

ranchers depend on. But as I said then, farmers' and ranchers' priorities are going to continue to be a priority here in the Senate, and the Agriculture appropriations bill is an example of that.

Our colleagues on the Appropriations Committee have reported a bill that provides robust funding to support America's farmers and ranchers. It provides important funding to the Farm Service Agency, including support for \$10.5 billion in capital access for farmers and ranchers. And it supports efforts to track foreign-owned land to prevent our adversaries like China from buying up America's farmland.

It also makes investments in rural development programs at USDA. In South Dakota, that money goes far in supporting water programs, electricity, and broadband programs in rural areas.

This bill also invests in conservation programs, and it advances efforts to help farmers and ranchers get their products to the market. I am glad to see support for processing capacity for meat, poultry, and egg products. And I am pleased that this bill also promotes programs that help State-inspected plants operate across State lines, which provides producers with more options for their products and supports smaller processors.

The bill also includes funding for the Agricultural Marketing Service to help facilitate greater access to international markets for American agriculture products. And the updated market data that will result from investments in this bill will help farmers and ranchers make better decisions about their businesses.

In just the past year, the threat to our food supply posed by diseases and pests has been national news. I am glad to see the Trump administration's actions to address bird flu and its effect on the egg supply have had a positive impact. And the Agriculture appropriations bill continues efforts to combat bird flu as well as other potentially devastating threats like chronic wasting disease and the New World screwworm.

Nutrition is another important part of agriculture policy, and the bill that has been reported out provides robust funding for programs like WIC and SNAP, and I appreciate Senator HOEVEN's work to find offsets for increased spending on these programs.

The work of feeding America and the world isn't easy, but I know our farmers and ranchers take a lot of pride in what they do. They know they are not just working toward the next harvest; they are keeping a heritage alive, a way of life that none of us can live without.

I appreciate the work the Appropriations Committee has put in to support our farmers and ranchers and, in particular, the leadership of Chair COLLINS and Senator HOEVEN. And to America's farmers and ranchers, we will continue to have your back.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive 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 PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

CENTRAL TEXAS FLOODS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, we continue to pray for the families of the 132 people now confirmed dead in Central Texas. We continue to pray for everyone still missing. We thank our heroic first responders who risked their lives to save those trapped in the storm.

Now, in the aftermath of the tragedy in Texas, some of us asked very necessary questions about how to prevent something like this from ever happening again: Did Federal funding cuts hinder rescue efforts? Did staffing shortages make it harder to respond?

Of course, Donald Trump didn't like these questions. He threw a fit, a tantrum. He called them lies. He said they were inappropriate. That is how he talks.

We know now why he threw a fit and acted so defensively—because, sadly, we may well have been right. Donald Trump and Kristi Noem have spent months attacking FEMA, calling for its elimination, slashing its budget, and hollowing out its workforce. And, now, their own chaos is catching up with them in the worst, worst way.

Now, they are trying to change their tune, saying they don't want to get rid of FEMA. A few months ago, they were all for getting rid of it. Now, they say they just want to change it. But there aren't enough walk-backs or pivots in the world to erase the truth. Their actions have unnecessarily harmed America's disaster response ecosystem.

Last week, I demanded an investigation into what role, if any, the administration's staff cuts to local and National Weather Service stations played in this tragedy. It is now clear that the administration fired key FEMA personnel during and, sadly, after the tragedy. So, today, it is very clear: This is a systemic problem that exists in Texas, extends beyond Texas, beyond the National Weather Service, and across FEMA.

Here are the facts about FEMA: A day after the Texas flooding, FEMA laid off workers—hundreds of call center workers. On July 7, the Agency received 16,000 calls and only answered 2,000 of them, around 16 percent.

Secretary Noem, meanwhile, issued a directive on July 11 saying that all DHS contracts of over \$100,000 had to be personally approved by her, accord-

ing to the New York Times—including, according to the New York Times, deployment of search and rescue teams. Every one of them had to be signed off.

This is not efficiency. This is adding redtape in the midst of a crisis, authored by Kristi Noem herself. Experts say this ill-advised decision very likely hindered recovery efforts.

As it stands today, FEMA is operating with a quarter fewer staffers compared to 18 months ago—one-quarter fewer—including senior-level officials, meteorologists, institutional experts, people who coordinate with public officials and other levels of government to respond to natural disasters.

In the middle of a natural disaster, Donald Trump and Kristi Noem are sowing chaos at FEMA, and their incompetence is putting lives in danger.

They and the DOGE people and so many around them, they have this fanatical dislike of all government, and so they just cut it. They don't even know what the effect will be. They don't even care. Just cut, cut, cut. Cut meteorologists who warn our people, our citizens, our farmers, our businesses of dangers that might come? Cut them? They are not waste.

Their recklessness is hurting rescue efforts. It has hurt the existing ones, and it is going to hurt more in the future, unless they reverse themselves.

We all support making Agencies like FEMA more efficient. Americans support cutting waste. Americans support improving the Federal response. But Americans sure as hell don't support DOGE-like cuts to vital places that can often be the difference between life and death.

The American people do not support this kind of chaos, this chain-saw approach to FEMA, to the National Weather Service, and to government at large. What Donald Trump and Kristi Noem are doing is chaos, and it is going to lead, unfortunately, to even more people getting hurt when the next disaster arrives.

RESCISSIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Now, on Republican cuts, this week, Senate Republicans are set to push through the Senate a bill that betrays rural communities, harms global health, weakens America's standing abroad, and, worst of all, sets the stage for even more harmful cuts down the line.

The so-called rescissions package continues a destructive Republican pattern: Cut now and ask questions later. The same thing that is happening with FEMA and the National Weather Service is happening right here. Again, use that chain saw; cut, cut, cut—whether it is waste or whether it is sinew and bone—and then later, say: Oh, maybe we shouldn't have done that.

And do you know what? Our Republican Senators, most of them, know this is wrong, but they are so afraid of Donald Trump.

Yesterday, he threatened that any of them who voted against the full rescissions package that we have before us would face his wrath. What is going on here? Does anyone stand up to these horrible, horrible cuts that hurt the American people?

Republicans, in realtime, are cutting healthcare. They are cutting education. They are cutting aid for our veterans.

Veterans are not getting—ask them. The veterans know they are not getting the healthcare they used to.

And making things even worse, Donald Trump's tariffs are coming in at the worst possible time, and in a few short months, they are going to raise the cost of groceries. They are going to hurt small businesses and do untold damage to our economy.

And, now, this package suffocates public broadcast. Well, did they even know when they said they wanted to cut it—you know, Donald Trump doesn't seem to like it—how much it helps our rural communities? It is the only place they can rely on for local news, for weather reports. And farmers across rural America depend on public broadcast to get weather reports because there is no other way. Did they know that it guts international aid that ensures America's national security? Did they even think of the consequences, just because Donald Trump says he wants it cut? And everyone knows he doesn't know the details of any of this stuff.

The rescissions package is certainly troubling, but the pattern behind it is even worse. It sets the stage for even more party line devastating cuts in the future to healthcare, to education, anything Republicans decide they don't like, all on a party-line vote, all because of obeisance and fear of Donald Trump, not a conviction that he is doing the right thing. This is a dark omen moving forward.

Our Republican friends say they fight for the middle class. They say they fight for working people. Then they turn around and take investments away from middle class and rural America.

I urge them—urge them—not to proceed with this bill as written.

HEALTHCARE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now on healthcare costs, Republicans' "Big Ugly Betrayal" will devastate American healthcare this year. Not many years down the line, not a few years down the line. It is going to hurt now.

There is a growing idea among Republican Members of Congress and then the lobbyists who talk to the press all the time that hospitals don't need to worry about the "Big Ugly Bill" because there is time to stave off or change the horrible Medicaid cuts Republicans passed and are now running away from. That is garbage.

Donald Trump and Republican leaders forced their Members to walk the

plank and cut Medicaid to the bone. So now they are in damage-control mode. They know how bad it is. They want to make their "Big Ugly Bill" seem less destructive and seem more palpable when, in reality, it is, quite literally, a death sentence for rural hospitals and vulnerable Americans. And that death sentence for so many of them is not 2 years away; it is now.

Here are the facts that show Republicans' "Big Ugly Betrayal" is having an impact right now, not later: At least 300 rural hospitals are at immediate risk of closing because of this bill already—already. Not 2 years from now. Now, this week, 2 weeks after the bill passed. Hospitals in Iowa, Nebraska, North Carolina, and Maine have announced they are closing or are in serious danger of closing. Not in 2027, not in 2028. Now. Now.

Governors in at least eight States—eight States—have called special sessions this summer. Not in 2028, not in 2027. They have called special sessions this summer or are pushing stopgap subsidies to shield doctors and hospitals from the immediate harm. States don't see the "Big Ugly Bill" as a problem for years from now. To them, to the workers, and, most of all, to the people who get healthcare in a lot of these rural hospitals, it is a problem right now.

And this fall, more problems. Not in 2028, folks. This fall, people will get notices that their insurance premiums for the Affordable Care Act will go up 75 percent on average because Republicans chose not to extend tax credits for the ACA.

This will also impact people on private insurance. If you don't have ACA, Medicaid, Medicare, you are still going to get increases in your insurance. Everyone is affected by these cuts—just about everyone—unless you are one of those billionaires who self-insures. You don't have to have insurance because you have got all the money in the world to pay any medical bill. That is not true of the vast majority of Americans.

And what they are doing is just the start. Republicans have made it clear they want even deeper cuts to Medicaid. Many in the House Freedom Caucus—those rightwingers—have said they weren't satisfied with their "Big Ugly Bill." So who is to say that Donald Trump and Russell Vought won't use rescissions or another reconciliation bill to cut healthcare even deeper? And what are our Republican colleagues going to do when the handful of rightwing Freedom Caucus people in this body and the other body say they demand cuts or they won't vote for any bill? Are they going to cave once again? Say: OK?

Let me say it again: All this talk from Republicans that many of their own cuts won't materialize is utter nonsense. Hospitals are closing now. States are reacting now. Insurance companies are adjusting now. And the harm to the American people will happen now, not later.

NOMINATION OF WHITNEY D. HERMANDORFER

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on judicial confirmation, the first judge confirmation, later today, Senate Republicans will confirm Donald Trump's first judicial nominee of his second term, Whitney Hermandorfer, to be a circuit judge on the Sixth Circuit.

We all know when it comes to judges Donald Trump cares only about one thing: total unyielding fealty to Donald Trump—not experience, not judicial independence, not knowledge or desire to pursue the law, but brazen, uncomplicated fealty to Donald Trump. That is how he chooses judges. That is how the people under him choose judges.

We have never seen this in America. You could have been a conservative like Ronald Reagan, someone like George Bush or H.W. Bush or Clinton or Obama. They all looked. You know, they wanted someone to have some philosophical kinship with them. But they said: Will they follow the law? Do they know this law?

Not this administration. It is so different than all the others in a very bad way. Donald Trump doesn't care about the law or what the Constitution says. He says that himself. He only wants his foot soldiers in black robes defending him when he tries to do whatever he wants.

Ms. Hermandorfer has failed to show that she can be an independent jurist committed to upholding the law. She has less than 10 years of legal experience. She has never served as the sole or chief counsel on a single case. She has made a career out of going after people's reproductive rights, transgender rights, and antidiscrimination policies.

When nominees like Ms. Hermandorfer are the standard, our courts are weakened; the judiciary runs amok; the American people are worse off.

I strongly—strongly—oppose her nomination.

NATIONAL SEMICONDUCTOR TECHNOLOGY CENTER

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, and finally, a very good day. I just got in from Albany in New York State. It was a very good day for Upstate New York. This morning, I was up in Albany to make a very exciting announcement years in the making. America's first ever national semiconductor technology center is now officially open for business in Albany, NY, in Upstate New York.

Today is the day I have been dreaming about since the time I wrote the Chips and Science law and when I was writing the NSTC program into the bill. I had always been thinking of Albany and of Upstate New York.

This center will be a leading hub for semiconductor innovation, not just in America but the whole world. This is a