

My heart is also heavy when I consider the more than 100 individuals that are still missing, the toll that this has taken on their families.

The Santana family from Mobile was camping on the river for the 4th of July. Eddie and his wife Ileana and their granddaughter Mila Rose are still missing. Tragically, Camille, wife to Eddie Junior and mother to Mila Rose, was found yesterday and is now at peace with the Lord.

I continue to pray for this family from Mobile, their loved ones who wait and hope, and those who continue to search and rescue in Texas.

In fact, the devastating flash floods has triggered one of the largest search and rescue operations in Texas history. We have seen the better part of humanity through the more than 1,700 emergency responders and community and family members who are risking their own lives to evacuate campers and counselors and search for those who are missing.

To the heroic first responders who continue to conduct search and rescue, your country offers you the deepest gratitude for your bravery. As a country, we must surround those who are grieving with love and support. I continue to pray for the victims' loved ones, the survivors, and those who are still missing.

Mr. President, may their memories live on beyond just Camp Mystic and the Kerr County community, but across our Nation and our hearts forever.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, let me begin by joining the Senator from Alabama expressing my concern with her with what happened in Texas Hill Country, the flooding over the weekend. It was a sad chapter in our Nation's history and a tragic chapter in the history of these families. Our hearts and prayers are with them.

ONE BIG BEAUTIFUL BILL ACT

Mr. President, on a different topic, July 4 was the signing of the Big Beautiful Bill. That is what President Trump called it. Congressional Republicans celebrated. I did not. I opposed this legislation because what it did, I think, is going to hurt a lot of families.

Taking health insurance away from 17 million Americans, taking food assistance away from millions, as well, is no way for the United States to act when it comes to needy families.

Have you ever been without health insurance? Ever been to a point you went to a hospital and you didn't have health insurance? I have. I was a law student here in Washington. In my second year, God sent my wife and myself a beautiful baby girl who had a serious health condition. I ended up at Children's Hospital in DC here in the waiting room, not knowing who was going to walk through that door, what doctor will come into that room and treat my child.

I didn't have anything to say about it. I had no health insurance. I was at their mercy. Good people responded, but it is a time in my life I will never, ever forget.

For the President to sign a bill on the 4th of July that takes health insurance away from 17 million people is just plain wrong. Obamacare—the medical program that was initiated under President Obama—extended health insurance coverage to more than 20 million families, giving peace of mind knowing they were covered if something serious occurred; a cancer diagnosis, a serious trauma—they were covered.

This President celebrates taking away health insurance from 17 million people. To cut Medicaid like that is to cause terrible personal consequences to a family, but it is more than that.

Make no mistake, a family without health insurance in a desperate situation is going to do two things: Postpone medical care that is needed because they can't afford it or show up in an emergency situation at a hospital and beg for coverage and care. That is going to happen. So what happens to the hospital that provides that care?

For most places in America, the hospital will do its best to help the family, but the net result is the hospital is not going to be paid because there is no health insurance plan. And if they are not paid, what do they do with the expenses of that treated patient? They pass them along to other families.

So this Big Beautiful Bill the President signed takes health insurance away from 17 million families in Medicaid and raises the cost of healthcare for the rest of us. How can that be a good idea? And why would we do such a thing?

Well, the reasoning was very simple and direct: The President wanted to renew tax cuts for the wealthiest people in America—the wealthiest people.

Oh, DURBIN, you are making that up. You are a Democrat. You are going to say that whether it is true or not.

Here is what it boils down to. Elon Musk got a \$346,000 tax break by President Trump signing this bill into law. Do you think he noticed, a man who is a multibillionaire? He probably didn't. It didn't change his life one bit. But to the family without health insurance, you changed their life a lot.

RESCISSION

This time, President Trump has come back with a new idea that I want to discuss here today. The President has come to Congress's doorstep with a bill called a rescission bill.

One of my colleagues, at lunch, said we need a new word. I know what "rescission" is. He knows what "rescission" is. But the American people may not. It sounds like a foreign word, he said. It does, in a way, but it is a legal term. And it is a request to cut funding already appropriated.

So money appropriated by Congress, signed by a President, sent to the administration, they decide they are not

going to spend; they are going to rescind it—a rescission bill.

So here comes President Trump's first rescission bill in his second term. And what does he come up with? This request would cut \$1.1 billion from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Do you listen to public radio, public TV? Are you aware of what it does for your community?

This would eliminate any Federal assistance for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

It includes \$700 million, which is eliminated, to provide critical funding for local, public media. This would devastate more than 1,500 public radio and TV stations across this country.

The bottom line: Do you think we are better off with less information as Americans or more?

The bottom line: Do you want a choice to pick your own source of information? Do you want that choice to include the Corporation for Public Broadcasting?

The President says: No, we are not going to provide the assistance for that to continue.

What it means for small towns in Downstate Illinois and all the way up to Chicago, in the classrooms there, is that public media stations provide essential, nonpartisan news coverage, lifesaving emergency and weather alerts, and educational programs for our kids.

I don't know the circumstances in Texas for this terrible flooding, and I don't want to presume anything. But as a general rule, more emergency information available to American families is better than worse. President Trump wants to eliminate the source, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and that means in many communities in my State of Illinois and around the country, the radio will be silent, when it might be giving a warning—a warning that extreme weather is on the way.

For most rural communities, this local broadcasting is especially crucial. Rural public broadcasting stations are often the only source of local news—the only source of emergency alerts in the region.

These local stations, also, are truly independent. They reflect the needs of the community and the people that they serve. They go out of their way to be nonpartisan. I know because I have dealt with them for decades.

For example, let me tell you about one station, WTVP, the local PBS affiliate serving Central Illinois. They have a program called "A Shot of Ag," which shares stories and perspectives on farming, farm life, and the rural-urban divide in my State.

I am proud to be a Downstater. I am proud as well to represent the city of Chicago. Why would I want to cut off information for the Downstate farming community that is available through public broadcasting?

Right now, in my home State of Illinois, there are 5 counties out of the 102

counties that are news deserts. Forty other counties have one news source left for broadcast. This rescissions package would eliminate \$700 million in support of local radios and TV stations, forcing many of these rural stations with small donor bases to close, turn them off, and be unavailable to the people who live in the community.

In these remote Illinois counties, these stations deliver critical services that commercial broadcasters have abandoned in less profitable markets.

What does it mean? Once these stations are gone, they are gone. It changes the culture, the information, the future. And in times of crisis, that could mean, in the extreme, the difference between life and death.

Let me explain.

Radio stations in Alaska rely on the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to fund 98 percent of their operations. They will lose the ability to share information about terrible weather conditions that are threatening the people of Alaska.

In Alabama—a Senator was just here from Alabama—folks will go without emergency alerts during tornado scares.

And just this last weekend, as I mentioned, a deadly flash flood took the lives of over a hundred people—and counting, sadly—in rural Central Texas. While we don't know exactly what procedures were in place, we do know that this funding is vital for emergency alerts, especially when disasters happen in the middle of the night.

These are critical services, but President Trump doesn't agree. In his request to Congress, he justified cutting the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and here is what he said:

[F]ederal spending on [the Corporation for Public Broadcasting] subsidizes a public media system that is politically biased and is an unnecessary expense to the taxpayer.

If your family is warned of an extreme weather condition on the way and you find a safe place, it is necessary. It is essential as part of your responsibility to your family to protect the source of information.

These publicly funded local stations educate our kids, deliver emergency alerts, and inform our democracy. They are not an unnecessary expense by any measure. They are a lifeline.

I would like to share a story about the NPR affiliate WGLT, a public radio station owned by the Illinois State University, serving Normal, IL. WGLT hosts candidate events and forums ahead of each election. Their mission is to keep neighbors connected and talking to each other. Its goal is to keep polarization out of local government, and it does just that.

WGLT had 100 percent bipartisan participation from candidates in the McLean County municipal election event. And McLean County municipal voter turnout has increased in local elections, thanks to this public broadcasting station. For the President to

say they are politically biased is just plain false.

Another station, WQPT, is the Quad Cities', in Illinois, only locally owned station, serving eastern Iowa and western Illinois. It is more than just a TV station. WQPT's First Book Club outreach program provides five free books every year to at-risk kids by partnering with title I classrooms. They ensure the kids whose families can't afford to buy books or might otherwise not have access are given the opportunity to read and learn just like every other kid.

Since the start of the program, WQPT has given away 400,000 free books to kids from low-income, "English as a second language," rural, and special needs families. That is what Donald Trump calls "unnecessary expense to the taxpayer." It could be life-changing for that kid.

While Donald Trump says these rescissions and this rescission request is in the spirit of improving government efficiency, I ask: Is there anything efficient about denying information to American citizens, about not giving American citizens a choice when it comes to broadcasting?

I will tell you what this request for me is. It is an attack on rural America, just like the Big Beautiful Bill, because let's not forget: Thanks to the Big Beautiful Bill the President just signed into law, 300 rural hospitals could close around this country, closing their doors and the critical services they offer.

With this rescission request, small towns and rural communities are going to get hit again, essentially losing their only access to trusted local media in many instances. These cuts could irreparably harm communities across America that count on public media for 24/7 news, music, education programming, and emergency alert services.

I urge my Republican colleagues. Privately, they tell me they don't want to see the Corporation for Public Broadcasting go away. The question is, Will they step up next week and vote that way? Many of them represent rural areas, smalltown America. To stand up for these people and to vote down this request to cut funding that has long enjoyed bipartisan support, I believe that there will be bipartisan support for this.

I urge my colleagues to come to the floor today to speak on the subject.

And I am now going to yield the floor to my colleague Senator WYDEN from Oregon, who is next.

Senator WYDEN, take it away.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon is recognized.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, before he leaves the floor, let me thank Senator DURBIN for his work on this and on so many issues exactly like this. What Senator DURBIN's career has always been about is making sure that communities are stronger, more inclusive, and give everybody a shot at getting ahead, and I just want to thank him for

doing this and all the times over the years that we have had a chance to work together.

Now, as Senator DURBIN has indicated, a few days ago, Republicans rammed their budget bill through the Senate. In the coming weeks, they will force a vote on yet another dangerous piece of legislation. Any day now, the Senate is going to vote on a bill that will let Republicans revoke previously approved Federal funding for key services and key programs that our people rely on—all so they can follow through on Donald Trump's illegal and disastrous funding freeze he tried to implement earlier.

Under their bill, Republicans want to gut over 70 percent—7-0—70 percent of funding for public broadcasting. Now, when you hear the words "public broadcasting," a lot of people, of course, think about the beloved characters Elmo and Big Bird, who are wonderful. I remember that with our kids. At the same time, public broadcasting is a lot more than that.

Over the last several years, local newspapers and radio broadcasters have been sidelined in many parts of the country. They just don't have the funds to keep their doors open. Many are getting bought up by private equity funds and corporate and media conglomerates that sanitize and repackage local reporting to fit their own media narrative.

Oftentimes, these new owners close the doors of local papers altogether. This is especially true, as Senator DURBIN eloquently mentioned, and a challenge in rural areas. There, broadband access is often unreliable and often too expensive to get out far into these communities.

Meanwhile, news is increasingly driven by the interests of big cities sitting behind pay walls or requiring high-speed broadband to access it.

Now, this issue is a personal one for me. I am a journalist's kid. I grew up with a front-row seat seeing the importance of protecting reporters and the vital work they do. That work is central to our democracy.

My home State hasn't been immune to the changes in the media landscape. More and more, Oregonians turn to public TV and radio programs like Oregon Public Broadcasting for news and information. In some of my State's most rural areas, like, say, Halfway in Eastern Oregon, Oregon Public Broadcasting is the only broadcast station residents can access.

These programs are literally a lifeline for Oregonians during a time when local journalism is dying off.

Not only do these programs provide news that is trustworthy, they also serve as linchpins in State and local emergency alert programs. Oregon Public Broadcasting is a State primary station for our State's emergency alert system. The broadcasters work closely with Oregon's Office of Emergency Management and other first responders to monitor and alert residents about

statewide, regional, or national emergencies.

In 2024 alone, Oregon Public Broadcasting helped notify Oregonians about child abductions, severe storms, and flash floods. Unfortunately, just this past weekend, we saw the devastating impact of underfunded emergency alert systems with the deadly flash flooding in Texas.

As more details emerge, there is one area that seems to me to be clear: More could and should have been done to bolster the local emergency alert system to help avoid and limit the horrendous tragedies that we have watched nightly for the last few days.

As extreme, deadly weather events like this become more and more common, local, State, and Federal governments need to be investing in, not shrinking, systems like public TV and radio.

These programs play such an important role in emergency situations, helping to get the most up-to-date information to their viewers and listeners. Instead, Republicans are watching the catastrophic situation unfold in Texas and still plowing ahead with plans to essentially defund these local emergency alert systems anyway.

Cutting off this funding is going to be a death sentence for one of the most reliable sources of news and information that our people rely on.

And rural areas that aren't served by big corporate media companies are going to be hit the hardest. Defunding public broadcasting is going to take news even farther away from local communities. And I know the people of my State don't want to be dealt with by somebody from a town on the eastern seaboard in a high rise.

I am going to close with this: Everything Republicans have done since gaining their trifecta of power has been with the goal of helping corporations consolidate power and profits on the backs of everybody else. And, for me, this is a regular reality because I see it as the ranking Democrat on the Finance Committee, which has jurisdiction over taxes and trade and healthcare. This bill is no different from what we have seen over the last few weeks in terms of corporations consolidating power and benefiting from legislation.

If it passes, this bill is going to take a wrecking ball to the services that Americans across this country rely on. It is going to make communities less safe just so Republicans can brag about another partisan ideological trophy.

So that is what we are dealing with here. When Donald Trump says: We are going to do this, Republicans say: How high should we jump?

By passing this legislation, Republicans would send a message, once again, that they are willing and eager to give up their congressional power to the executive branch.

I so appreciate Senator DURBIN bringing this issue to the floor of the Senate to open a lot of eyes on what is on the

line because I know he—and we have talked about this before. We believe in a government that gives everybody a fair shot, gives everybody a chance to get ahead.

You have made that point today; that government is not just supposed to be about the mighty and the powerful and the people with money. And I thank you for this and all your wonderful service.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MORENO). The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, I want to join my colleagues in supporting the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. I want to talk about two things: one, the people we represent and why it is so important that we maintain this service that is so essential to their well-being, and second, I want to speak about the institution we are part of and why it is an absolute betrayal of this institution's values and procedures to try to cut this program in this way and at this time.

I mean, first of all, all of us have public broadcasting in our communities. One of the biggest challenges, especially in our rural communities, is all the forces that are fraying the bonds that have been so central to the quality of life in those communities. It is our community hospitals that are under such financial stress. It is the lack of manufacturing that we are trying to have come back, where there are good jobs. It is the depopulation, where we can't get folks—there are not enough folks to serve in the volunteer fire departments.

These are real challenges to who I think all of us here who represent rural folks appreciate are really among the best folks we have in this Nation. You know, it is rural folks who sign up and enlist in the military at a far greater percentage than other parts of America, who pay the price of wars in Iraq or Afghanistan or wherever it may be that the Commander in Chief and Congress send them.

We have had a discussion in here that I do believe is bipartisan about the importance of strengthening rural America and how to do it. It is a topic of ongoing conversation, and it should be.

But one of the institutions that have served your constituents in Ohio very well—Senator DURBIN's in Illinois, Senator WYDEN's in Oregon, Senator CANTWELL's in Washington, and my constituents in Vermont—is public broadcasting. It is the radio and the television.

One of the things that allow us to be united despite our differences is a shared understanding and knowledge of what is going on in our communities. That is what the news is about. It is not a propaganda machine. It is not advocating the point of view of the President or the point of view of the Senator from Vermont. It is giving information. At its most elemental level, it is giving dire information that is desperately needed when we have a natural disaster.

We in Vermont had a flood on this day in 2024. We had a flood on this day in 2023. The institution that was so essential to response, to information that was really vitally necessary, that allowed people to share the experience and figure out what to do, was Vermont Public.

It is important. It is not about politics; it is about the shared experience that people in a community need to have a sense of place to help them have confidence that they can count on one another, that they know where they live and they care about it.

So the question I have for us in respect to the responsibility that you have and I have to the people we represent is, when we know that there are these extraordinary, globalizing pressures, the demographic changes that are weakening the bonds of brotherhood, why would we compromise an institution that has served so many so well for so long? That weakens that sense of community, so why would we do that? There is not a good reason that we would do that. There is not a budgetary reason why we would do that. This is \$1.60. If we wipe out everything, it is about a buck-60 for every taxpayer in the country. Seriously? A cup of coffee? What does that cost? A cable TV subscription? What does that cost? And at what price?

That capacity to share information, to understand the experience, to appreciate the challenges that you face and your neighbors face—that is so essential for people to have the strength to carry on.

You know, Vermont Public started just around the time I went to Vermont, and it was on the third floor of an aging building, the Windsor Constitution House. It was started by five people who knew—they just didn't know better. They thought they could start something that would last, and they had no reason to think that other than they knew it would be beneficial to the folks in their community.

Those five people who started from nothing included classical music but news right in the beginning, Vermont news. That has become a statewide news source that folks in Bennington, up to Derby Line, that folks working in the barns milking cows, that folks on the factory floor all have on as I visit them. And they might have FOX News on. They might have MSNBC on. But the news they all have on is Vermont Public. That has been so beneficial to Vermont.

By the way, these news deserts that are afflicting all of us—what has helped us so much is that many of these extraordinarily gifted reporters who care about a sense of place, who have been on community newspapers, have now become the talent that has created this extraordinary institution of Vermont Public—great reporting.

So in a democracy, we all know we need this, and it is not because it is going to be an agent for our point of

view, but it is going to be a cohesive force in the community to help people figure out the path forward. We have to keep this.

You know, in Vermont, we have pretty generous folks. The drives that we have to raise money are pretty successful, and we get about 90 percent of our funding through that. That is a lot higher than most States. But the 10 percent we will lose will cost us about \$4½ million. That is real money for us.

So I just ask myself the question, when I know that the things I am saying about our appreciation of people in rural communities are things that every single one of us, Republican and Democrat, knows is true, and every single one of us, Republican and Democrat, would assert that we want to strengthen those rural communities because we have direct experience with how powerful and wonderful the people in those communities are—they don't complain. They work hard. They face adversity. They somehow toggle it together when it is always tough to pay your bills at the end of the month. And then they have this one news source that helps them so much to be good neighbors to people they disagree with on many other things.

Now, Vermont public television has also been tremendous. Vermont Public is both public broadcasting and public radio. They work together. And how many of our kids benefited from the extraordinary programming that helped kids share the values that are independent of what your political point of view is, values like goodness, values like tolerance, values like acceptance. That is what the program is about. It is values, shared values.

You can be the most conservative person in the world; you can be the most liberal person in the world; you have no right to be disrespectful because you are "right" politically.

This is an institution that has served us well at very little expense. It would be heartbreaking for us in Vermont to see the U.S. Senate give the back of the hand to those folks who, over 50 years ago, were inspired by a commitment to their neighbors throughout the State of Vermont and tell them that we want to take away their funding.

The second point I want to make is about the institution we are part of. We passed a budget. We appropriated money for this. Fifty-three Republicans supported it, right? That was 3 months ago. What has changed? Nothing has changed. DOGE came. Trump came. They are looking for scalps. Cut funding. Get rid of USAID. But we as an institution have the power of the purse. We had a negotiation. We came to a mutual decision that spending public dollars on public broadcasting was a good thing, and that was a negotiated outcome that now is being torn up—torn up.

So what does it do for the budgetary process where we have to go through a process that is extremely difficult be-

cause there are extremely different points of view about how best to spend money and where to spend it? But an institution can't survive if, at the end of that process, the agreement made becomes the agreement that is broken. It erodes trust. It demeans our institution. It makes weak the bonds of trust that we must have amongst us to come to resolutions and defend them and carry them out.

So we must not abandon the people we represent and the right they have to public broadcasting, and we cannot abandon the trust we must have in one another to keep our word. An agreement made must be an agreement kept.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I rise to join my colleagues. I want to thank the Senator from Illinois for helping to organize this today. I thank my colleague from Oregon and my dear colleagues from the Commerce Committee Senator WELCH and Senator BALDWIN.

We are here today to talk about an essential safety issue—it is really public safety—and somebody is trying to masquerade it as a fiscal responsibility issue.

The proposed rescission of \$1.1 billion from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting isn't just an attack on NPR and PBS; it is a reckless—reckless—endangerment of 13 million Americans who depend on these stations for life-saving emergency information. When the floods rise in the Southwest or wildfires rage in the West or hurricanes barrel down on the Atlantic or gulf coast, public broadcasters are often the only lifeline connecting families and rural communities to the crucial emergency information. This isn't hyperbole. These are the facts.

Consider what happened in Kentucky during the historic tornado of December 2021. When that devastating storm carved one of the longest tornado tracks in our Nation's history, WKMS public radio was often the sole source of news as the community suffered widespread power and communications outages. So families huddled in the dark and relied on battery-powered radios to receive lifesaving information. Without WKMS, many would have been completely shut off.

Look at Hurricane Helene just last year. Half a million Americans lost power across the Southeast; the internet failed; cell phone towers went dark, but Blue Ridge Public Radio kept broadcasting, providing the most reliable information when alternative sources simply would not function without electricity.

Even in the aftermath of the unthinkable situations that happened this past week in Texas, Texas Public Radio stayed on the air to provide updates on severe weather alerts, recovery efforts, and to help the community mourn and rebuild together.

The numbers are a sobering story as 79 radio stations and 33 TV stations

across 34 States will probably have to shut down if these cuts are enacted.

This chart shows the impacts that people are saying we have from our most vulnerable fire situations coming up. I think these are this year's numbers. That is in red. Our most vulnerable tornado—well, the Senator from Illinois knows this well. All of this in the light color, in the green, shows a very high—relatively high tornado risk. Then the last, our blue coastal areas, show a relatively high or high risk for hurricanes.

What do the black dots represent? What do the dots represent in each of these areas? Radio stations that will no longer exist if this rescission comes into power. If you cut these programs, you are going to lose the revenue from these radio stations and risk their being shut down.

Now, why would we do that?

For me, in the central part of our State, I guarantee you that I don't want to do it. I don't want to do it in Yakima, WA, where KDNA serves the surrounding community that has a high risk of wildfires. Northwest Public Broadcasting maintains 24-7 fire coverage from May through October, tracking blazes that threaten lives and property, and they have expanded coverage especially to address wildfire communication gaps for Spanish-speaking northwesterners. This is a big agriculture section of our State, and we want to ensure that everybody receives the alerts regardless of their language.

What the President's rescission ignores is that public broadcasters serve as the official resource in at least 20 States' emergency plans. The NPR manager—they manage the public radio satellite system—receives emergency alert systems that are fed directly from FEMA. That means they are part of our emergency response. PBS operates the warning alert and response network, which transmitted over 11,000 emergency alerts last year alone. That is a 33-percent increase from the previous year. Let me repeat that: Eleven thousand emergency alerts went out. That is 11,000 times that these radio stations in these areas I am talking about warned people about dangerous and life-threatening risk.

In Oklahoma, this March, the public broadcaster issued 65 fire alerts across 13 counties in just 10 days, and 6 evacuation orders were transmitted. KOSU operates the system at a cost of \$751,000 annually, with the CPB providing crucial support. This is similar to funding like local-focused media in the Alaska Rural Communications Service, Northwest Public Broadcasting, or Harvest Media in the Great Plains. It would cost local broadcasters more than double of CPB's current contribution to replace these critical services.

So this isn't smart budgeting. It is definitely penny wise and pound foolish. These will cost lives instead of saving dollars. Rural communities face

the greatest threat. We know that. We just learned this even more this past week with these horrific tragedies. When a severe storm knocks out power, when tornadoes approach, when cell phones fail, when battery-powered car radios don't work, we need to make sure that there are radio stations that do.

Since 1975, Congress has recognized that public broadcasting requires stability to serve communities effectively. So this isn't a partisan issue; it is a practical issue. We need to say that we are going to save public radio. When the next disaster strikes—and trust me, it will. I live in a very disaster-prone part of the United States, with all sorts of issues, from fires to volcanoes, to tsunamis, to floods, to lots of things. We need to be able to access potentially lifesaving information.

So I urge my colleagues to reject these dangerous rescissions and make the investment here that is helping us save lives across the United States.

I yield to my colleagues.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. President, I rise today in strong opposition to President Trump's plan to claw back funding that Congress approved on a bipartisan basis. Not only does this so-called rescissions package defund critical programs that Wisconsinites rely on, it fundamentally undermines the ability of Congress to write and pass bipartisan appropriations bills.

To my colleagues who push for more bipartisanship in our work here, passing rescissions packages like this will only make that bipartisanship more difficult. It will mean more partisanship, more deadlock, and, ultimately, a greater risk of government shutdowns. That is why we have not passed a partisan rescissions bill like this package before.

Like any bipartisan agreement, there are always things in annual appropriations bills that we don't like or that we would write differently, and there are things that my Republican colleagues don't like or they would write differently. But how can one party negotiate and make concessions as a part of bipartisan annual appropriations bills if the majority party can just walk back those agreements months later?

I would like to start by calling out the harm this package will do for Wisconsinites in the short term—in particular, cuts to public broadcasting.

One in four Wisconsinites lives in a rural community, and many rely on public broadcasting for local news, emergency alerts, and free educational programming, especially for children. Wisconsin Public Radio is the primary broadcast relay for Wisconsin's Emergency Alert System, including AMBER Alerts and lifesaving weather alerts like tornado and flash flood warnings. We need to look no further than the absolutely devastating news out of Texas to see that access to high-quality and timely information can mean the difference between life and death.

Access to local news from reporters and sources that community members trust is more important than ever. Stripping this funding would endanger local news that is already disappearing in so many Wisconsin communities. In 2024, almost one in five newspapers in Wisconsin shut down, according to a recent study. That same study found that Wisconsin's northernmost county, Bayfield County, had no local news source while 22 counties across Wisconsin had just 1 local news source.

That is where public media plays a critical role in keeping Wisconsinites connected with their communities. Stations like WXPB in Rhinelander will be under threat if this package advances, one of the few news sources producing local reporting in Wisconsin's Northwoods and Michigan's Upper Peninsula or Radio Milwaukee, which, because of public funding, can broadcast local school board meetings for parents and families to stay in touch with what is happening in their schools. Without Federal support for public media, this critical information could disappear for Wisconsin families.

The President's effort to take this funding from local communities and endanger the vital information that Wisconsinites need to stay safe is all because he is trying to desperately pay for his deficit bomb of a bill that just got rammed through Congress. That bill gives huge tax breaks to the wealthy and big corporations. President Trump and the Republicans are paying for some of it by gutting Medicaid and kicking families off nutrition assistance, and now they are taking away access to public media.

Beyond the clawbacks included in this package, the second point I want to make is about what these proposed cuts will mean for Congress and our ability to write bipartisan appropriations bills going forward.

It is clear to me that President Trump does not respect the separation of powers, but I remain hopeful that my Republican colleagues will stand with Democrats to protect the powers given to Congress by our Constitution. With this rescissions package, House Republicans bent their knee to the "king" and, once again, green-lighted Trump's wishes. I am asking my Republican Senate colleagues not to follow suit because the future of bipartisan compromise depends upon it. The package that the White House proposed and the House approved claws back billions in funding that Republicans and Democrats approved on a bipartisan basis. If Republicans approve this package on a party-line vote, it will fundamentally undermine Congress's ability to set funding levels. If Senate Republicans allow this bill to pass, we know that the administration will keep sending us new rescissions packages.

The President has already put a target on the bipartisan investments he wants to claw back. We have seen his funding freezes from cuts to cancer and Alzheimer's research to withholding

funding for afterschool programs and slashing workforce training programs. This White House froze funding that was approved by this very body, written and passed by both Republicans and Democrats.

If my Republican colleagues approve this reversal, then what is next? What is to stop every future majority party from throwing away months of bipartisan work? What incentive will minority parties have to come to the table to get a bipartisan funding bill over the finish line if the party in power can turn around and go back on its word?

I ask my Republican colleagues to consider what advancing this package will mean for the next round of negotiations that we are about to enter for fiscal year 2026. I believe the future of bipartisan compromise hangs in the balance here. I urge my colleagues to vote no on this rescissions package.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the following Senators be permitted to speak prior to the scheduled vote: myself for up to 5 minutes, Senator LUJÁN for up to 5 minutes, Senator BLUNT ROCH-ESTER for up to 5 minutes, Senator MARKEY for up to 8 minutes, and Senator ERNST for up to 5 minutes.

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

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I thank Senator DURBIN for bringing us together, and I rise today in strong opposition to this request that Congress take away funding that has already passed on a bipartisan basis—Democrats and Republicans working together, House and Senate.

This proposal would gut already designated funding for public broadcasting and slash critical international aid funding, programs that have long had bipartisan support.

As the daughter of a newspaperman, I know how important public media and the free press are to our country. Public broadcasting reaches nearly 99 percent of Americans—99 percent—with programming they don't have to pay for, delivering educational programming for our kids, coverage of local news stories, and lifesaving emergency alerts.

I can't tell you how many times, in some of the most remote areas of my State, in that tip of Minnesota—I was just listening to the public radio station up there—they will inform you of what is happening with wildfires in Canada, because they wouldn't really care about that in certain parts of the country, even in certain parts of my own State. But it matters to people for emergency reasons. Or the flooding of roads matters to them. They don't even know if they can get from one place to another. We have had sudden incidences, even in those remote areas, where it is the source of news.

Access to this programming is important to people in urban, suburban, and

rural areas alike. We have long agreed on a bipartisan basis to support the more than 1,500 local and regional public TV and radio stations throughout the country. I loved the map that Senator CANTWELL showed us because it showed how these stations are distributed across the Nation, in what we might call the reddest of States, in the most rural areas. I would argue that, in some of those rural areas, they are the most important.

And yet they are trying to undo this critical funding—but not all of them. I understand that people are working together on this, and I think we must continue the support.

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting supports public TV stations in my State—in places like Duluth and Granite Falls and Austin—and supports 16 public radio stations across our State, like the ones in Grand Rapids, in Bemidji, and in Brainerd. We have a long history of producing public programming that is quite outstanding in our State, from “A Prairie Home Companion,” which many have heard of, to “Marketplace,” which came out of local stations out of Minnesota.

Public media in Minnesota has also created amazing original TV series, like the ones to inspire more young people to enter STEM fields and spotlighting our artists and our local chefs.

And we can't forget the impact on kids. When kids are exposed to so much bad stuff on the internet—PBS Kids: 15 million monthly viewers. They don't have those kinds of bad ads that pop up that they see or the bad links that they see. They see things that are suitable for kids, and parents know it.

All across the country, in times of crisis, public radio is essential to public safety. The Florida Public Radio Emergency Network provides geotargeted information with live forecasts, evacuation routes, and shelter details.

Alabama Public TV serves as the emergency alert station hub for the State, broadcasting signals to all radio and TV broadcasters throughout the State, as well as is the primary outlet for AMBER Alerts for missing kids.

Twin Cities PBS launched the Nation's first 24/7 TV channel broadcasting realtime emergency alerts. And, recently, in the wake of the horrific shooting of the State lawmakers in the State, when portions of our State were in shelter-in-place when a madman was out loose, Minnesota Public Radio kept people informed around the clock about how to stay safe, about where the shelter-in-place areas were, and what was happening with the manhunt.

It is NPR that continues to report on State Senator John Hoffman and his wife Yvette, whom I got to talk with yesterday, about their recovery, even when the national attention has moved on. That is what local public TV and local radio do for us.

This request, of course, would also deepen the damage when it comes to

foreign aid. The President would impose major cuts to PEPFAR, the program that began under President George W. Bush, supported by so many Republicans in this Chamber, to prevent the spread of HIV-AIDS. This has bipartisan support. It is credited with saving over 25 million lives.

The rescission would also weaken our other global health efforts, whether it is Ebola or malaria or bird flu. We know so many of these start in different places. And we can't just bury our heads in the sand. We actually need to take them on where they are because you just can't hope that no one is going to come knocking at your door—because it does, and it comes in the form of a very dangerous disease, or to your constituents who are stranded over in another place.

Or the need to help other countries so you increase your own national security—we know that very much in Minnesota, with our Somalian population and what they have faced in Somalia.

We know that when it comes to other countries that actually come up through all of it and are some of our best trading partners.

The President's proposed cuts to funding for UNICEF are also misguided. We should be at the forefront of supporting bright futures for kids.

This is about leadership. It is about national security. It is about building trading partners that are so important for us in the Midwest with our farmers. It is about the USAID Food for Peace Program. Minnesota farmers and ag businesses sold a total of \$70 million to that program in 2024 alone. When America shares its bounty with the world and we do it in a smart and targeted way, we benefit.

Hacking away at public broadcasting and public radio is not just shortsighted; it is dangerous. And the same for the foreign aid. These investments are a small cost compared to what we get out of them.

We have made a decision—a Democratic Senate at the time, a Republican House at the time, together—on how we want to spend our funding. This is on us to stand up for, yes, the separation of powers but to stand up for the people in our community. I hope we can do it on a bipartisan basis.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. LUJÁN. Mr. President, I want to thank my friend from Illinois Senator DURBIN for his leadership and commitment to saving public broadcasting and educational programming for Americans all across our beautiful country.

Now, unfortunately, just yesterday in New Mexico, the Rio Ruidoso rose to nearly 20 feet in a matter of minutes amid heavy rainfall, sweeping away homes, debris, and people. The flooding claimed the lives of three people already, including two children. Rescue missions are currently underway. The same area was also ravaged by a wild-

fire just last year. Our first responders are working around the clock to protect their neighbors and ensure help arrives when every second counts.

Now, if it weren't for the strict rules in the U.S. Senate on the floor, I would be playing audio right now—audio from the mayor of Ruidoso, Mayor Crawford, who was speaking to his constituents on KRUI's “The Mountain” radio program.

Now, Mayor Crawford told his residents:

We did have over 30 swift water rescues . . . have some folks taken to the hospital.

We have been up and down trails looking at the homes that have been torn up there . . . these people have been in these homes for 70-plus years.

We're issuing alerts and warnings to get to higher ground.

These are the alerts that communities in Ruidoso and other parts of the country need when disaster strikes. They save lives.

Many of us in this Chamber have witnessed the devastation caused by natural disasters in our own States, in our own communities. Now, tonight, I am praying for all those families across Texas, for a safe return of those who are missing and for those who lost loved ones.

New Mexico is far too familiar with devastation and destruction that comes from fires and flooding and other natural disasters. Three years ago, we experienced one of the worst fires in our State's history, with the Hermit's Peak and Calf Canyon fire. A critical part of that response was our local radio stations and public broadcasters disseminating information in realtime about evacuations, shelter information, food drives, and State and Federal resources.

As a matter of fact, at a time when mobile phones weren't working—most communications were down—it was only these local radio stations, which were also benefiting from the transmitters from public broadcasting, that were able to communicate with so many constituents. These communications are now under attack by congressional Republicans and the White House.

Senate Democrats are sounding the alarm and leading the charge to stop this dangerous rescission package before it harms families, communities, and the public broadcasting that they all rely on. From the moment we wake up to the time we turn in at night, New Mexicans rely on radio and public broadcasting to stay safe during natural disasters and to connect with trusted news, educational programming, and our favorite New Mexico musicians—sometimes even a basketball game or two.

Now, over the past several weeks, I have received texts, calls, and people coming to my office pleading with us in the U.S. Senate to save public radio and public broadcasting. New Mexicans who work at radio stations are calling in to say that they are worried about

losing their jobs. From every corner of our State, New Mexicans are speaking out with one clear message: Do not mess with public broadcasting.

Radio is one of the most dependable ways to get information out when disaster strikes a community. I have witnessed this firsthand. That is why the Federal Government must do everything it can to support families in crisis and ensure that they have the resources and information they need to stay safe. Stripping \$1.1 billion from public broadcasting puts millions of lives at risk, including first responders and families who depend on emergency radio systems and public broadcasts to stay informed and stay safe.

Now, I heard from a broadcaster in New Mexico this week who said:

We are literally saving lives and finding ways to save more. Please do everything you can to stop this rescission.

Now, the White House and congressional Republicans are making decisions that will leave New Mexicans in the dark.

A teacher in Albuquerque shared with me that she relies on public broadcasting in her classroom every day. Parents have shared that they use public media to teach their children about New Mexican culture, history, and tradition.

These stations are central to community life. They provide unbiased news, local reporting, and educational programming that connects people to each other and to the world.

Yet Republicans are trying to eliminate public broadcasting to strip communities of trusted information. If this Republican rescission package goes through, it will only divide us further: fewer voices, fewer facts, fewer connections.

Americans are pleading not to be left in the dark. I urge my colleagues to listen to them and to vote against this reckless cut to public broadcasting.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Ms. BLUNT ROCHESTER. Mr. President, I thank the Presiding Officer and I thank, also, Senator DURBIN for providing this opportunity to speak up against this rescissions package.

When I ran for the Senate, I never thought that I would have to stand up to defend "Mr. Rogers," "Sesame Street," and "Curious George," but here we are. And it is hard to believe that, about 56 years ago, Fred Rogers himself actually came to the Senate to advocate for PBS funding. And in his closing, he shared a song that he wrote to help teach children how to deal with their feelings of anger.

The lyrics ask: What do you do with the mad that you feel?

I find his words really poignant at this moment of incredible strife in our country because Mr. Rogers reminds us that we all have ownership over our actions. In his words:

It's great to be able to stop when you've planned a thing that's wrong.

And respectfully to my colleagues across the aisle, this is wrong, and the American people need you to stop. Stop prioritizing big corporations over the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

The strange thing is, this is actually a corporation that the Trump administration is refusing to protect, and it is the one American families rely on for news, for education, and for public safety and weather reports.

This harmful package, which had bipartisan support—funding that was approved by Congress—would cut \$1.1 billion from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, which could force local TV and radio stations to close.

It would gut funding for programming like PBS NewsHour, a trusted news and public affairs show. It would cut funding for PBS Kids, a trusted and safe source of children's programming.

And speaking of trust, while only 33 percent of Congress is trusted, 66 percent of Americans trust PBS. And who will be most hurt by these cuts? Families in low-income and rural areas. Why? Because not everyone can stream Netflix or watch Ms. Rachel on YouTube.

In Delaware and across our country, there are thousands and thousands of families who still don't have access to the internet in their homes, which means PBS is the best, most stable source of information for those households. And this package could cut them off.

These are programs with generational impact from "Sesame Street," which has been teaching young children like my granddaughter to count and spell since 1969; to "The Gilded Age," a show I love, that gives a dramatic glimpse into the history of our country.

PBS, to me, is like a living library, granting access to art, food, culture, travel, and history across our Nation and the world. But it is not just educational; it is not just cultural. It is lifesaving.

PBS covers 97 percent of American households, ensuring lifesaving alerts reach communities when other systems fail. They support our country's emergency alert system, including earthquake early warnings, amber alerts, and warnings when severe weather is imminent. This is vital service, and cutting funding for these programs would be devastating.

My colleagues, as we embark on the 250th anniversary of our country, our goal should be expanding participation in this great American experiment through education, information, and knowledge. These form the foundation of an informed citizenry, and informed communities create a stronger democracy.

As I close in the words of Randy Farmer, the chairman of Delaware Public Media, my home State's NPR affiliate, who said:

Independent journalism is the lifeline we depend on for a free and informed democracy.

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting provides access to independent, nonpartisan journalism. To me, it is the epitome of public service.

So to bring it back to where I started with Mr. Rogers, I urge my colleagues to stop what they have planned because it is wrong.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I rise today to speak not just in opposition to the proposed rescission of public broadcasting funds but in strong support of something far more important: the survival of local public radio and television stations across the country.

These local stations are lifelines. And in moments of crisis, they become critical tools for public safety. When hurricanes knock out power, when wildfires force evacuations, when floods or winter storms threaten entire towns, it is local public stations that deliver the emergency information people need in realtime.

Public broadcasters also serve a critical role in distributing alerts to other commercial stations serving as an entry point for the information. It helps to connect the entire emergency alert system.

Public media stations are embedded in the communities, trusted by their neighbors and committed to getting lifesaving information out. Pulling the rug out from under these stations—especially in rural areas where they may be the only source of local news and alerts—is a threat to public safety.

That is not hypothetical. That is reality. These stations don't just serve in times of disaster. They serve every day by delivering local news that no one else is covering. In an era of media consolidation and nationalization, public radio and television step in. They are the ones at the townhall meeting, the school board meeting, the high school debate tournaments.

They are covering water quality reports, zoning changes, and the voices of everyday Americans. These stories aren't trending on social media, but they matter deeply to the people who live in these communities.

And then there is the service these stations provide to our youngest viewers and listeners. For millions of families, especially in low-income and rural areas, local public television is the only source of high-quality educational programming for kids, and it is free. There are no ads, just storytelling that teaches kindness and curiosity and literacy and respect. These stations are community institutions run by local staff and listened to and watched by local residents.

In fact, let's be honest, from 7 in the morning to 5 every afternoon, it is the children's television network, and that is why the polling says that 80 percent of Black and White and Latino and Asian families support that children's television. It is the children's television network from 7 in the morning

until 5 o'clock every single day that has been serving America for generations.

When we talk about eliminating funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, we talk about cuts that are going to imperil the survival of many public stations in rural and underserved areas, which often rely on the Corporation for Public Broadcasting for more than half of their budgets.

We should be finding ways to strengthen these stations, not eliminate the modest Federal support that keeps their doors open and their transmitters running. And I urge my colleagues to protect local public broadcasting, protect the signal that reaches the farmhouse, the mountain top, the Tribal land, the city block. Protect the station that covers your community when no one else does.

I thank each of you for your consideration on that issue.

#### NOMINATION OF WILLIAM BRIGGS

Mr. President, on a second subject, as ranking member of the Senate Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee, I rise today to oppose the nomination of William Briggs to be Deputy Administrator of the Small Business Administration.

On April 2, the committee reported out the Briggs nomination by a vote of 10 to 9—not one Democrat voted in support. So why, you are asking? Why? Well, because the Trump administration is causing chaos and cuts and confusion at SBA.

Its leadership has failed to be open and transparent with Congress about their activities, despite promises from Administrator Loeffler that she would be responsive to all members of the committee.

But because of this administration's utter contempt for accountability and their shameless lack of transparency, this SBA has failed to provide us with the information necessary to hold them accountable and ensure small businesses are being supported.

We still do not know if SBA has sufficient staff on hand to carry out its core programs, including disaster assistance and access to capital. But that hasn't stopped them from proposing to cut the Agency by 33 percent.

We still don't know what grants and contracts have been terminated because of President Trump's Executive order eliminating programs to promote diversity and equity and inclusion.

We still don't know the extent to which DOGE staffers gained access to confidential small business data at SBA. We still do not know which SBA regional and district offices will be relocated or remain open to serve small business owners, including our Springfield district office in Massachusetts.

And we still do not know the justification for eliminating congressionally authorized programs aimed at helping women and veterans and small businessowners.

The SBA and Administrator Loeffler have been unable to provide sufficient

answers to any of these questions or requests. And those questions are important because Congress must know whether our small businesses are getting the support they need and deserve. This is the only way to know whether the program is working before it is too late.

Unfortunately, I don't expect Mr. Briggs to stand up to this administration and put small businesses first. In written responses to committee Democrats, Mr. Briggs was very evasive. He consistently deferred to the classic Trump talking points: I am not an SBA employee. I will follow the law.

Well, we all know that this administration does anything but follow the law, so let us be clear: If Mr. Briggs is unwilling to be forthcoming with Democrats on the Small Business Committee during the confirmation hearing process, how can we bet that he will be unwilling to be transparent, and how can we not bet that he is going to become unwilling to stand up for small businesses once he has that job?

So as a result, I urge my colleagues to vote no on this nomination and to demand that the Trump administration provide Congress with the information we need to hold them accountable and ensure that they are serving our 34 million small business owners.

I can promise the American people that as the ranking member of the Small Business Committee and the members of the committee, we will stand—we will continue to stand and ask questions that are not being answered by this SBA.

Mr. President, with that, I urge a "no" vote on the nomination that is pending before this body.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, today the Senate will vote to advance the nomination of Mr. William Briggs to be the Deputy Administrator of the Small Business Administration. I strongly urge my colleagues to vote yes in support of his nomination.

As chair of the Small Business Committee, I have had the honor of getting to know Mr. Briggs and have seen firsthand what he is bringing to the table. He is sharp; he is steady; and he is the right person for the job.

Throughout the committee's rigorous nomination process, Mr. Briggs showed up prepared. He was respectful and ready to engage. The professionalism and seriousness with which he approached the committee made it clear that he would be ready to lead on day one.

In fact, Mr. Briggs is no stranger to the responsibilities of SBA leadership, having previously served as the Acting Administrator of the Office of Capital Access.

During his nomination hearing, he emphasized how his previous work rolling out the Paycheck Protection Program equipped him with practical knowledge and the necessary experience to effectively root out fraud and waste throughout the SBA.

As we continue to uncover and pursue fraud, it is critical that we have a Deputy Administrator who can identify and evade those pitfalls while simultaneously ensuring the Agency's day-to-day operations are running smoothly.

Mr. Briggs has also committed to working hand in hand with SBA's field offices to ensure that small businesses from any community, instead of just certain demographics, can access the support that they deserve.

This position isn't just professional for Mr. Briggs, but it is also personal. As a former entrepreneur who ran two small businesses, he knows what it is like to balance the books, tackle red-tape, and manage employees.

He also understands the pressures and uncertainty that so many small business owners face every single day. The one-two punch of his government experience and private sector entrepreneurship makes Mr. Briggs the perfect candidate to help Administrator Loeffler make the SBA more accountable, more efficient, more transparent, and more focused on its core mission, which is helping America's job creators succeed.

Let's give Main Street America someone who will fight with them and for them.

Again, I urge all of my colleagues to support Mr. Briggs' nomination for Deputy Administrator of the Small Business Administration.

I yield the floor.

#### VOTE ON KUPOR NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. JUSTICE). Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Kupor nomination?

Ms. ERNST. 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 bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. PAUL), and the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS).

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

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL) and the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY) are necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 49, nays 46, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 379 Ex.]

#### YEAS—49

Banks	Cassidy	Curtis
Barrasso	Collins	Daines
Blackburn	Cornyn	Ernst
Boozman	Cotton	Fischer
Britt	Cramer	Grassley
Budd	Crapo	Hagerty
Capito	Cruz	Hawley