

our GDP and our economy on a journey to the center of the Earth. Even my Democratic friends know those tax cuts have to be extended.

But we have other things we have to do too. We are deficit spending. We are spending money around here like it was pond water, like it was ditch water.

I don't want to blame it all on President Biden. But if the shoe fits, wear it, Cinderella.

This is what President Biden spent. He didn't spend this from tax revenues; he borrowed it: \$1.9 trillion on the American Rescue Plan; \$1.2 trillion on the Green New Deal, which they called an infrastructure act; \$1 trillion on the Inflation Reduction Act; the Chips Act, where we gave money to some of the biggest companies in America—Big Tech—because they said they needed it. We gave them \$280 billion for semiconductor manufacturing.

It was just announced yesterday: China just kicked our ass on artificial intelligence.

I don't know if I can say "ass" on the Senate floor, but by God, I just did.

They did—I don't know how else to describe it—after we spent \$280 billion? This is just under President Biden—\$4.380 trillion on money we didn't have.

We are deficit spending every nanosecond. I don't know how many millions we have had to borrow since I have been talking. We are taking in about \$4.5 trillion, give or take. We are spending about \$6.5 trillion.

When we deficit spend, that money doesn't fall from Heaven. We thank Heaven for it, but we have to borrow it, and we have to pay it back. And those annual deficits—daily deficits, monthly deficits—roll over into national debt, and we have \$36 trillion worth of national debt. We are going to run out of digits. That is the most debt we have ever had, well over 100 percent of GDP.

So we have to renew the tax cuts, which is going to cause short-term—before it stimulates the economy—short-term loss of revenue. And we have to stop the deficit spending, and we have to reduce our debt.

But there is more. There is more.

We have to increase defense spending because President Xi is working with President Putin, who is working with the Ayatollah in Iran. And their goal is to have Putin dominate Eastern and Central Europe, to have Iran dominate the Middle East, to have China dominate the Indo-Pacific and the South China Sea and be free to roam in Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America and South America.

I don't want America to be the world's policeman, but I don't want President Xi or President Putin or the Ayatollah in Iran to be the world's policemen either. Weakness invites the wolves, and we have to start spending more money on defense.

You don't have to be Einstein's cousin to figure out that all the things that I just described that we have to do in the next year to 6 months could be

called competing interests—tax cuts, stop deficit spending, reduce the debt, but find more money for defense. Something has to give.

All this is a long-winded way of saying we are going to have to reduce spending. We are going to have to do it. The numbers are the numbers. Since 2019, the American population has grown 2 percent. We are not having babies. Two percent—and that is after all the illegal immigration.

Do you know what has happened to our budget? It has gone up 55 percent.

I know we had a pandemic. We had to save the economy. Two percent growth in population and a 55-percent increase in spending. Yes, we have had inflation. We didn't have 55-percent worth of inflation.

We are going to have to be able to afford tax cuts and more defense spending and to pay down deficits and to pay down debt. We are going to have to reduce spending to prepandemic levels.

And that is what this OBM memorandum today, which temporarily held up the spending of some money, consistent with President Trump's Executive orders, was the first baby step toward. That is what this is all about. That is what it is all about. The world is not going to spin off its axis.

Again, I support the "take Care" clause of the Constitution. I understand what the Impoundment Act says, but this is reality. And this is what we have to solve over the next year. And we are going to have to solve it together because the debt is \$36 trillion. Our population is 355 million people. That is 102 grand per man, woman, and child, and it has increased. And we are about to extend the tax cuts and start spending more on defense.

There is a lot of excitement around here about the reconciliation bill or bills. I am excited about it. You can write this down and take it home to Mama: Those reconciliation bills, which we have to pass to get through this multiple-vehicle pileup that I just described, are going to contain substantial spending cuts. They are. Because you know what? If they don't, that reconciliation bill or bills will never pass the U.S. Senate. And I know it will not pass the U.S. House of Representatives. Then we will have failed to do what we told the American people that we were going to do, which is to get the Federal Government right-sized, to put the high prices behind us by growing out of them, by stimulating the economy and increasing wages, by making energy cheaper, by paying down our debt. And that is what is going on.

I hope all the folks today will go home and take off their Batman T-shirts, wash them. They are probably a little sweaty. I hope everybody will go home—those who drink, have a cocktail, take their meds, and put this all in perspective. That is what that OBM memorandum was all about.

I am going to say this one final time because maybe some members of the

media are listening. I am not advocating to ignore the Constitution. I am not advocating to ignore the impoundment laws of this Congress. What I am saying is: If you don't believe we are going to have to cut spending substantially in order to get out of this mess that has been created, then you shouldn't be driving it.

I yield the floor.

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

#### TRUMP EXECUTIVE ORDERS

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, if it weren't for a judge's temporary administrative stay, we would still be in the middle of Trump's pointless and illegal shutdown right now. Federal funding for a whole host of things would be frozen, meaning people all over the country who count on the Federal Government wouldn't get help.

All of us—all 100 of us—got calls from back home, saying: What the heck is going on?

VA home loans are being shut down. The Medicaid portal is being shut down. The Head Start portal is being shut down. Construction projects are being shut down. All because the Trump administration believes that it doesn't have to follow the appropriations law.

Now, lots of us disagree about the size and the scope of the government. Lots of people vote no on the appropriations law. Fine. But once it is the law, the legislative branch sends it to the President of the United States. The President either signs it or vetoes it. In this case, President Biden signed the appropriations law.

There is no provision in the statute and there is no provision in the Constitution that permits a President to pick and choose the spending that he prefers. That just doesn't exist in the law.

The article I branch has one most foundational power in terms of the three branches of government being separate and coequal. "Coequal" is kind of a funny way of saying it, but it is important to think of these three branches as in constant struggle against each other for power. Our power is the power of the purse. Our power is the power to enact appropriations bills, to determine the level of Federal spending on various programs.

But what the Trump White House did today was announce by fiat: We are not going to fund disaster relief. We are not going to fund public housing. We are not going to fund rural health care or foster care or opioid treatment or highway and rail projects or wildfire containment or cancer research or clean energy initiatives—all of it gone in an instant and, in this case, only for an instant because Donald Trump woke up yesterday and decided he no longer wanted to fund some of the most basic things that the Federal Government supports.

Again, this really isn't about arguing about the merits of each individual

program, although I don't know who is against allowing highway repairs to continue. I don't know who is against allowing Medicaid-funded nursing homes to continue. I don't know who is against allowing someone who has been waiting for their VA home loan to be able to close on that loan. But it is really not about that. It is about a more basic question, which is, Are we a nation of laws? Are we going to allow ourselves to turn into a monarchy?

I want to harken back to something I mentioned earlier today. The White House Press Secretary was asked about a specific program, and she said: Well, they should talk to Russell Vought.

Russell Vought is the nominee to be the OMB Director, the Office of Management and Budget.

There are a couple of things wrong with this. First of all, it is not his call whether or not to spend the money; the Congress already decided that. Second of all, even more creepy than that, this guy has not been confirmed. He is not a government employee. He is not in charge of anything. And we are supposed to, like, petition this person to beg him to follow the law.

This is the beginning of a long battle over a couple of most basic questions. First, are we going to allow this administration to just cause pain all across the country—every State, every county, school lunches, VA loans, construction projects? You name it. Are we going to allow this President to just do this because he feels like it?

The second question is not about the projects themselves or the programs themselves or even the people they help it is about who are we as a Congress.

When we swear an oath to uphold the Constitution and laws of the United States, is that just the thing we do before they give us the pen and the pin that say "United States Senator"? You know, you stand right there, and you swear yourself in. They give you a little pen that says "United States Senator." You look at it, and you go: I am a U.S. Senator. But the important part wasn't when they gave you your election certificate. It wasn't when they handed you your pen. It wasn't when they give you this pin here that says "United States Senate." It is when you swear that oath to uphold the Constitution and laws of the United States of America. And the Constitution and laws of the United States of America make it very, very clear: We are not a constitutional monarchy; we are a democracy.

What the court did today is important because it stopped a lot of pain all the way across the country—personal economic pain, family economic pain, macroeconomic pain from shutting down construction projects and business operations and all the rest of it. But it is more foundational than that.

We have to establish some boundaries here that go beyond our partisan boundaries. We have to establish that enough is enough; that you might have

your view about the size and the scope of the Federal Government and you might have your view about the previous President or the previous election campaign, but the law is the law here, and we are not going to allow any President, any administration, at any time to disobey the law in this flagrant of a fashion.

One final thought. There will be a Democratic President at some point, and if this becomes the precedent, I promise you, if you are a U.S. Senator on the Republican side, you are going to hate this. You are going to hate the idea that a progressive President can reach into the defense budget or the VA budget or the Department of Commerce's budget and just say: You know what, I don't want to fund that. I am going to plus-up this and defund that.

That is not the way the Federal system is supposed to work.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

#### TRUMP EXECUTIVE ORDERS

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I think this is my first time with you presiding, so it is good to see you.

This power grab—this attempted power grab—that took place today in flagrant disregard for our separation of powers has a home not in the Constitution but in Project 2025.

The American people hate Project 2025, so Donald Trump spent his campaign trying to distance himself from Project 2025, but then he put one of the authors of Project 2025 in charge of the Office of Management and Budget, who is, as we saw in the Budget hearing, out of one side of his mouth saying "Oh, President Trump doesn't have anything to do with 2025; he disavowed it" and, as President Trump's appointee to OMB, is merrily implementing Project 2025.

This is exactly aligned with the Project 2025 playbook that Americans rejected so much that Trump had to lie and pretend he rejected it too, in addition to being unconstitutional. That is not just an allegation any longer; a court today here in the District of Columbia found it to be unconstitutional and has ordered a stop to this pause.

That is a relief because for people in my State, today was a scary day.

Medicaid was stopped. The portal to the Medicaid system that the State reaches into was closed. People say: What is Medicaid? Medicaid is how a great many American seniors pay for their nursing homes. If you are shutting down Medicaid for your jollies, what you are doing is threatening the security of elderly folks living in nursing homes for whom Medicaid pays the bill.

We have in Rhode Island and in other States gone through very significant addiction crises. Addiction recovery is very often paid for through Medicaid. So when you shut down Medicaid and close the portal, you are threatening

people who are bravely fighting their way through their addiction, trying to get well and better, and suddenly President Trump is cutting the legs out from under them by closing the Medicaid portal and threatening Medicaid.

Mr. President, 300,000 Rhode Islanders get supported by the Medicaid system, so this sent a lot of fear through a lot of people. I know there are people in the Trump administration who enjoy that. They get their kicks out of creating fear and having people—you know, cruelty is their pastime. But this is getting a little carried away.

Firefighters and police officers—I spoke this morning to the Major County Sheriffs' Association, and they immediately raised the concern: What about my HIDTA grants?

Those of who have been in law enforcement know what a HIDTA grant is. For firefighters, it is the AFG grant—the assistance to firefighters grant—with which they buy safety equipment, breathing apparatus, and new fire engines and vehicles.

So all of that panic because this rash and unconstitutional decision was made.

Kids in school often are supported by Federal programs. Head Start is a particularly good one. We had a very well-loved mayor of our capital city, Providence, RI, who started in Head Start and became the mayor of our capital city. Head Start is a wonderful program. Why would you want to threaten all of those children?

Sojourner House is a domestic violence support entity and shelter in Rhode Island that supports women when they come out of an abusive relationship and need a place to find immediate safety and try to put their lives together. It is supported by Federal grants that President Trump tried to shut down today. It is astonishing.

There is \$33 million in small business loans out in Rhode Island with a big question mark by them because of today's bad behavior.

It is the community health centers. People had doctor's appointments and people were going in for minor procedures and treatments, and suddenly there is a cloud over the ability to fund the community health centers.

This is just wild, extreme, and dangerous stuff.

I will take my lawyer role for a minute. Talk about unconstitutional—the Constitution provides a method for the President to veto legislation he doesn't like. That veto method does not include not—being the President, coming in in a whole new administration, having missed completely the opportunity to do a proper veto or for Congress to override, and doing this unilateral thing, which is not only forbidden by the separation of powers and the veto rule but also by law Congress passed regarding so-called impoundments. So it is flagrantly, flagrantly illegal.

I will close by saying that it is also a threat of corruption. Every time you