

Federal spending, if he wants to reduce the Federal workforce, if he wants to gut Medicaid, gut Medicare, gut Social Security, gut the SNAP program, gut low-income heating assistance, gut rental assistance, gut title I funding to our public schools, guess what? He has got two Republican Houses that he can persuade to do his bidding. He has been pretty good so far at persuading these two Houses to do his bidding.

So why didn't he do that? That would be the lawful way to accomplish that. If President Trump could convince the two Houses to slash all of these programs in a budget, that would be lawful and get an appropriations deal that cuts all of these programs the way he and Russell Vought and Project 2025 want to do it.

But that is not what he is doing. He is trying to do it on his own. Why? Why would President Trump, who has a clearly legal path ahead of him that he can exercise over the course of the next 6 weeks—it is not very long—to get a budget deal with two Republican Houses—why would President Trump, with two Republican Houses and 6 weeks to get a budget deal to do everything he wants—why would he not exercise that route but, instead, use an illegal route as an Executive to slash funding contrary to clear statute?

It is because he doesn't think that elected Republican Members of the House of Representatives and the Senate will go along with his radical plans. He doesn't think he can convince my GOP colleagues to take the ax to all of these programs and hurt the American people in the way he wants to.

Let's make President Trump do this the right way, not the wrong way. Let's put it on the shoulders of President Trump and the two Republican majorities. Do you want to slash this stuff? Fine. Have that debate on the floor of the Senate and on the floor of the House when we are doing the budget negotiation between now and March 14. Show the American public your homework. Show them who is going to get hurt. Show them that we are going to hurt everyday people at the expense of the big guys, who are getting a tax cut in the reconciliation bill later. Let's really have that debate right here in the full view of the American public with these spotlights on and the TV broadcasting it.

That is what this President is afraid of, and that is why he is using this illegal strategy to accomplish what he is afraid he can't accomplish in the article I branch.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

TRUMP EXECUTIVE ORDERS

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, I thank my colleagues.

You know, President Trump likes to think that chaos is a useful tool. He can create disarray and disruption, and things will end up all right. There is

another word that more aptly describes what he did: "cruel," deeply cruel.

You know, on Sunday night in Vermont, it is really a special night. You have got the work of the week behind you. The errands of the weekend are done. If you are fortunate and have a family, you have dinner; you are watching the football game; you are gathering yourself for the week ahead.

The week ahead for people is different. It is a mom who has a dentist appointment that she finally got after 8 months on Medicaid. It is a dump truck driver who is looking forward to getting back and seeing his friends at work and getting that construction project in town completed. It is a Medicaid doctor who, as tired as he was from the week before, is excited about the week he faces or she faces. It is the Meals on Wheels recipients—folks who have had a quiet weekend who are lonely and are anticipating the delivery of that meal, not only for physical nourishment but for the emotional comfort that comes with having that contact with the person who is delivering that meal.

These are the everyday things that people do. They are living their lives, where they do work; they make appointments for their kids; they see them to childcare; they help their neighbors. Out of the blue—with no discussion—an announcement goes out. It is illegal. It is sent out by a person who hasn't even been empowered to act.

It says to that mom who is going to the Medicaid appointment: It is off.

It says to that person who was going to get a Meals on Wheels delivery: It is not coming.

It says to that construction worker: That project you are so proud of that you are working on in that you are making a contribution to your community, don't show up for work.

It comes out of nowhere—with no explanation, with no discussion. It is cruel taking away the expectations that people depend on to live the hard lives that a lot of people have.

By the way, I talk about people who have a fair amount of stability in their lives. There are women who are getting beaten, and they have refuge because they can call a hotline, and they can go to a shelter—closed. It is some kids who are homeless and have a shelter that they can go to because of the incredible effort of people in our communities—in your community and in mine—who care about that, when it is invisible to so many others. So the jeopardy of those people—taking away their security in the name of showing how chaos works to accomplish your goals—that is cruel. That is cruel.

You know, it is also cruel because of the folks who volunteer at some of these places. You are depriving them of the opportunity that makes so much of a difference in their lives when they see their lives being fulfilled by being able to help others.

I got a ride from an Uber driver, and I was talking to him. He told me that

he was retired. He is retired like a lot of people where they have a job or two, and his was driving. But the other thing he did was he delivered Meals on Wheels, and he told me about his mother-in-law who, until she was 91, delivered Meals on Wheels, oftentimes to people 30 years younger. The joy he had in doing that is what made life so vivid and worthwhile for him to live. It is the joy of helping your neighbors. The President's order took that away from him—no meals to deliver. That is cruel.

It is also totally illegal and totally unconstitutional, and this is the test that we face. If we are U.S. Senators and we believe that the Constitution is important, not in the abstract but in the role it has played in preserving and protecting the freedom of all Americans, and if we believe that freedom is preserved when there is a check and balance against unbridled power, then we are the ones who have to act in order to protect the well-being of this country against the illegal actions by a President who just doesn't care whether it is legal or it isn't.

He worships power, and he is creating a new culture where, if you worship community service, if you worship generosity, forgiveness, empathy, you are a sucker. That is the emotional message from this President Trump.

Our people in Vermont, our people in Utah—they want and they do better that, when they see injustice, when they see suffering, they respond to it. They don't intensify it.

So we have a decision as U.S. Senators to stand up for what this institution requires, and that is that we are a separate and coequal branch of government, and when the responsibilities are being subverted by an overreach by the Executive, we resist, and we resist because it is absolutely vital to the well-being of this country that our democracy prevail with three branches of government and checks and balances.

But it is really fundamentally important to the well-being of the people we represent—in their opportunity to live with stability, in the ability to help their neighbors, to have confidence that promises made are promises kept, that we defend the good work, the good will, and the integrity of the people of Vermont, of the people of Utah, and of all of our 50 States.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

TRUMP EXECUTIVE ORDERS

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, as much as President Trump desires it, the President is not a king. We are here tonight because, as much as President Trump desires it, the law is not a suggestion. We are here tonight because President Trump has decided he is a king, that the law is a suggestion, and he has decided to betray American families.

You have heard of the Great Depression, but right now, we are living

through the “Great Betrayal”—the story of a man who ran for the Presidency, saying he was going to be a champion for families. Then, shortly after taking office—just 8 days ago—he proceeds to launch an attack on the very core programs that families, parents, children, and communities depend on.

Wow—have you ever seen anything like it? Have you ever seen anything like it in your life that someone campaigns for families, and just after they are sworn into office, they launch a huge attack on America’s families?

That attack is actually illegal because the law—once programs are funded, it is the Executive’s responsibility to implement those programs, not to say, “Well, I will implement this one but not that one,” or “I will shut down all the funding for all the programs.” No.

In fact, we have had that conversation in the past. Let’s turn the clock back to President Nixon. President Nixon said: You all reached a compromise, and you had some programs some of you liked and some programs others liked, and you agreed to fund those programs. But do you know what? I am only going to fund the ones I like. I am only going to distribute the funds for those programs which fit my agenda.

The courts responded. They said: No, you can’t do that. The power of the purse sits with Congress. It is Congress that decides what is going to be spent on what, and it is the Executive’s—the President’s—responsibility to implement that.

Then Congress said: Do you know what? We will give the President a break. If the President wants to roll back a program that has already been authorized and funded, he can ask Congress to do it. It is in the 1974 Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act, and it is called a rescission.

The President sends a message out to us and says: Hey, do you know what? I don’t think we need all the funds for developing that new nuclear warhead because it turns out it won’t fit on a missile. I would like to have those funds rescinded and put back in the Treasury.

And we have 45 days to act. It is a privileged motion.

All right. So along comes the “Great Betrayal” President, President Trump, who campaigned on families and then decided to attack the programs for families just 1 week into office, and he says: I don’t like that rescission structure. I am just going to do what Nixon did. I am going to do what the Court said couldn’t be done because I don’t like what the Supreme Court decided previously. I am just going to break the law.

Now, is this, like, out of character for President Trump? Well, certainly, just hours after being sworn into office and taking the oath to the Constitution of the United States of America, he said: The 14th Amendment—the one

about, you know, birthright citizenship—I am canceling it. Wow. Now, we have two major instances of breaking the Constitution with just 8 days into the office. That is quite the record.

The thing is the real victims across this country. My colleagues have laid it out so well, the fact that that grant to run the women’s shelter is locked up. That program to run the childcare center is canceled. The grant to keep us at the forefront of the semiconductor R&D in Corvallis, OR, is on hold. That medical research is frozen. That contract for vaccination programs so we don’t end up with an epidemic that will hurt children can’t be written. That employment program for veterans returning from a theater of war ain’t happening.

No, that is crazy. And all these things are affecting our families—and not just our families, our infrastructure.

We worked so hard in a bipartisan way to launch the biggest infrastructure program since Eisenhower. We did the massive national interstate highway system. But do you know what? It was a long time ago, so we said: We have to rebuild our bridges; we have to improve our mass transit. And we had a very large expenditure trying to bring these up to speed.

You know, in my State, there is a bridge on the interstate between Oregon and Washington. It is still a drawbridge. It is like the last drawbridge in the United States of America. It has to be replaced, but now it is on hold.

We have another bridge that is under contract or grants to be able to be earthquake-resistant because it will play a critical role when the big one, the one we always talk about—like, California might fall into the sea—when that earthquake that happens roughly every 300 years off the coast of the United States on the West Coast—like, we need to have a bridge that actually holds up to it. Well, who knows if that is going to get built now.

So not only does this attack families, not only does this obstruct and delay infrastructure projects, but it drives up costs.

I seem to have an echo in my ear about the President saying he wants to reduce costs. But, instead, when you slow down projects, the cost of materials goes up. What is that? That is called driving up costs.

So we are here tonight to say this cannot happen. We are here tonight to say to our Republican colleagues: This is not about red and blue or Republican and Democratic States.

I talked to a colleague earlier today who said: I am getting all kinds of calls from my home. I bet that is true for every one of our 100 Senators. I know everybody on this side of the aisle has been hearing from folks back home saying: We are pretty upset. We are pretty worried. What is happening? You know, that portal where we get funding from Medicaid or that portal where we get funding for veterans ben-

efits—or whatever it is—it is all shut down. I am sure all 100 Senators have been getting these calls.

This is an attack by an authoritarian in the executive branch on the constitutional powers of Congress.

You know, when we talk about the branches of government, we talk about article I and article II and article III. Article I of the Constitution is about Congress, because at the heart of democracy are folks who are elected down the hall in the House of Representatives and here in the Senate to wrestle with and shape the law. Article II is the executive, who executes those laws. Article III are the judges who defend the Constitution.

Well, so here we are, article II, the President, with authoritarian impulses, is attacking all of us here, all 100 Senators, all 430 or -5 or so Members of the House of Representatives, and saying: I want to have the power and decide how things get distributed for things that have already been enacted. So that is why we are here.

I must say, it is even worse. It is even worse than simply his attack on families in this violation on the Constitution. It is part of a vast authoritarian power grab.

In just the past few days, the inspectors general for Agency after Agency have been fired. The inspectors general are the ones who make sure the executive branch is behaving according to the law. They do all kinds of reports that hold people accountable. They do things that determine this program is working, that program is not working, this is being done in accordance with the law, this isn’t.

If the inspectors general are not there, there is no one to hold people accountable. That is the point of firing them all. That should put terror in every one about the lawlessness President Trump intends to go forward with.

I know there are all kinds of other things, all kinds of other attacks. For example, all those lawyers in the Department of Justice who are assigned to environmental crimes, like when companies have huge amounts of asbestos and dump it in the wrong place or huge amounts of chemicals that contaminate some groundwater and cause all kinds of citizens to have wells that they can’t use anymore, or so on and so forth—every one of them has been tossed. They got the word. They are not there anymore, just within a few days of the start of this administration.

So I thank my colleagues who came here tonight to talk about this.

The architect of this plan is a man named Russell Vought. Russell Vought did the last budget for Trump the first time he served. And then he started a nonprofit think tank that worked to develop the basic plans for Project 2025. Then he became the architect of Project 2025.

And it has three main parts. The first part: Attack and tear down programs for America’s families, the ones that

help them get on their feet and be able to thrive and move into the middle class. The second part is to borrow \$2 to \$3 trillion from the Federal Treasury. And the third part is to do massive tax giveaways to the richest Americans.

He has laid all three of them out. Check it out in Project 2025. He came and talked to us all about all these programs, these three steps: Savage the programs for families—of course, that wasn't exactly the words he used; he just said massive cuts to things like Medicaid, massive cuts to things like childcare program. Everybody should be on their own, with no foundation to have any assistance getting on their feet and being able to move forward—not on healthcare, not on housing, not on education, not on childcare, not on anything. Well, that is the attack on families. That is the great betrayal.

He is going to be voted on this Thursday in the Budget Committee. The Budget Democrats and our Democratic leader have written and said this vote should be delayed. We are in the middle of a constitutional crisis. The architect of that crisis is the man to be voted on on Thursday. This is wrong. Let's fix this constitutional crisis and then continue with the conversation about con-

firmation of the nominee Russell Vought.

Let's work together, Democrats and Republicans, to defend the institutions of our democracy. Let's say no to this sweeping authoritarian power grab. Let's defend the Constitution.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands adjourned until 12 noon tomorrow.

Thereupon, the Senate at 7:55 p.m., adjourned until Wednesday, January 29, 2025, at 12 noon.

NOMINATIONS

Executive nominations received by the Senate:

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

MICHAEL DUFFEY, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR ACQUISITION AND SUSTAINMENT, VICE WILLIAM A. LAPLANTE, JR., RESIGNED.

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

PAUL ATKINS, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION FOR A TERM EXPIRING JUNE 5, 2031. (REAPPOINTMENT)

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

STEPHEN MIRAN, OF NEW YORK, TO BE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISERS, VICE JARED BERNSTEIN, RESIGNED.

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

FRANK BISIGNANO, OF NEW JERSEY, TO BE COMMISSIONER OF SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION FOR THE TERM EXPIRING JANUARY 19, 2031, VICE MARTIN O'MALLEY, RESIGNED.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

ADAM BOEHLER, OF TENNESSEE, TO BE SPECIAL PRESIDENTIAL ENVOY FOR HOSTAGE AFFAIRS, WITH THE RANK AND STATUS OF AMBASSADOR.

CONFIRMATION

Executive nomination confirmed by the Senate January 28, 2025:

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

SEAN DUFFY, OF WISCONSIN, TO BE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION.

WITHDRAWALS

Executive Message transmitted by the President to the Senate on January 28, 2025 withdrawing from further Senate consideration the following nominations:

FRANK BISIGNANO, OF NEW JERSEY, TO BE COMMISSIONER OF SOCIAL SECURITY, VICE MARTIN O'MALLEY, RESIGNED, WHICH WAS SENT TO THE SENATE ON JANUARY 20, 2025.

ADAM BOEHLER, OF TENNESSEE, TO BE SPECIAL PRESIDENTIAL ENVOY FOR HOSTAGE AFFAIRS, WHICH WAS SENT TO THE SENATE ON JANUARY 20, 2025.

MICHAEL DUFFY, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR ACQUISITION AND SUSTAINMENT, VICE WILLIAM A. LAPLANTE, JR., RESIGNED, WHICH WAS SENT TO THE SENATE ON JANUARY 20, 2025.