

This is what Donald Trump and his cronies think about your benefits, America. They want to privatize them. They want to give it over to Wall Street. They want to eliminate a bedrock of this country, Social Security—probably the most popular government program ever created and has done so much good for so long.

Why are they doing it? Why do they want to privatize Social Security? Just to line the pockets of the wealthy elite.

Of course, Secretary Bessent had to rush to Twitter later to do a little cleanup, but the truth came out—the real truth.

Actions speak louder than words, and the actions Donald Trump and his gang are taking against Social Security speak volumes. For months, the Social Security Administration has suffered from the laceration of the DOGE chain saw—laying off thousands of staffers, closing local offices, and beneficiaries hanging in limbo. Now SSA is forcing the field office workers who are left to shift from working with the local beneficiaries who come in with appointments to instead answering the phone lines because they don't have enough staff. You call up, and you have to wait and wait and wait, if you get service at all. There are more delays in answering questions, more delays in processing benefits. Perhaps that is the point. I am pretty certain it is.

Donald Trump and Republicans know they can't come right out and say they want to end Social Security outright. So what does he do? What does Trump do? He and his cronies sabotage Social Security from within. Instead of one lethal blow, the Trump administration is engaged in an act of strangulation, making Social Security so unworkable, so problematic, and so inefficient, that they create the pretext for privatizing.

Secretary Bessent's comments yesterday more or less gave up the game. In their view, Social Security is not part of America's future. But in the views of an overwhelming majority of Americans, it sure is.

Trump and his people want to end guaranteed benefits and tie the dignity and survival of seniors to the whims of Wall Street. Democrats will fight this every step of the way. We believe in Social Security.

#### RAILROAD MERGER

Mr. President, about the rail merger, this week, Union Pacific, the largest freight railroad in America, announced its intention to acquire Norfolk Southern in an \$85 billion mega merger—the largest railroad deal in history.

If approved, this deal would cut down the industry from four major players to just three, pushing us even further down the road of dangerous consolidation and monopoly power.

Right on cue, the companies are already making the same tired claims: This merger will promote competition, improve service, benefit workers and customers alike.

History tells us the opposite. The last four decades of railroad mergers

have led to worse service, worse safety, worse working conditions, higher costs for shippers, which ultimately means higher prices for consumers.

They also promised that no union jobs will be cut. We heard that before from the same executives who laid off thousands of workers while raking in record profits.

That is why SMART TD, the largest rail union in the country, is opposed to this deal. They know what is coming—job cuts, corner-cutting, and corporate greed at scale.

The Surface Transportation Board has a responsibility to protect safety, protect public interest. This is a hostile takeover of America's infrastructure, and it is a test for the Trump administration. Will they side with the railroad oligarchs or side with the workers and families?

If Donald Trump rubberstamps another merger that hands over critical infrastructure to a corporate cartel, he will prove once again that he is not on the side of working Americans.

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

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

#### RURAL HOSPITALS

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, let me bring up what I heard the minority leader say yesterday. Yesterday, he came to this floor, and when he left the floor, he went out to hold a press conference. At that point, the minority leader bragged—bragged—that the Democrats were introducing a bill to repeal the entire healthcare section of the One Big Beautiful Bill.

Here is what the minority leader won't tell you: The Democrats' plan would eliminate—completely eliminate—the \$50 billion designated for rural hospitals all across our country. The minority leader will not tell you that or anything about it because he prefers to focus on fear rather than the facts.

Republicans created this rural hospital fund because rural hospitals are in trouble.

In the last decade since ObamaCare became law, over 100 rural hospitals across the country have closed. Only 10 new ones have opened. Hundreds more are now at risk of closing due to the financial strain. The \$50 billion rural hospital fund was created to address just this crisis. Every single Democrat voted against helping rural hospitals. Now they want to eliminate the fund designed to help our rural hospitals regardless of the damage that it will do to healthcare all across America. With their actions yesterday here in the U.S. Senate, Democrats would make our healthcare system weaker—weaker—for those who need it the most.

#### EXECUTIVE NOMINATIONS

Now, Mr. President, I would like to turn to the issue of nominations.

Yesterday, Leader Thune filed cloture on a number of nominations, one of whose is Brian Nesvik. Brian is the nominee to be the Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

The people of Wyoming know Brian very well, and they know him as a fierce advocate for Wyoming. He is the definition of qualified, and he is one of the very best of Wyoming. He has been the director of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department since 2019. He has served in the Wyoming Army National Guard since 1986—a brigadier general and a Bronze Star recipient.

As the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Director, Brian is going to play a critical role in conserving our natural resources. He is going to take the reins at a time when politics, not science, has too often driven decisions by the Agency. I look forward to working with Brian to restore science to conservation policy.

Brian isn't just the man for the job. I will tell you that I really like and admire him. I met him overseas when he was commanding our troops. I think it was in Kuwait in 2013. He was respected by the troops and then was respected as Wyoming's Game and Fish director. So I look forward to his confirmation.

Congratulations, Brian.

You know, I had the honor of introducing him at his confirmation hearing in March. The committee approved his nomination. And that was 112 days ago, which is the issue of nominations in general.

The people of Wyoming ask me on weekends: Why hasn't Brian been confirmed yet? He had his hearing. We saw it on television. It was passed by the committee. That was almost 4 months ago. Why isn't he on the job today?

Let me tell you why. It is because of really unprecedented Democrat obstruction.

For 7 months, Senator SCHUMER and his band of Democrat obstructionists have thrown the kitchen sink at President Trump's nominees. That is why, right at this moment, 161 highly qualified nominees like Brian have not yet come to the Senate floor for a vote. I am talking about nominees who have had hearings, have had their paperwork done, have had FBI background checks, and have been approved by a positive vote of a committee of the U.S. Senate. Many of these received Democrat support in the committees. Each and every one of them is now stuck in what I consider to be Senate procedural purgatory. They have been stalled. They have been stonewalled and systematically delayed by Senate Democrats.

This isn't advice and consent. No. This is obstruct and delay. If President Trump nominates you, they are against you. That is the new litmus test: Nominated by Trump? Not good enough for the Democrats. Some people call it Trump derangement syndrome.

It has consumed the Senate Democrat caucus.

Historically, the Senate has found ways to work together to fill important positions in our government and do it in a timely manner. During President Trump's first term, by the time Congress recessed for the August break, the Senate had confirmed 133 nominees, and 79 of them were confirmed by voice vote. During President Biden's term, 150 nominees were confirmed by the time the Senate departed for the August recess, and 76 of them were confirmed by voice vote. Here we are in President Trump's second term, and zero—absolutely zero—nominees have been confirmed by voice vote. That is totally unprecedented. President Trump is the only President in modern history to not have a single nominee confirmed by voice vote.

Obstructionist Democrats are turning the Senate into the world's slowest human resources department. It is by design. They have filibustered every single Trump nominee following the confirmation of Marco Rubio to be Secretary of State on day one of the administration. Democrats are doing this regardless of the qualifications of these highly qualified individuals. They do it regardless of bipartisan support in the committees. They do it regardless of precedent and regardless of urgency.

Democrats filibustered the Chief of Protocol at the State Department. They filibustered the Assistant Administrator at the Environmental Protection Agency. They filibustered the Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information at the Department of Commerce. They filibustered the Under Secretary—not the Secretary but the Under Secretary—for Industry and Security at the Department of Commerce. They filibustered the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering at the Department of Defense. They filibustered the Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs at the Department of Veterans Affairs. They even filibustered the General Counsel for the Department of Agriculture—all qualified, all delayed—simply because President Trump nominated them.

Even positions that have never been subject to a rollcall vote in the U.S. Senate have not been spared. When nominees finally get a vote on the Senate floor, many have been confirmed with bipartisan support.

A President deserves to have his team in place. President Trump deserves to have his team in place, and America deserves to have leaders on the job. Democrats have set a sad, new standard for obstructing confirmations. Republicans will not stand back while Democrats weaponize the Senate rules, sabotage the process, and paralyze the executive branch. Republicans will do what needs to be done to get President Trump's team in place.

#### WAIVING QUORUM CALL

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to waive the mandatory quorum call with respect to the Mason nomination.

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

Mr. BARRASSO. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the previous rollcall vote scheduled at 11 o'clock be started immediately.

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

#### CLOTURE MOTION

Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 271, Cheryl Mason, of North Carolina, to be Inspector General, Department of Veterans Affairs.

John Thune, Tommy Tuberville, Bernie Moreno, Tim Sheehy, John Barrasso, John R. Curtis, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Mike Rounds, Katie Boyd Britt, Roger Marshall, Pete Ricketts, John Boozman, David McCormick, Tim Scott of South Carolina, Rick Scott of Florida, Eric Schmitt, Lindsey Graham.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the mandatory quorum call under rule XXII has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Cheryl Mason, of North Carolina, to be Inspector General, Department of Veterans Affairs, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL), the Senator from Washington (Ms. CANTWELL), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. GALLEG0), the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. HASSAN), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. KELLY), and the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) are necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 53, nays 41, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 458 Ex.]

#### YEAS—53

Banks	Graham	Moreno
Barrasso	Grassley	Mullin
Blackburn	Hagerty	Murkowski
Boozman	Hawley	Paul
Britt	Hoeven	Ricketts
Budd	Husted	Risch
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Rounds
Cassidy	Johnson	Schmitt
Collins	Justice	Scott (FL)
Cornyn	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Cotton	Lankford	Sheehy
Cramer	Lee	Sullivan
Crapo	Lummis	Thune
Cruz	Marshall	Tillis
Curtis	McConnell	Tuberville
Daines	McCormick	Wicker
Ernst	Moody	Young
Fischer	Moran	

#### NAYS—41

Alsobrooks	Kaine	Sanders
Baldwin	Kim	Schatz
Bennet	King	Schiff
Blunt Rochester	Klobuchar	Schumer
Booker	Lujan	Shaheen
Coons	Markey	Slotkin
Cortez Masto	Merkley	Smith
Duckworth	Murphy	Van Hollen
Durbin	Murray	Warner
Fetterman	Ossoff	Warnock
Gillibrand	Padilla	Welch
Heinrich	Peters	Whitehouse
Hickenlooper	Reed	Wyden
Hirono	Rosen	

#### NOT VOTING—6

Blumenthal	Gallego	Kelly
Cantwell	Hassan	Warren

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HAGERTY). On this vote, the yeas are 53, and the nays are 41. The motion is agreed to.

The motion was agreed to.

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Tyler Clarkson, of Virginia, to be General Counsel of the Department of Agriculture.

#### VOTE ON CLARKSON NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Clarkson nomination?

Ms. DUCKWORTH. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Arizona (Mr. GALLEG0), and the Senator from Arizona (Mr. KELLY) are necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 52, nays 45, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 459 Ex.]

#### YEAS—52

Banks	Grassley	Mullin
Barrasso	Hagerty	Murkowski
Blackburn	Hawley	Paul
Boozman	Hoeven	Ricketts
Britt	Husted	Risch
Budd	Hyde-Smith	Rounds
Capito	Johnson	Schmitt
Cassidy	Justice	Scott (FL)
Collins	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Cornyn	Lankford	Sheehy
Cotton	Lee	Sullivan
Cramer	Lummis	Thune
Cruz	Marshall	Tillis
Curtis	McConnell	Tuberville
Daines	McCormick	Wicker
Ernst	Moody	Young
Fischer	Moran	
Graham	Moreno	

#### NAYS—45

Alsobrooks	Cantwell	Gillibrand
Baldwin	Coons	Hassan
Bennet	Cortez Masto	Heinrich
Blumenthal	Duckworth	Hickenlooper
Blunt Rochester	Durbin	Hirono
Booker	Fetterman	Kaine