

the Department of Justice to release its files related to Jeffery Epstein.

For years, Donald Trump and the MAGA movement have railed on about the Epstein files. They have told the American people they are going to release the files and expose the elites. Pam Bondi has said she has the files on her desk, and they are ready to go public.

The names of these shady elites who have abused children were just sitting there, and she was ready for it to be released.

But now a complete reversal.

Trump is straight up gaslighting the American public. Does he think the American people are that dumb? Did he really think the American people would not forget what he had said for years on the campaign trail?

Just yesterday, we learned that the Trump administration abruptly fired one of the lead prosecutors in the Epstein case—no explanation. No warning. Just gone.

So what happened? It is really easy to run a campaign and rile up people, but when it is Trump's turn to actually expose the elites, Trump has chickened out. And it is because he is one of those elites, and he is taking care of his own.

It is all connected. Just look at his legislative agenda: tax breaks for his rich buddies; subsidizing private jet purchases. Again and again, he rigs the system against everyday Americans. And that is what this resolution is about, to show the American people they deserve the truth.

No more shady coverups. If there is any evidence of a coverup in the Epstein case, the public has a right to know. If there is a list, the public deserves to see it. Americans deserve to see the truth, even if it is not what Donald Trump and his elite friends want.

If the Department of Justice has these files and there is nothing to hide, then release them and prove it. Trump's own people have told us a million times that they have it and that they promised to make it public. So bring it out. It doesn't matter who is implicated in that.

The American people are done with these games, these lies, and the two systems of justice: one for the elites and one for everyone else.

Enough with the secrets. The American people deserve the truth. So I am calling on my fellow Senators to join me in demanding the Department of Justice release the Epstein files to restore public trust, affirm institutional accountability, and to prevent the politicization of justice.

With that, as if in legislative session and notwithstanding rule XXII, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 325, submitted earlier today; further, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. MULLIN. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, this is nothing but political theater. It is so obvious that the Democrats are just using this for a political football.

If they are really serious about this, what happened the last 4 years? Where were they? Silent. Doing nothing but covering up for an absent President. And now, all of a sudden, they want to talk about transparency.

We haven't even figured out who ran the White House the last 4 years, and now all of a sudden, they want to make something of this. Are you kidding me?

If they are serious about it, then why didn't they say something the last 4 years? This is nothing more than just political theater trying to go after a President that they truly despise; therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

Mr. GALLEGO. Mr. President, the Senate just had the chance to demand transparency and stand up for the truth. Instead, my colleagues chose to protect the powerful and perpetuate years of misinformation.

Transparency is the foundation of accountability. When people are told again and again that the evidence exists, and then, suddenly, they're told it doesn't, that undermines the faith in our entire system, and it's an insult to the intelligence of every single American paying attention.

You don't rebuild public trust by hiding the truth Mr. President; you do it by proving you have nothing to hide. So I'll ask again, if there's nothing to hide in the Epstein case, then what are you so afraid of? What are they hiding? Why did the Trump administration abruptly fire the prosecutor leading the case? Why the silence? Why the backpedaling? Why the objection?

The Department of Justice should work for the people, not the powerful elites.

Today's resolution should have made that clear.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, next year, we will celebrate the 250th anniversary of our Nation's founding, and I am glad that in anticipation of this great celebration, President Trump has issued an Executive order outlining preparations that our country will make to celebrate this anniversary.

As part of this effort, President Trump has also issued a separate Executive order specifically directing the elimination of woke and anti-American displays at the Smithsonian museum.

Now, this may come as a shock to many people, but every single Institution in this city seems to be infected with political ideology and bureaucratic agendas, and the Smithsonian is no exception.

The 21 museums that make up the Smithsonian Institution have been a

treasure for a long time; but, unfortunately, in recent years, they have strayed from their true mission. These museums should be a place where up-and-coming generations of Americans can go to learn about American heroes and who built our great Nation.

They should be places where they learn about our Founding Fathers, the founding documents like the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, the pioneers who explored and settled this great land, and those who endured great hardships in order to make a better life for their children.

There are so many great stories of Americans, people who have done so much to make our country what it is today. These stories are what our young people need to hear because how else will you inspire the upcoming generation to stand on the shoulders of their forebearers and continue to make life better for more and more people who call this great country home?

How will we teach those who will one day lead this Nation—whether that is in government or in business, in medicine or any other field—that these pursuits are honorable and they have a purpose, if they have not yet learned these lessons about the heroic men and women who have gone on before them?

Unfortunately, as I indicated a moment ago, the Smithsonian has strayed from its original reason for being. The Smithsonian Institution was founded in 1846 for the expressed purpose of increasing the diffusion of knowledge among men. It was founded as a gift by James Smithson, who devised his entire estate to the U.S. Government.

Congress, as we now know, accepted this gift and provided for its governance and its financing. The Smithsonian Institution operates as a trust, which means that it is an executive Agency of the U.S. Government and is chaired by a 17-member Board of Regents.

But since its original founding in 1846, something has gone terribly wrong with the direction of the Smithsonian. A writer and mother of six recently described her experience taking her children to museums in our Nation's Capital on a warm summer day.

At the family's first stop, the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History, her 4-year-old was excited to see dinosaur skeletons. But she was disappointed to learn that much of the dinosaur exhibit was dedicated to climate change.

One exhibit specifically read:

Since the last ice age, Earth's climate has warmed. But now that warming is getting faster because of us.

Well, you don't have to be a climate denier—and I am not—to recognize that something is profoundly wrong with this message.

Is it really the message a 4-year-old needs to learn, that climate change is something that she or he is personally guilty of contributing to?

Unfortunately, to the mother's dismay, she said the museum's website highlighted additional polarizing displays. A historian from the museum told the mother:

The second-floor popular culture exhibit—probably the most popular in the museum—is a Marxist struggle session. Every single exhibit is interpreted through a race-class-gender lens.

Is that really what we want to be teaching the upcoming generation of Americans at our most esteemed museums?

No. It seems like the Smithsonian has lost its way.

Instead of celebrating the contributions of remarkable Americans or educating our children about the animals that once roamed the planet, Smithsonian Institution museums are telling children they should feel guilty for contributing to climate change and introducing them to topics, which are clearly not age-appropriate.

But sometimes, it is not what the Smithsonian includes in their exhibits which is troubling; it is what they choose to exclude.

Who can forget the snub to Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas in the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture?

I recall when the museum opened, the Smithsonian had zero plans to reference Justice Clarence Thomas, the second of two Black Justices to ever serve on the U.S. Supreme Court.

Instead, what they chose to highlight is the testimony of Anita Hill in what came to be known as a “high-tech lynching” that followed.

Well, this was, obviously, a biased presentation and one that was clearly on its head. And I introduced a resolution at the time asking them to recognize the historical importance of Justice Thomas and his service to the Court.

After a groundswell of opposition in the months that followed, the museum finally did include him in an exhibit. But, the previous exhibit featuring Anita Hill and not the Justice is a stain on the Smithsonian that I will never forget.

I remember talking to the head of the Smithsonian at the time. Basically, he said: Thank you, Senator, for your call, but Congress doesn't have anything to say about what we do at the Smithsonian.

Well, he is wrong, and these are not messages that the Smithsonian should be sending.

America's history is a tale of triumph over incredible odds in the pursuit of freedom, and it is one that all of our children and our grandchildren deserve to learn in an unbiased and apolitical way.

Now, some have argued that the Smithsonian is subject to oversight by Congress and the executive branch. Others have said: No, it is purely a private, independent entity.

But a close examination of the Institution's history will show that it has always been a government institution, an institution of the U.S. Government.

After James Smithson willed his estate for an establishment for the in-

crease and diffusion of knowledge, the Senate—the U.S. Senate, what we are today—passed a bill to establish and organize the Smithsonian Institution that was signed into law by President Polk in 1846.

Now, that doesn't sound like a private, independent entity to me if Congress has to pass a law.

And then Congress delegated the governance of the Smithsonian Institution to a Board of Regents. This Board includes a Chief Justice of the United States, the Vice President of the United States, as well as three sitting Senators and Representatives.

Moreover, the Smithsonian receives more than half of its funds—its operating funds—from the American taxpayer, from the Federal Government. It is pretty hard to make the case that an Institution that gets the majority of its funding from Congress and is governed by a board of government officials is anything but a government entity. In fact, you can't make that argument because the evidence is all to the contrary.

Furthermore, the Institutions are structured much like other government Agencies headed by a Secretary who oversees several Under Secretaries. I don't know of any private corporations whose CEOs are referred to as “secretary.”

Moreover, the Smithsonian Institution itself has argued time and time again in court that they are, in fact, a government entity. In a case called *Raven v. Sajat*, a Federal court agreed, ruling that the “Smithsonian is a government institution through and through.” That means that the Smithsonian is clearly subject to oversight by the U.S. Government, including the executive branch and the Congress.

Our country was founded on the ideals of individual liberty, justice, and equality before the law. These are values that our institutions should teach, particularly to the next generation—not “woke” ideology and political agendas. So as we prepare for the celebration of America's 250th birthday, I would encourage—strongly encourage—the Smithsonian Institution to reconsider its purpose and to return to the principles and ideals laid out in the founding documents they so proudly display, to the benefit of all Americans.

I would close with this prediction: We know from recent events—some as recent as early this morning when we took the step that many of us have talked about for many years, and that is eliminating taxpayer support for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting—there are more than enough media entities that are capable of communicating the news and other information of interest to our constituents, the 350 million people in the country. We don't need to subsidize those with taxpayer money. Indeed, if you look at the First Amendment of the Constitution, it guarantees a free press. Can the press truly be free if it is financed and

subsidized by the government? I don't see how that is possible.

So starting early this morning with the vote on the rescissions package and the defunding, at least in terms of Federal funds—private funds and donations are certainly fine—but we finally have begun the step of bringing accountability to the Nation's Capital. No longer will the bureaucracy simply take the taxpayers' money and do what they want regardless of oversight by the Congress and the executive branch and the oversight, in essence, of the American people. Those days are over.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

NOMINATION OF LT. GEN. THOMAS M. CARDEN, JR.

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, 2 weeks ago, I informed Senate leadership of my intent to object to the Senate proceeding to Trump's nominee to serve as Vice Chief of the National Guard Bureau. So I rise today to both publicly and clearly explain my hold on this nomination and to demand that the Trump administration release all remaining U.S. military forces from the unnecessary and political deployment to Los Angeles.

Earlier this week, the Trump administration did announce that they would be releasing 2,000 National Guard troops from deployment—no, not from an overseas mission, not from some disaster response to a region in need, but from a deployment against their own fellow citizens.

Around 2,000 National Guard women and men and an additional 700 marines are still in Los Angeles today. Why? Because Donald Trump needs a distraction.

Think back to about a month ago. The President found himself at the lowest point of his Presidency thus far. He was drowning in negative headlines, everything from his failing tariff wars that continue to raise prices and costs on working families, to Vladimir Putin embarrassing him on the world stage, to a messy, public breakup with Elon Musk. So in order to change the news cycle, which he does so often, to shift the headlines away from his many, many failures, President Trump chose to ramp up ICE raids in California.

When Californians took to the streets to exercise their First Amendment rights by peacefully protesting, Trump responded by federalizing the California National Guard, and then later the U.S. Marines were ordered in to intimidate the people of Los Angeles.

It was the first time that the National Guard has been deployed against the wishes of the State's Governor since 1965.

None of these servicemembers signed up to become a political prop, but Trump has put them in this impossible position that he knew would escalate tensions in the region and take them away from their critical missions elsewhere.

That is exactly why, in late June, a few weeks ago, the head of U.S. Northern Command requested that Secretary Hegseth return at least 200 troops from the National Guard's wildfire unit who were stuck in Los Angeles for Trump's political purposes, because every day that those troops were unnecessarily deployed to Los Angeles was another day that their primary mission went unmet. We are talking about undermining firefighting and fire mitigation efforts as we are approaching peak wildfire season. This is dangerous and unnecessary.

Because the Trump administration continued to keep thousands of troops in Los Angeles, 2 weeks ago, I exercised my constitutional duty as a U.S. Senator to advise and consent to nominations in order to block the nomination of LTG Thomas Carden.

Lieutenant General Carden currently serves as second in command of Northern Command, the combatant command that has overseen Trump's orders to militarize Los Angeles.

But I want to be very clear about something. My objection is about more than Lieutenant General Carden. None of what we are seeing in Los Angeles through this militarization is business as usual. Deploying the Guard against the wishes of the Governor, against the wishes of the mayor, and against even the wishes of local law enforcement—the sheriff, the police chief—none of that is normal.

So today, I am making it clear to all of my colleagues of my intent to oppose any expedited consideration of this nomination until two conditions are met:

First, every last guardsman and marine must be released from this deployment in Los Angeles. Stop militarizing our cities and using our servicemembers as political pawns.

Second, I will maintain my hold until I have been given sufficient commitments and assurances from this administration that no guardsmen from other States will be sent to enforce the President's political demands on California.

Until both of these conditions are met, I will maintain my hold on this nomination.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

NOMINATION OF AARON LUKAS

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, today, I encourage my Senate colleagues to confirm Mr. Aaron Lukas as the next Principal Deputy Director of National Intelligence.

Mr. Lukas's long career serving our Nation as a CIA officer makes him well suited for this important position. He has more than 20 years of intelligence experience, which includes working as a CIA Station Chief and joint duty rotations at the Office of the Director of National Intelligence and the National Security Council.

With Mr. Lukas's knowledge, experience, and know-how, he has the right

background to assist Director Gabbard with eliminating bureaucratic bloat and returning our intelligence community to its core mission of aggressively stealing the secrets of our adversaries.

I am grateful to Mr. Lukas for his decades of service, and I would like to thank him and his family for being willing to answer the call of our country to serve once again.

For all these reasons, I again encourage my colleagues to join me in supporting Mr. Lukas's nomination to be the Principal Deputy Director of National Intelligence.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, at 2:15 p.m. today, the Senate vote on the motions to invoke cloture on Executive Calendar Nos. 263, 96, 108, 91, and 114, and that the mandatory quorum calls be waived; further, that if cloture is invoked on the nominations individually, all postcloture time be expired, including Executive Calendar No. 260, and the Senate vote on confirmation of the nominations at a time to be determined by the majority leader, in consultation with the Democratic leader, no earlier than Monday, July 21; finally, that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

JEFFREY EPSTEIN

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, Donald Trump has made some farfetched statements over the last few months, but a stunner in the last few days was his claim that the Jeffrey Epstein matter was a "hoax" and a "scam."

Here is why the President is wrong. The figure at the center of this story was an ultra-rich, well-connected sex trafficker. He was a serial rapist of women and young girls. And for some reason, the Trump administration that claimed they would be the most transparent administration ever turned on a dime.

The President had run on a campaign with a promise to expose the Epstein files. Now, he and the Attorney General, Pam Bondi, say, nope, nothing to investigate when it comes to Epstein and sex trafficking. All these claims are just ludicrous.

I want the American people to know that is wrong. If you want to know why, just look at the latest report from our investigators that was discussed in the New York Times this morning. Somewhere in the Treasury Department, locked away in a cabinet drawer, is a big Epstein file that is full of actionable information—"follow the money"—details about his financing and operations that await investigation.

Last year, the Biden administration allowed our investigators to look at portions of the file. We did that at the Treasury Building. Here is what it says. Treasury's Epstein file details 4,725 wire transfers. Let me repeat that—4,725 wire transfers—adding up to nearly \$1.1 billion flowing in and out of just one of Mr. Epstein's bank accounts. If you ask me, that is more than 4,000 potential lines of investigation right there. Hundreds of millions more flowed through other accounts. That is even a lot more to investigate.

The file shows that Mr. Epstein used multiple Russian banks, which are now under sanctions, to process payments related to sex trafficking. A lot of the women and girls he targeted came from Russia, Belarus, Türkiye, and elsewhere.

One shudders to think about the kinds of people who must have been involved in trafficking these women and young girls out of those countries and into the Epstein web of abuse.

Again, these are all potential leads the Department of Justice ought to be digging into. This is about years and years of international sex trafficking.

None of this is a hoax. None of it is a scam. I would like to say, I consider it insulting to the intelligence of the American people for the Trump administration to simply say there is nothing to investigate here.

When the Trump administration came in with a lot of fanfare about transparency and openness, I said I am going to follow up on that. So I wrote to the Attorney General, Ms. Bondi; Treasury Secretary Bessent; FBI Director Patel, and I asked them all to produce the Epstein file to the Senate Finance Committee so it could be reviewed. In fact, I made that request multiple times. The Trump commitment to transparency based on the response didn't mean a whole lot because they just refused.

Here is what one Treasury official wrote back to me:

The Department of Treasury has previously made documents available relating to the matter in response to your inquiries. Accordingly, we understand that you have the information you seek from the Treasury related to this request. We thank you for your attention to this important issue.

For anybody who is familiar with how these discussions go in Washington, DC, what I just read was code for the bureaucrats saying: You are asking for information. Go pound sand.

The Trump administration may be trying to close the books on the Epstein sex trafficking, but I want it understood, as a senior member of the Senate Finance Committee, where we spend a lot of time looking at where substantial sums of money are going, particularly if they may be promoting wrongdoing and helping to evade taxes, we are going to stay on this fight to hold the wealthy individuals accountable for the harm that they, clearly, were involved in, injuring the young women and others in this sex trafficking.