended, were repealed or not enforced.

Americans don’t want the FAA weakening safety standards, but I fear that is precisely what Mr. Bedford will do: weaken the 1,500-hour rule, weaken safety standards, and prioritize profits over passenger safety.

The American people deserve far better than an FAA Administrator who isn’t fully committed to their safety. The Senate should reject Mr. Bedford’s nomination.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The Democratic whip.

CENTRAL TEXAS FLOODS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, summer camp is a great memory for so many of us. You think about the good times we had, at the right moment in life, with a lot of friends, learning the basics of swimming, archery, target shooting, and other things, like camping out—memories you carry for a lifetime, wonderful memories, a rite of passage for many individuals and families, a family tradition passed on to younger siblings and, ultimately, to our own children and grandchildren.

There are so many images in our minds, over the last several days, as to the tragedy that occurred in Central Texas. I know I speak for millions of Americans when I say we are heartbroken over the flash floods that devastated Central Texas this past weekend.

Early Friday morning, while most were fast asleep, a foot of rain fell onto Texas Hill Country. This deluge floated to the Guadalupe River, causing it to rise by 26 feet in 45 minutes—26 feet in 45 minutes.

Near the Guadalupe, a girls sleep away camp, Camp Mystic, which had been there for 99 years, was all but destroyed by the floods. Already, that camp has confirmed that 27 of their campers and counselors died in that flood—27.

I send my deepest condolences to the families and loved ones of those campers and counselors.

Tragically, the flooding in Texas continues to take lives. More than 100 peo-

ple have perished. That number is expected to grow, sadly, in the coming days.

In the midst of this disaster, I am heartened by the kindness and courage shown by the first responders and volunteers. Twenty separate agencies, at every level of government, have come together to help save lives. At Camp Mystic, the counselors, many of whom had just graduated from high school, risked their own lives to save younger campers. We will never forget that bravery.

This disaster has impacted people of both political faiths—Republicans and Democrats—and Independents as well.

I want to say this, and I say this on reflection of my career in the House and the Senate: I have never, to my knowledge—never—voted against disaster assistance for people in other States than my home State of Illinois. There, but for the grace of God, go my people that I represent. And I would hope that the Senate and the House would stand together, Democrats and Republicans, and say we are going to be there for the victims of this disaster.

I pray that we find the missing loved ones and that we take the necessary steps to stop another tragedy like this from occurring.

ONE BIG BEAUTIFUL BILL ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, this weekend, across the country, we observed our Nation’s 249th Independence Day, a day intended to celebrate a government of, by, and for the people, in Lincoln’s words. But this Independence Day was anything but a celebration in one respect, and that is because, this Fourth of July, the President and congressional Republicans decided to sign their so-called Big Beautiful Bill, and in so doing, they retreated from the values that our Founders etched in the Declaration, “that all Men are created equal,” not just the wealthy and well-connected.

Americans across this Nation overwhelmingly oppose this bill—and for good reason. You see, this bill signed by the President on the Fourth of July is the largest cut in healthcare and the largest cut in nutrition assistance in history, slashing more than \$1 trillion from healthcare programs like Medicaid and \$200 billion from the SNAP program.

Seventeen million Americans will lose their health insurance. Health insurance premiums will rise for another 20 million Americans. Three million people will have food taken off the table, including kids, seniors, and veterans.

I can’t understand the celebration of the facts that I have just read.

I have heard misstatements. One misstatement was: Don’t worry. The people we take off Medicaid will be the illegal immigrants.

They are not eligible for Medicaid, and they are certainly not in that calculation of 17 million Americans.