

side, on the public housing stock side, on vouchers, on section 8, on HUD-VASH, there are lots of programs that work—on the low-income housing tax rate. There are a lot of government things that we do that have helped and can help more.

But the truth is that the throughput capacity of the system is being constrained by the government itself. We could allocate \$3 trillion to affordable housing, and if it is still hard to build a house in an individual neighborhood, all that money would get stuck. Actually, the State of California tried that. They allocated an enormous amount of money to housing, and they didn't get very much built.

The county of Maui, many years ago, said: No new housing unless it is affordable—which kind of lands on the ears in a wonderful way, right? No new housing unless it is affordable. Do you know what happened? There was no new housing at all for a full decade.

So we just have to embrace, on the left—the reason I care about this is because I think it is the single most impactful economic policy that we could implement, to make it easier to build housing for working people, for students, for the disabled, for the elderly, for the entrepreneurs, for cities, for towns, for rural neighborhoods. This is important because I care about that.

Now, if you are a conservative, the basic principle is almost even more simple, which is: It is your damn property. You should be permitted to do what you want with your property within certain safety boundaries and all the rest of it.

But if it is your property and you have a quarter of an acre and you want to build an accessory dwelling unit for your kids because they are adults and they just had a baby, you should be allowed to do pretty much whatever you want with your property. But we have inverted the presumption so that it is your neighbors that get to decide what you get to do with your property.

So if you are a private property rights person, you should love the idea of deregulating the housing market. If you are a progressive and you see how much people are struggling right now, you should love the idea of deregulating the housing market.

We need to reform land-use laws for upzoning to allow higher density, reducing minimum lot sizes, deploying manufactured homes, enabling single-room occupancy development wherever multifamily housing is allowed. We know all this works because it is working in certain places.

It is hard to keep any issue out of the partisan crossfire. It really is. It is hard to keep anything out of the partisan crossfire. Everyone retreats to their own corner and starts talking past each other and trying to light the algorithm on fire.

Our ability to come together, use common sense, and find a way forward will affect how people live and succeed for generations to come.

Just this week, Senator BANKS and I introduced legislation to incentivize local governments to build more housing near federally funded transit projects. Senator YOUNG and I introduced the YIMBY Act, the Yes in My Backyard Act, which encourages localities to cut onerous regulations and adopt pro-housing policies.

We can and we do disagree about almost everything, but on this, we should all be able to agree that in the richest country in the history of the world, people should not have to worry about having a roof over their heads. We can fix this, and we must.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

#### NOMINATION OF AARON SZABO

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, the Trump corruption of the Environmental Protection Agency continues apace, so I am here today in opposition to the nomination of Aaron Szabo to serve as the Assistant Administrator for the Office of Air and Radiation over at EPA.

The Constitution provides the President the power to nominate ministers and officers of the United States and the Senate advice and consent power over his nominees.

I think we probably agree that the Constitution means something, that advice and consent is not a mere rubberstamp. But when a nominee comes before your committee, they should provide straight answers to questions. Well, this nominee dodged our questions and then doubled down with more obfuscation when we gave him a chance to clarify through questions for the record. That alone should be sufficient reason to withhold consent until proper answers are obtained.

This character Szabo is credited by name as a contributor to the EPA chapter of Project 2025, the extremist, rightwing, fossil fuel-funded blueprint for dismantling the Federal Government, which President Trump is now dutifully implementing. Some of the environmental highlights from Project 2025? Weaken the Clean Air Act by reversing the endangerment finding. Purge the Agency and bring to its staff “trauma.” In case you aren't keeping score at home, EPA Administrator Zeldin is already hard at work on these.

Szabo was an advisor to the America First Policy Institute—the Trump-aligned think tank funded by fossil fuel and aligned with Big Oil interests. He worked as a lobbyist, pushing the interests of major polluters like members of the American Petroleum Institute. Well, chief on the wish list of his former clients is rescission of the EPA's endangerment finding. That is a 2009 evidence-based determination that greenhouse gases are, in fact, harmful to human welfare and the environment. When that rule was adopted back in 2009, it had actually already been settled scientific fact for decades that greenhouse gases harmed the public

and the environment. Now, 16 years later, the evidence has only gotten stronger, and the looming economic dangers of climate collapse have only gotten more evident. The only people who benefit from repealing the endangerment finding are the planet's biggest polluters—Mr. Szabo's former clients.

To me, Mr. Szabo's recent work and professional affiliations should also render him unfit for the role to which he has been nominated. Is this really what we want for the EPA? Is this really how we protect clean air—by helping polluters rule the roost?

It gets worse.

When questioned at his hearing about his ties to Trump's donors' extreme anti-environmental agenda, Szabo provided obfuscatory answers. He acknowledged that he was a contributor to Project 2025, which he could hardly fail to do since his name was on it, but he stated that he kept no records—no records—of his contributions to that effort. He was asked whether he had no records because he never had any or because he had deleted them. He couldn't answer. He bumbled, stumbled, bobbed, weaved, dodged, and, ultimately, refused to answer, although he did concede that some of the advice he had provided was written advice.

Following up with subsequent QFRs on the topic, we got from Mr. Szabo a sudden response, albeit one that does not seem credible, particularly in light of his previous inability to answer the question.

He wrote:

Like millions of other Americans, I have been the subject of attempts to steal personal information through electronic means. I, like many federal government employees, had their completed Standard Form 86, titled “Questionnaire for National Security Positions,” stolen in 2015 that included sensitive information. I periodically delete old messages and documents that are no longer necessary to help ensure privacy and security to my family, those I interact with, and myself.

Seriously? Szabo had plenty of time to provide that response during his confirmation hearing, but he never mentioned anything of the sort. His contribution to the anti-environmental portion of Project 2025 is hard to connect with any issues of family, privacy, and security.

To be clear, this is not entirely about whether you approve or disapprove of Project 2025. What is relevant here is the extreme degree of evasiveness in answering or, more exactly, not answering our questions. Senators are constitutionally obligated to provide advice and consent on the President's nominees. So we should demand better than this in the people we confirm to serve in the most senior positions in our government. The current status of “dodge ‘em” in our nomination hearings is a disgrace.

Beyond Mr. Szabo's own questionable qualifications and his deceptiveness and his troublesome testimony, we also cannot ignore the full-on corruption of the EPA on behalf of Trump's polluting

fossil fuel donors—corruption well underway. I already mentioned the endangerment finding, but there is more. Proposed deregulatory efforts will make cars dirtier and less fuel-efficient. Why? So Trump's donors in the oil industry can sell more gasoline. They will let powerplants and oil and gas facilities spew more carbon dioxide and methane without limits. Why? So Trump's fossil fuel political donors can sell more oil and gas to those facilities. The EPA is even attempting to shut down the program that keeps track of how much carbon pollution industrial facilities emit.

See no evil. Hear no evil.

The Trump corruption train rolls on, and to allow one of the architects of the EPA section of that fossil fuel-funded Project 2025 free rein to dismantle an office that is so central to the Agency's core mission and to the protection of all our constituents will do nothing to help anyone except the interests of the polluters who fund President Trump and, if I may add, the Republican Party.

I will vote no on his nomination, and I strongly urge my colleagues to do the same for a multiplicity of good reasons.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

#### DEMOCRATIC AGENDA

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, in November, President Trump and the Republicans really received a very powerful mandate from the American people. They wanted to make certain that our border was going to be secured and that we were going to strengthen the economy, get inflation under control, rein in wasteful government spending, get ourselves back on track, and make America great and prosperous and safe and secure once again.

By passing the One Big Beautiful Bill, we delivered on this mandate by securing the largest tax cut in U.S. history, including reduced taxes on tips and overtime, a \$6,000 bonus deduction for seniors, and the permanent extension of President Trump's 2017 tax cuts. It also reduces the burden of the death tax for millions, providing critical relief for family-owned businesses and for so many of our Nation's farms and farmers. It bolsters our Armed Forces with a \$150 billion increase in military spending. It provides the largest ever investment in border security so that we can, indeed, complete building the wall and also hire new Border Patrol agents and officers. It strengthens Medicaid by rooting out waste, fraud, and abuse. It restores fiscal sanity by eliminating hundreds of billions of dollars in far-left spending, and the list goes on and on.

These are all enormous wins for Tennesseans, whom I represent, and, indeed, for all Americans, but our work here in this Chamber is far from over.

At the top of the list, we have the need to confirm President Trump's nominees. The President deserves to

have his team in place to enact his agenda, but instead of working with us to carry out the will of the American people, our colleagues across the aisle have chosen to obstruct at any cost. Right now, we have 130 pending—pending—nominations of people who have been through committee. Their paperwork is in, and their questions are answered. All they need is a vote in this Chamber. There is absolutely no reason that we should have this backlog, especially when you look at the importance of these nominations: U.S. ambassadorships to the Vatican, the Netherlands, Chile, Greece, and the European Union; seven Federal judgeships; U.S. attorneys; Under Secretaries for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and the Navy; the Commissioner of the Securities and Exchange Commission. That is just a brief, partial list.

Our Democratic friends are trying to slow down the process on these nominees as much as they possibly can. They lost at the ballot box. They have lost in the Halls of Congress. They have tried the courts, and they have lost in the courts. So obstruction and stalling are what they have left as they try to spite the President.

They might think that they are hurting just the Republicans or just the President, but, you know, what they are doing is hurting the people whom they are elected to represent. Every single day that goes by without these nominees being approved and getting to work on the job means those nominees are not able to work on behalf of the American people. Unfortunately, it is the people who suffer because Agencies are not fully staffed and can't make responses. You have individuals who need help with VA benefits or help with an Agency and an item of concern. At this point, they are understaffed.

With the recent disclosures from DNI Gabbard, we are learning even more about how President Obama and the Democrats manufactured the Russia hoax to try to derail President Trump's first term. I bring this up because their obstruction is nothing new. When they run out of different roadways and different avenues and different opportunities, they have got one thing left. As I have said, they have lost at the ballot box, here in Congress, and they have lost in the courts. So now what they do is try to obstruct.

We know from the documents that have been released concerning the Russia hoax that the Democrats were hard at work on this in 2016 and 2017 with President Trump's first term. For months, far-left activist judges undermined our Constitution by blocking lawful orders from the Trump administration in a brazen effort to decide nationwide policy. Their abuse of power only came to an end when the Supreme Court reined in those Federal district judges and said: No, you have no ability, and you have no right to issue nationwide injunctions.

More recently, we have seen Democrats try their best to obstruct a core

part of the "America First" agenda, and that is securing our southern border. Americans want our border to be secure, and they want criminal illegal aliens removed from their communities. Across the country, ICE and Border Patrol agents have been hard at work in carrying out this mandate and arresting criminals who have absolutely no right to be here in our country.

Well, the Democrats are working to vilify and undermine our brave Federal law enforcement. We have seen congressional Democrats try to storm ICE facilities, including a House Member who faces Federal charges for assaulting a Federal ICE officer. They have smeared ICE agents who risk their lives to protect our country, comparing them to the secret police and Nazis. They push legislation that would prohibit officers from wearing masks, exposing them and their families to targeted harassment.

This is all happening as ICE officers face an 830-percent surge in assaults. That is correct—an 830-percent increase in assaults. Just this month, far-left criminals ambushed officers at an ICE facility in Texas, shooting one officer in the neck. Three days later, a man sent three people to the hospital after firing dozens of rounds at a separate Border Patrol facility in Texas.

These brave officers deserve our total and undivided support, and the American people deserve to have elected Representatives who protect their interests. That is what Republicans are working to do every single day. They are working to protect our Nation's citizens, and nothing—not even this obstruction that continues every single day by the Democrats—is going to stop us.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BLACKBURN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. RES. 81

Mr. RICKETTS. Madam President, Iran cannot be allowed to have a nuclear weapon. This has been a redline for decades, going back to President Clinton.

The reason is because the results would be catastrophic. It would create an existential threat to our allies and partners in the region, such as Israel. Even worse, it would create a threat to our heroic servicemembers, at a time when Iran and its proxies have already shed blood and have that blood on their hands.

It would trigger a regional arms race, as countries threatened by Iran's persistent malign aggression seek their own nuclear deterrent. And it would lead to an even more assertive and aggressive Iran that would be emboldened