

them announced without any details. Only one of the six agreements the President has announced this month has actually been signed. But even these newly announced frameworks are very thin on details and still amount to a historically high, 15-percent-across-the-board tariff on American consumers and businesses—the highest effective tariff rate in modern U.S. history.

This is no way to treat our friends and allies, and it is certainly no way to run trade policy and strengthen our economy.

Manufacturers and farmers in my State and across the country are being asked to make business decisions when the rules have been changing by the week or the day. I have spoken with small business owners who are holding back investments because they don't know what tariffs they will be paying next month or even next week.

And it isn't just chaos; it is also corruption. The administration slapped a 50-percent tariff on the country of Brazil even when we have a trade surplus with them. Remember, at the beginning, when he was talking about "Well, with some countries, we have these big deficits, and that is different than the surpluses"? Why would you slap a 50-percent tariff on a country that we have a trade surplus with? Why? Because the President didn't like the political headlines coming out of the country. That isn't a trade strategy; that is weaponizing economic policy.

Meanwhile, American families are paying the price. When the administration boasts about collecting over \$100 billion in tariffs this year, that is \$100 billion in new taxes. It is not China paying for Trump's tariff taxes; it is the people of our country. Trump's tariff taxes are the largest tax increase on the American middle class in over half a century.

The President's new tariff taxes are already raising costs for American families by \$2,400 a year—\$300 of that in food costs alone. According to one estimate, fresh produce could rise nearly 7 percent under the new tariffs that are set to take effect on Friday.

It is American manufacturers who are absorbing the costs when they have parts that are coming from other countries. It is the American exporters, like farmers, who are losing markets. The markets will dry up. And it is American consumers who are feeling it at the checkout aisle. That might not mean much to the wealthy who just got those giant tax breaks, but it means a lot to seniors who are already struggling with higher grocery and prescription drug costs, and it means a lot to people who are struggling with high costs. And I just read about how the Treasury Secretary is now talking blantly about privatizing Social Security.

In Minnesota, the Small Business Person of the Year—Busy Baby owner Beth Benike—fears her business can't survive under these policies.

I have heard from Mark, the CEO of a flower company in our State, who told me his business is being undercut by foreign competition that is exempt from the very tariffs his company is forced to pay.

I have heard from Minnesota's soybean farmers, who are concerned about losing markets that they have spent generations developing.

In my State, we export over \$7 billion in goods to Canada every year. Canada is not just our top trading partner; it is our trusted ally. Yet, under Trump's policy, we are slapping tariffs on them too.

Border crossings are down, tourism is down, and it is taking a toll on our economy.

That is why Senator KAINE and I got a vote on his resolution, which I was proud to be the lead cosponsor on, to say: Unleash us from this. Congress must take back its power over tariffs and the power of the purse. And, yes, we actually passed that bill. It is sitting over there, waiting in the House, as prices go up, as chaos goes up, and as corruption goes up.

You know, these are real people, real businesses, real farmers, and they are trying to survive in the uncertainty while the President treats our economy like a game show.

Let's be clear. I support strong trade enforcement. I backed targeted tariffs to combat the unfair dumping of steel and market manipulation, especially by China. I actually went over and met with the trade enforcers in the Commerce Department a few years back. I thanked them for their work and spent hours with them.

But this isn't a targeted approach. What President Trump is doing is a blanket approach that punishes our allies and our own workers more than our adversaries. He is using emergency powers to bypass Congress, and they are just letting it happen—our colleagues on the other side of the aisle—and are enacting sweeping trade taxes with little regard to the economic consequences. That is not leadership; that is an abuse of authority.

That is why, as I noted, I co-led the bipartisan Trade Review Act with Senator KAINE and Senator WARNER. When the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the AFL-CIO agree like they did on that bill, you know we are doing something right.

So I will keep working to restore common sense and responsible governance to our trade policy on behalf of American families, businesses, and farmers.

I supported the USMCA, which was a Trump trade agreement which the President was so proud of at the time. I would ask: Why not negotiate these issues—some of the issues I know we have? Why not negotiate that within the framework of that agreement? Because it is up for review. Instead, we have this chaos.

Right now, more than half of our major trading partners—accounting for

56 percent of U.S. imports—still don't have finalized deals. We have 24 hours to go. The clock is ticking.

But here is what we do know: This is not how you grow American manufacturing, this is not how you give farmers certainty that they can export to market, and this is certainly not how you lower costs for the middle class.

Minnesotans have had enough of these tariff taxes. They want solutions, not showmanship. They want a trade policy that works for farmers and workers and their families. They want leaders who will tell the truth about what these tariffs are: They are a tax on the people of America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 2557

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, nobody in our country should be above the law—not a politician, not a celebrity, not a billionaire—no one. The principle of "equal justice under the law" is so powerful that if you walk outside these doors and you look across to the Supreme Court, you will see them carved into the facade above the pillars: "Equal justice under law."

No matter how powerful someone is, if they commit a crime, then they need to be prosecuted, and the American people have a right to know if information is being held related to the conduct of the crime.

So in regard to the Epstein files, there is only one right answer: the complete and total disclosure of everything, all the details, while protecting the names of the victims. Whatever a person's political party is shouldn't matter. The level of power shouldn't matter. Their net worth shouldn't matter. "Equal justice under law" is the vision of our Nation. If an individual is a pedophile, if an individual has raped a young girl, then they need to be held accountable. Let the chips fall where they may.

Jeffrey Epstein was a monster. He groomed and abused and raped and coordinated the rape by others of underage girls, and he trafficked these girls to rich and powerful men.

As I speak here tonight, the Department of Justice has files detailing a tremendous amount of information about his operation, and in those files, as we have heard from Pam Bondi and as she has informed the President, the President's name is among them.

Well, that doesn't mean that he was somebody who participated in a crime. He could be listed as an associate. He could be listed as a friend. He could be listed as somebody who attended a gathering. We don't know. In fact, we don't know about any of the names that are in those files as to what they did. But that is the point. As to the names of the powerful people who associated with an individual—Jeffrey Epstein—who was running an international sex trafficking ring—all of that information must be disclosed. Full disclosure is the only option.

Every detail should be brought to light, and anyone who committed egregious crimes should be held accountable no matter who they are.

My colleague from Oregon Senator RON WYDEN and the Senate Finance Committee have been investigating Mr. Epstein's financial network for years. They have been seeking disclosure.

I have a letter that Senator WYDEN wrote. It reveals more than 4,700 suspicious wire transfers adding up to more than \$1 billion from just one of Mr. Epstein's bank accounts and hundreds of millions of dollars in other bank accounts. What would that information show us about who they went to? What questions would it lead us to ask, and what questions would that information answer? The American public has every right to know the questions that Senator WYDEN and the Finance Committee are asking.

Let me be clear. That work was bipartisan work, Democrats and Republicans together calling for disclosure and accountability.

In this letter, Senator WYDEN notes:

Epstein clearly had access to enormous financing to operate his sex trafficking network, and the details on how he got the cash to pay for it are sitting in a Treasury Department filing cabinet.

For years, so many people across America in both parties have been demanding the release of the Epstein files, but we heard a lot from a few folks who are in the administration now.

December 15, 2023, Kash Patel said that Mr. Epstein's "black book" was "under [the] direct control of the FBI." Well, Mr. Patel is now the Director of the FBI.

On October 22, 2024, Vice—well, he wasn't Vice President yet, but now he is Vice President—JD VANCE said in a podcast:

Seriously, we need to release the Epstein list. That's an important thing.

On February 25, 2025, Attorney General Pam Bondi, who was in office, said Mr. Epstein's client list was "sitting on my desk right now to review."

But, suddenly, we are hearing a different tune from people in the administration. We are hearing: There is nothing to see here, they are saying. Go look somewhere else, they are saying. This is not important, they are saying.

But not everyone agrees with that. Let's take the Speaker of the House. July 15, House Speaker MIKE JOHNSON told CNN:

We should put everything out there and let the people decide.

On July 16, Senator Majority Leader JOHN THUNE told FOX News:

I'm always a believer in transparency—I think more is . . . better.

I agree with Speaker MIKE JOHNSON. I agree with Majority Leader JOHN THUNE. I agree that the right principle about this information is to put everything out there.

Let us not forget that as the Senate Finance Committee is pursuing those

information about the file transfers and what they show, that, ultimately, it is not about money itself but about what money tells us and the case it builds for who did what, because what really matters here is this: the victimization of young girls. That is what this is about, the abuse of young girls, the rape of young girls. That is what this is about. That is what transparency is about.

So whether the information in the Department of Justice files is about flight and travel records, names of people who were involved in various ways, names of businesses or nonprofits, other organizations, about meetings held or communications made, whether it was by email, whether it was by text, whether it was by phone call, any immunity deals, any nonprosecution agreements, any plea bargains, any settlements—whatever it is—the American people demand transparency, just as the Speaker of the House demanded transparency, just as the majority leader of the Senate has demanded transparency.

This bill requires "no record shall be withheld, delayed, or redacted on the basis of any of the following: embarrassment, reputational harm, or political sensitivity, including any government official, public figure, or foreign dignitary," regardless of where they are, regardless of where they live.

But what the bill also says is the information released must protect the victims and the underage witnesses, protect those who were victims or who were underage witnesses to crimes. So information can be redacted by those victims and underage witnesses—personally identifiable information, depictions of abuse, or information that would jeopardize a Federal investigation or national security.

Colleagues, the question before us is simple: Will this body follow the lead of the Speaker of the House and the majority leader of the Senate and call for full transparency?

The administration has said the law doesn't allow us to do it, so I am proposing a law that gives them the power to do what they have said they would like to do—transparency.

Will we, instead, object to this law to protect perpetrators of crimes against girls? That is the question tonight: Will we protect our children, or will the information be withheld? Will we fail to demand it, fail to adopt this law to ensure that it is delivered in order to protect the powerful? That is the choice: Protect the victims, be on their side, pursue justice, or protect the powerful?

So, Mr. President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 2557, which is at the desk. I further ask that the bill be considered read three times and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The majority whip.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, reserving the right to object.

For years, Democrats have ignored this issue. Now they can't stop talking about it. Maybe it is because Democrats are trying to distract from their extreme, unprecedented obstructions here in the U.S. Senate.

As of this morning, there were 147 qualified nominees awaiting confirmation by the U.S. Senate. Many were approved by committee with Democrat support. These aren't controversial nominees or individuals. They are patriotic Americans patiently waiting for their opportunity to serve their country. Some have quit their jobs; others have sold their assets. But this Democrat Trump derangement syndrome is holding them back.

So far this year, Democrats have allowed exactly zero—zero—nominees to be confirmed by voice vote. This is a drastic departure from the norms and traditions of the U.S. Senate. It is very different from how Republicans treated Democrat nominees when we were in the minority in 2021. Or maybe it is because Democrats don't want to talk about their dreadful poll numbers—the lowest in 35 years. It is front-page news.

Senate Republicans included a provision that addresses this very issue in the appropriations bill that Democrats are currently holding up. They are stopping the progress on the bill that addresses this. Either way you cut it, this exercise is a Democrat distraction; and therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

Mr. MERKLEY. Would my colleague yield for a question?

Mr. BARRASSO. Regular order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon has the floor.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I ask my colleague to yield for a question. He has chosen not to, and that is his right.

But the question I would ask is this: If the Speaker of the House is demanding transparency, if the majority leader of the Senate is demanding transparency, if the American people are demanding transparency, if my colleagues who have said time and time again just months ago there should be transparency, then why does my colleague come here and object to transparency? What is it that they know that they don't want the American people to know?

To withhold this information is an assault on justice, and it is absolutely wrong. We must continue to demand that the rich and powerful are not shielded from the full force of justice if they have perpetrated crimes against underage children.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

DACA

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, my colleagues, it feels like every single day the Trump administration finds new ways to defy the rule of law.