

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.

I am going to have more follow-up for Attorney General Bondi very quickly. As for today, if she doesn't want to do the investigating, doesn't want the DOJ to do it, let me just reinstate my original demand: Have that Treasury information given to the Senate Finance Committee and have us, on a bipartisan basis, do our work. That is what we do in important investigations.

If the Trump people believe they need additional authority to carry out the requests that I make, again, this afternoon, let me offer to help them write the bill myself. The idea that there is nothing more to investigate—not when you have 4,000 wire transfers, many of them associated with the possibility of wrongdoing and sex trafficking promoting—the idea that you have that and there is nothing to investigate when it comes to the Epstein sex trafficking operation is ridiculous.

Pam Bondi was the attorney general in the State of Florida where a lot of the Epstein crimes were committed. The Attorney General ought to know better, of all people.

I can't begin to understand the President's handling of this or why he thinks this is just going to go away. But I am here to say that our investigators have spent 3 full years looking into this. And the reason why is because we feel so strongly about the horror of sex trafficking and our commitment to root it out.

The President of the Senate is new to this body, but I am sure he has dealt with these issues before. You can't have a much bigger horror in front of you than sex trafficking abuse. So we are talking about real evil—real evil—done to women and girls by Jeffrey Epstein. And, Mr. President, nobody gets to sweep that under the rug.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

REMEMBERING JOHN STULP, JR.

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I rise today to remember the life of John Stulp, Jr., a son of Colorado's Eastern Plains, Colorado's first and only water czar, and the former commissioner of agriculture for our State.

In his 45 extraordinary years of public service, John was appointed by five Governors—of both parties—to two cabinet positions and six State boards and commissions.

Governor Bill Ritter, who appointed John as commissioner of agriculture, said:

If we had an award for the most universally loved cabinet member, it would be John Stulp.

I agree.

After graduating from Colorado State University with a degree in veterinary science, John returned to Prowers County with his beloved wife Jane. Together, they ran Stulp Land and Livestock for 50 years, growing dryland wheat and raising cattle, while continuing to practice veterinary medicine.

I was honored to spend time with him and learn from John, including a visit to the Stulp farm in 2013.

Over the years, the Stulp family farm has welcomed Members of Congress, State legislators, commissioners, and school groups with open arms and warm hospitality. John always had something cold to drink when you were there.

He was a farmer first, and of farming he said:

You don't farm because you want to; you do it because you have to. It's in your blood.

John was elected county commissioner in deep-red Prowers County as a Democrat, which testifies precisely to the kind of leader he was—steady, willing to work toward compromise, and always putting the needs of South-eastern Colorado first.

We could use his example around here.

As a water czar under then-Governor Hickenlooper, he had the enormous task of creating a water plan for the next 50 years. Skeptical at first, John's quiet and thoughtful approach brought rural and urban users to the table and helped forge compromise over some of the toughest issues that we face in the West and in Colorado.

He knew that rural Colorado was counting on him, I would suspect, all of his life, but he was also thinking beyond himself and beyond his own backyard—about the next generation of Coloradans: his 5 kids and now 14 grandkids and about what they would inherit.

John leaves an incredible legacy in Colorado, not just with regard to the work he did to ensure that rural Colorado was represented in the capital of Denver or in the expertise and counsel he gave to countless leaders but, I would say, most importantly to him, in his family.

I send, on behalf of the people of Colorado, my condolences to the entire Stulp family—to John's children, to his grandchildren, to his wife Jane.

Colorado will feel his loss, and his leadership will be deeply missed. I think his example will testify to the standard every one of us should strive for of leadership in our States and in our communities and as members of our families.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MORENO). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

NOMINATION OF ARIELLE ROTH

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, I rise in support of the nomination of Arielle Roth to serve as Administrator of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, or NTIA.

Having worked closely with Arielle, I can attest personally that there is no

one better to lead the NTIA and to advise the President on telecommunications issues. As the telecommunications policy director to the Senate Commerce Committee, Arielle led my legislative and oversight efforts on communications and broadband policy with integrity, creativity, and dedication. I am not sure I have ever met someone as passionate about telecommunications law and policy as Arielle. Her work ethic is indefatigable, only rivaled by her dedication to public service. President Trump's administration and the American people are blessed to be getting her talents in this new role.

Arielle will play an integral role in the management of the Federal Government's use of electromagnetic spectrum. She will work closely with Federal Agencies to protect critical uses of spectrum, whether for national defense, weather forecasting, or transportation, while identifying opportunities to free up spectrum for commercial use. As I have stated before, American leadership in spectrum is vital to the security of global telecommunications networks, to our own national security, and to our economic success.

NTIA also plays a crucial role in administering billions of dollars for Federal broadband programs, including the \$42 billion BEAD program. President Trump and Secretary Lutnick have charted a new course from the prior administration's inaction and ideological hand-wringing. With Arielle at the helm of NTIA, I have no doubt that BEAD will succeed in its mission of connecting Americans to the internet as expeditiously and efficiently as possible.

Arielle's qualifications show that she is the right person for this job. Her telecommunications experience dates back to her time as a legal fellow at the Hudson Institute's Center for Economics of the Internet. Then, for 4 years, Ms. Roth served at the Federal Communications Commission as the Wireline Advisor for then-Commissioner Michael O'Rielly. She next turned to Congress, where she worked on telecommunications policy at the House Energy and Commerce Committee and, later, as legislative counsel to our former colleague Senator Roy Blunt, a long-serving member of the Senate Commerce Committee.

Arielle has been a tireless and expert advocate in defending and promoting key conservative values. She has consistently fought to defend the taxpayer, to defend free speech, with particular passion to defending kids online. Arielle was key in delivering policy victories many said were impossible.

Simply put, her experience both in Congress and at the FCC makes her ideally suited to lead NTIA. Arielle will serve President Trump and Secretary Lutnick well in their mission to advance government efficiency, economic growth, and innovation. The American people will benefit enormously from her service.