

look at the Trump administration, you have to lift up the hood and look for where the corruption thread is. We are going to see corruption like you have never seen before out of this administration. And the corruption thread here is that you close all these things down, and then you pick the ones you like for the people who are your big donors, for the companies that gave you big bucks, for the special interests who put you in office, for the political allies who serve you, and you let them have their money freed up while everybody else's is frozen.

Do you think that is imaginary? It is exactly what the Trump administration did with the tariffs in his last term of office. You could go into a secret little line, and if you knew the right people, you could get a waiver.

There is an absolute avenue to corruption in this. Thank God the courts shut it down. This was a bad moment. It is not over. I hope my Republican colleagues will rise to the occasion because this is a basic attack on our Constitution, and it is a basic attack on the legislative branch of government.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

TRUMP EXECUTIVE ORDERS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, first, I thank my friend from Rhode Island. He has been laser-like focused on corruption. Whether it is the Supreme Court, the executive branch, or anywhere else in the government, he has done a great job.

Mr. President, I just finished doing a little TV taping to the people of New York to tell them how evil, how horrible this plan that Trump has put into effect will be.

The plan will shut off billions of dollars, maybe trillions of dollars. For what? For things average working families need. They will be less safe because police will be cut and fire will be cut. Their kids will be less educated because schools will be cut. In places where there is a school tax, like Long Island and Westchester, it could make your taxes go up. They will be less safe because food inspectors who keep our food safe could be cut. It will go across the board. Housing will become more expensive. We desperately need housing. Everything. This is going to affect everything. The radius will expand and expand and expand of what Donald Trump can do.

Make no mistake about it, Project 2025 proposed slashing everything—cut, cut, cut—all to give one thing: tax breaks to very wealthy people. This is Project 2025 by another name. It is the same stuff. They couldn't call it Project 2025 because when the public found out about that, they were outraged.

Well, make no mistake about this, President Trump. When the public finds out about this, they will be outraged.

I got on TV tonight and asked my constituents—particularly those in Republican House and Senate districts—to call their Congressmen and Senators and tell President Trump to drop this evil plan, which will hurt them so badly.

The fact that Mr. Vought will be head of OMB, which is the Agency that is in charge of all of this spending, is frightening. It is like putting the fox in the chicken house, and all the chickens, which are the average American taxpayers, are going to be susceptible to the sharp fangs of Mr. Vought.

By the way, speaking of chickens, here is another little reason—there are so many. Right now, the price of eggs is through the roof—\$5, \$6 a dozen. It was \$2 a year ago. It was \$4 in November. Why? Because there is something called bird flu that is killing off millions of chickens. When you have fewer chickens, you have fewer eggs—fewer hens, fewer eggs—and fewer eggs means prices go up.

But there is a program. We actually, when we were still in charge in November, put \$300 million into the budget to help our farmers deal with bird flu, with avian flu. It helps them get the PPE they need. It helps them isolate the diseased chickens because you need to build different types of facilities. It helps them learn what to do. That could be cut. That could be cut, and the price of eggs will go up to \$8 or \$10.

All of these things have an effect in one way or another on average working people.

How about all the hundreds of thousands of workers who have now gotten jobs in clean energy? It is a great thing. For the first time—good-paying jobs with a future for so many people could be gone out the window if this plan goes into effect.

Now, I know that a court has stayed this until Monday. America, don't be fooled.

Trump and his henchman Vought will keep at it and keep at it and keep at it until Project 2025 is implemented, even though they don't call it Project 2025. He will go to a different court, maybe in a very conservative, red district. They will do whatever they can to continue to squeeze the middle class, cut the things that the middle class needs, and then—and then—cut the taxes on the wealthiest people in America.

Any organization—we have heard—I have heard hospitals are worried in not providing the care that they need. Head Start is going to close. What do the parents do? The Agencies that deal with mental illness, they depend on government funding. So much—so much—is at stake.

In my State, we are getting thousands of calls: How is this going to affect us?

And even if the cut hasn't come through yet, people are worried. And they say: We better save money for a rainy day and cut back on this and cut back on that.

It has frightened people. Now, maybe that is what Trump likes doing: frightening average middle-class folks. But it is really a terrible thing to do.

Meals on Wheels—that is a hot meal every day for people who don't have food—in danger. Rural hospitals and community health—in danger. New York subway maintenance and mass transit throughout the country—in danger. Money for housing—in danger. Everything. Everything.

And so, Mr. President, we Senate Democrats are doing all we can to stop this—not just today, not just tomorrow, but in the long-range plan. But we are also urging Americans to call their Senators, call their Congressmen—particularly Republicans—and get them to tell President Trump to stop it—cut this out, cut out these cuts—because you are going to hurt us. The only people who will get hurt by this are average American middle-class families, and that is just about everybody.

I yield the floor, and I thank my colleague from Illinois for taking up the cudgels here.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I thank my leader from New York and glad he gave us his little seminar on chickens.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

TRUMP EXECUTIVE ORDERS

Mr. DURBIN. It was very well done. As a Midwesterner, I know a little bit about that, so I respect his observations.

Who is Mr. Vaeth, V-A-E-T-H? His title is the acting leader of the Office of Management and Budget, and he is the one who sent out a letter—a memo—that, basically, called for a temporary pause in government spending.

By what authority did he do that? I don't know. I have been in Congress for a few years. I have never quite seen anyone with an "acting" before their name have this much authority and power, but he had a lot. He has taken to, himself, the decision making that affects families all over the United States, including in my State of Illinois.

That little memo that he put out last night is particularly troublesome to me because if you read it, what he is saying is we don't want anybody who receives these Federal funds who does not abide by the Executive orders of this new President.

The Executive orders of the new President are 7 or 8 days old—brandnew—and I can't tell you whether or not the recipients of Federal funds all comply with these Executive orders, which have been tumbling out of the White House on such topics as DEI and some of the other favorite political positions of President Trump. But he, basically, paused Federal spending starting last night so that these recipients can answer the basic questions as to whether they are loyal to his point of view.

He referred to those who didn't agree with him as Marxists, as in Karl Marx—Marxists. I am thinking to myself: Who is this guy? How does he have this much authority, and how is he able to say things like that that are so blatantly political?

Well, the money that was turned off today was felt across America. This poorly conceptualized, poorly communicated policy has created mass confusion in my State and across the Nation. And worse yet, it has endangered the health, safety, and welfare of Americans across the country.

The proposed freeze mandates that the government "temporarily pause" the disbursement of key funds. Think about that for a minute when I start reading these programs. We are going to temporarily pause reimbursement to local units of government and charities, for example, while we decide whether they are living up to the standards of Donald Trump in terms of his political values.

Here are some of the programs that were affected today: Head Start. I think everybody knows what Head Start is. If you have ever been there, it is one of the most enjoyable visits a politician can make. They put you in a room with little kids—I mean little kids; 3, 4, 5 years old—and you get to read them books and play with them. I tell you, for a grandfather, it is a joy. It reminds you of how much joy you have with your own kids and grandkids.

But why are they important? For many families, Head Start is daycare, Head Start is pre-K, Head Start is a chance for kids in tough family circumstances to have a fighting chance. And, of course, the Head Start agencies need to get their Federal funds to keep the lights on, to feed the kids, to make sure that they can heat the buildings in the winter.

And today Mr. Vaeth, whoever in the world he is, has decided that we are not going to give them money. Close the portal. Close the opportunity for them to receive Federal funds.

What is he thinking? If these kids can't come to these Head Start facilities, they not only miss the opportunity for education and socialization and a warm place to be, but they are missing an opportunity that makes a difference in their lives.

The other one is Violence Against Women. The groups are calling us in Illinois. They call me because the Senate Judiciary Committee, which I serve on, authored this bill years ago. A Senator from Delaware at the time, Joe Biden, introduced this legislation. And what it boils down to is, if you are a victim of domestic violence, there are grants available to provide safe and secure places for you to stay rather than be put in these horrible, violent situations at home.

So what are we going to do with Mr. Vaeth's idea to put this on temporary pause? Are we going to have a temporary pause on violence in homes? I

wish we could. But to think that he makes that kind of decision is beyond me. Where does he get the authority to do this, and doesn't he have any conscience when it comes to the impact of these decisions?

Natural disaster relief speaks for itself. You think of those poor folks in California, trying to recover from their own wildfires. You think of the flooding and hurricanes and all the other events that take place. There are people who need a helping hand. Mr. Vaeth decides to put that on temporary pause.

Veterans' benefits speaks for itself. Men and women who served our country earned these benefits by risking their lives for America, and to put those benefits on temporary pause is a disgrace.

Loans to small businesses. So many aspects of business rely on just a helping hand to get started. And if you think that loans to businesses are just for little businesses, keep in mind that in 2009, Elon Musk came to the Obama administration and asked for a loan so that his Tesla car company wouldn't go into bankruptcy.

But there are a lot of smaller businesses just as desperate to get a helping hand. In Illinois, the impact of this thoughtless policy is already being felt.

Another area that is near and dear to me is medical research. The National Institutes of Health, with an annual budget of around \$38 billion to \$40 billion, is the premier medical research Agency in the world—in the world. The things that they are working on—new drugs, new surgical techniques, new treatments—will save lives. We know it. It has happened over and over again.

So, today, they get Mr. Vaeth's memo about the temporary pause in funding, and they have got to tell their laboratory researchers, doctors, and specialists to stop what they are doing at 5 today. That was the end of the funding from the Federal Government.

Honest to goodness, Mr. Vaeth, what are you thinking? Stopping medical research? You want that on your head, your conscience? Think about what that means. Federally funded research scientists are going to lose funding for this research, and the people of America will pay the price. Families will pay the price.

The disability community, the same thing—the ability to access critical services for them and their loved ones. Some of these things are very basic: paying a personal attendant who will help a disabled person get dressed in the morning so they can spend a productive day at work. If they are not there, the disabled person doesn't have that opportunity. That is a real-life issue for a lot of families with disabilities.

The Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault in Springfield contacted us today and said that because of this announcement from OMB and from the Trump administration, they don't know if they will be able to help survivors without VOCA funding.

These are just a few of the many examples that emerged in the chaos of the past 24 hours.

If your goal is to make America great again, why would you start by cutting these basic services for families and deserving people across this country?

For goodness' sake, we are better than that. I am proud of a nation that cares for people who need a helping hand. I am not ashamed to say that. And some of these people, particularly veterans, earned it—earned it over and over again. These are just a few of the people who contacted us.

Although the Trump administration has claimed that individuals who receive direct assistance from the government will not be affected, Americans across the country have faced severe service disruptions with Medicaid and Head Start amidst the policy changes that Mr. Vaeth, the acting head of the OMB, has imposed.

Even the President's own Press Secretary, just a few minutes ago, was unable to even answer the questions about what was going on with this OMB Director. You know why? Because this move is nothing more than a power grab designed to target the most vulnerable people and disguise it as a way to "analyze government spending." Analyze government spending? Tell that to the family that is waiting desperately for medical research. Tell them that we had to suspend it for a little while so we could do a little analysis.

I want to be clear. The President is blatantly violating the law by holding up these vital funds across America. The Federal funds this administration is refusing to distribute have been collected by taxpayers and appropriated by Congress, and the money belongs to the American people. It is the law.

Thankfully, a Federal judge here in the District of Columbia has decided to temporarily block this freeze, this temporary pause, from going into effect until next Monday, February 3. But this measure only delays the chaos and uncertainty if it is President Trump's determined effort to make sure that this happens.

We will not stand idly by while the President plays fast and loose with our Nation's laws and the American people's lives and livelihoods. We can have fiscal responsibility. We can have a budget we are proud of. But this kind of action, taken by a fellow last night somewhere in the bowels of a building here in Washington, is hurting people all across America.

You can't help American families be great if you don't give them a fighting chance. We have got to stop this and stop it soon.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

TRUMP EXECUTIVE ORDERS

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I am honored to join my colleagues here