

fact. It is just not accurate that by hiring women or Black people or Hispanics that the safety of this Nation is compromised. That is offensive.

What we have just learned, though, is that the initial FAA report suggests that the tower staffing was not normal during the crash, that the controller on duty last night was doing a job traditionally handled by two people. There is supposed to be someone handling helicopter traffic and someone guiding planes into the airport. There was one person doing that job last night.

We will learn more about what caused this crash. But it is not lost on us that the President of the United States made a choice when he came into office. He threw the FAA into immediate crisis. He ousted the Administrator, replaced the Administrator with no one, and spent the first week trying to bully and intimidate Federal employees. He fired the entire FAA Safety Advisory Board.

So we will take the time to find out what actually happened, but this happened under President Trump's watch. Clearly, something was not right in that tower last night, and it is important for us to follow the facts instead of making quick accusations.

TRUMP EXECUTIVE ORDERS

Mr. President, I came to the floor to continue the discussion that my colleagues have been having over the course of the last 2 days about something fundamentally dangerous that the President is engaged in: an attempt to seize power from Congress.

I don't understand why my Republican colleagues aren't outraged by President Trump's announcement 2 days ago that he was suspending all Federal spending. I don't know why my Republican colleagues don't see how that essentially makes us irrelevant if we spend hundreds of hours of time engaged in very difficult, bipartisan negotiations to come up with a Federal budget every year, as is our constitutional responsibility under article I, and then the President of the United States decides to cancel all spending for weeks or months or longer. That is what the President did 2 days ago.

Now, the courts have put a stay on that order, but the White House Press Secretary yesterday afternoon made it clear that they are still intending to pursue a shutdown of Federal spending. And notwithstanding the very confusing set of news that came from the administration yesterday, notwithstanding the court order, my office has continued to be peppered with phone calls from organizations in Connecticut that are doing incredibly important work that can't get paid.

One of our most critical homeless shelters called this morning to tell us that the disbursement system was still down. This is a homeless shelter that relies on Federal dollars in order to pay the bills. Right now, they are potentially not going to be able to pay certain rents for their clients that are in emergency housing right now. They

are facing an immediate cash flow issue. They will be able to make payroll this week but not next week. They still haven't been able to get paid by the Federal Government because their payment system was shut down yesterday. It is still not back up.

Another not-for-profit in Connecticut that relies on Federal funding to provide food for families and children that are having trouble putting a meal or two meals on the table reports that they are still not able to log on to get reimbursement. This is, again, a small not-for-profit that helps keep people alive with emergency food, that does not have ample cash flow in their bank account, that is still unable to get Federal reimbursement. The result of them shutting down or suspending operations is literally kids going hungry tomorrow, the day after, the day after that.

The State of Connecticut has a really important series of grants still suspended. Payments have been suspended for a Federal grant that helps install solar and clean energy projects in Connecticut. That is not back up and running either.

This is just the tip of the iceberg, so nobody should think that this crisis has passed. Donald Trump suspended Federal spending. The Medicaid system got turned off. Many other important payment systems got turned off. Some of them got turned back on after the order went into place or after it was clear that there was going to be a court order to stop the President from engaging in this unconstitutional action, but many of these Federal programs are still suspended.

There are literally people who may be tossed out on the street and become homeless. There are kids who may go hungry because this crisis has not been fixed.

This is a fundamental corruption, what is happening right now, because what Donald Trump will be able to do, if he seizes control of Federal spending from us, is to be able to use his unilateral discretionary power to be able to send money to people that agree with him and deny it to people who don't agree with him; to send money to his billionaire friends' companies and deny funding to the competitors of those companies; to decide that this disaster in a red State will get funding, but this disaster in a blue State won't get funding.

And if you don't believe me, just look at the way that Donald Trump and Republicans are behaving right now about the wildfires in California. All of a sudden, Republicans are talking about applying conditions to saving people's lives and saving people's property in California.

California is going to have to comply with an unknown set of conditions designed by Donald Trump and Republicans, conditions that were never even contemplated by Republicans when there was a hurricane in Louisiana or in Florida, when there were floods or devastating tornadoes in the Midwest.

People aren't dumb; people know what is going on. There is a different standard if you are a friend of President Trump than if you aren't. There is a different standard applied to aid that goes to States represented by Republicans than aid that goes to States represented by Democrats.

And if we hand the unilateral decisions about where to spend money and where not to spend money to the Chief Executive, there is no going back. This is unconstitutional because the Founders and the Framers thought about this. We are article I, not article II for a reason. We have the spending power for a reason.

Our Founding Fathers were scared to death about the second coming of a monarchy. They were scared to death about putting too much power in the hands of the Executive. So they said that Congress decides the big questions: where and how to spend money; the conditions applied to how that money is spent; whether or not the country goes to war or not. Those decisions are made by us, and when you hand them to any Executive without check, it is a violation of the Framers' intent, it is a violation of the letter of the law of the Constitution, and it is a recipe for corruption.

And so I am angry that a lot of my Republican colleagues that I believe in, that I have worked with, that I have sat and negotiated tough bipartisan pieces of legislation with, aren't raising alarm over what President Trump has done, and what he is continuing to try to do. If you believe that this pause is good for 90 days, then I have a handful of bridges to sell you.

If it is for projects in Democratic States or projects that don't align with the President's personal political priorities, I mean, nobody should believe that that pause is just going to last 90 days.

This is a constitutional crisis, and, yes, the courts have stepped in and put a stay on the President's order, but, ultimately, we should stand up for ourselves. We should stand up for congressional prerogatives—Democrats and Republicans.

And what pains me even more is that my Republican colleagues don't see the story and the broader danger to our democracy, to our country, that is posed by the actions of this President in the first week. There was a handful—a small handful—of my Republican friends who stood up and said it was wrong for Donald Trump to pardon the most violent of the January 6 rioters.

Now, it was wrong for him to have pardoned any of the rioters, the people who sought to do violence to us. I hear a lot of Republicans claiming that, you know, these were just tourists. Yes, there were a couple of bad apples in the bunch, but most everybody just kind of got pushed into the building by accident. They thought they were coming for a tour of the place.

I was here that day. I don't remember a single one of my Republican colleagues staying in the Chamber, after

we were told to flee, to greet the tourists. Everybody knew, that day, that our lives were all in jeopardy, that they were looking for blood. One of the rioters—one of the most violent rioters—who beat police officers, who was let out of jail last week by Donald Trump, went to the scaffold in the gallows after he beat up police officers, and he posted on social media: Too bad there aren't any Democrats hanging.

I don't know why more of my Republican colleagues—and I thank Senator GRASSLEY for speaking up on this—don't realize what happens when darkness descends on our Agencies. I remember a time when Republicans believed in stewardship of the dollars that we appropriated. We wanted to see what happened inside these Agencies.

Donald Trump fired all the inspectors general—like, they are our people; they are there for us, for the American people, to make sure there is not thievery happening in these Agencies. If you want to fire inspectors general and replace them with somebody better, fine, there are no inspectors general in our Agencies. They are gone. And as far as I can tell, there is, like, one Republican that raises an objection to this.

You put all of this together—the abolition of political violence; the darkening of operations in the Executive branch through the firing of the inspectors general, and the seizure of spending power—and that is all a recipe for despotism.

And I understand that some people might think that that is hyperbolic, but I will just tell you that democracies do not die in an instant. Very few democracies that have perished have a day, a before-and-after moment. It is a descent, and, then, all of a sudden, you wake up one day, and you discover that you are not in a democracy any longer; that the leader, that the President, has so much power that it can never be taken away.

And the steps that have been taken by Donald Trump, in the first week, are a master class in the kind of plan that you would undertake if you wanted to grab power permanently. You say to your supporters: If you threaten or intimidate my opposition, I will let you off the hook. You cast darkness over what happens inside the Agencies so the President can move money anyway that he wants without any accountability. And you seize control of spending so that you can use money to reward your friends and punish your enemies.

One of the things that my Republican friends may not understand is what has happened, since the January 6 pardons, to Democrats. A lot of us don't talk about this because we, frankly, don't want to legitimize the people who are making the threats. But when Donald Trump's supporters are told that if they engage in violence in support of their President that they will be let out of jail or face no consequences, they believe him.

And so I will just tell you, the calls and the threats that I have received

since those pardons are serious. They have changed the way that I have to think about protecting my family. And I know that Republicans have received those threats over the years as well. I understand that these threats of violence do happen to both sides.

But this is a specific immunity that has been given by Donald Trump. He has now given a broad immunity to people for beating up police officers. He gave pardons to a specific set of people who beat up police officers. If you are beating up police officers to further the political agenda of Donald Trump, you have immunity. And so, all of a sudden, a lot of unhinged people out there believe that if they engage in violence to further Donald Trump's political ambitions, they have immunity too.

Now, maybe at some point, they will believe that they are furthering Donald Trump's political ambitions by making threats against Republicans, but, right now, the threats that they are lodging are against Democrats—especially those Democrats that have spoken up most vocally against the pardons of the violent January 6 rioters.

And what happens when people start to feel those threats of violence? What happens when people worry about their safety if they engage in political action is that they don't—is that they don't. What happens to organizations when they fear that they won't get a grant from the Federal Government if they don't pledge loyalty to the President is that they don't speak up.

Democracies don't die in a moment. They die when the rules get rigged so that there is a price to be paid—a bodily or financial price to be paid—for standing up to the leader. That is what Donald Trump is constructing in his first week, a system of rules in which you as an American will pay a financial price or a physical price for criticism of the regime. That is not allowed in a democracy.

And so I do not understand why we have been totally unable to find unanimity in two simple ideas: The President of the United States cannot, should not, excuse and encourage political violence; and that the President cannot and should not seize control of the spending power in this country to decide for himself which of us and which of our States get money and which of us and which of our States do not.

Those are fundamental corruptions that make our country weaker, that destroy the democratic norms that are existential to our sense of patriotism and Americanism, but, also, ultimately allow this administration to facilitate a kind of corruption that happens to almost every country that slides away from democracy, in which the leader, unbound, gets to reward friends around him who are loyal.

So this crisis has not passed. As I said, there are organizations in my State that today cannot receive Federal funds—a homeless shelter that is thinking about whether it is going to

have to put people out on the street very soon if that funding portal doesn't get turned back on.

But I will leave you with this. I get it that today it feels like everything has to be partisan; everything has to be us versus you. And I will admit that I, you know, sometimes fall for that trap. All of us sometimes fall for that trap of just evaluating everything based upon red versus blue. If the other side is for it, I have to be against it. I admit that I will fall for that trap sometimes.

But I also, you know, have my bonafides. I have sat down and negotiated with Republicans I disagree with on some really tough issues, like guns and immigration, and came to some conclusions on those issues.

So I have been willing to put my action where my mouth is and say, even on the tough stuff, we can find accommodation and agreement. But I don't know; I am heartbroken. You know, I am heartbroken that more of my Republican colleagues didn't stand up and say: Mr. President, you shouldn't have pardoned the people who tried to kill us, the people who tried to steal the ballot box, the people who desecrated our Capitol. You shouldn't have pardoned them.

I don't think that that should have been so hard for us to agree on. It shouldn't have required courage for my Republican colleagues to stand up and say: Those pardons were wrong, Mr. President.

And I don't think it should have taken courage, yesterday, for more Republicans to say: You can't seize control of Federal spending. It is not constitutional to cease paying people and paying nonprofits and paying for homeless services and paying for nutrition services while you evaluate whether the programs line up with your political priorities.

We passed a budget. We hammered out an agreement, a budget that has amounts and numbers, conditions on it. The President doesn't get to exercise independent authority. He has to implement the budget we pass.

That weakens the institution. That weakens Republicans and Democrats. And I will guarantee you, what comes around, goes around. Sometime down the line, a Democratic President will do the same thing, will just suspend money for things that Republicans care about. That will end up hurting you too.

So I am mad, I am angry, I am heartbroken, and I hope this crisis will pass. But my belief is that the only way that it passes—this crisis caused by the endorsement of political violence by this President, the shuttering of the inspectors general, and the seizure of spending power—I think the only way that this crisis passes—and it is a crisis, a constitutional crisis—is if we find a way to come together, Republicans and Democrats. That is not happening today. My hope is that it happens tomorrow.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

NOMINATION OF DOUGLAS BURGUM

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I rise today to urge my colleagues to support the confirmation of Governor Doug Burgum from my home State of North Dakota to serve as our Nation's 55th Secretary of the Interior.

Whether it is energy, grazing, outdoor recreation, water supply, the National Park Service, or Tribal relations, Doug Burgum is an outstanding choice who fully understands the vast responsibilities under the Department of the Interior.

I have had the pleasure to know Doug for over 30 years, and throughout his career, Doug has gained well-deserved national recognition as an innovative leader.

Governor Burgum is a proud native of Arthur, ND, earning his bachelor's degree from North Dakota State University—home of the Bison—and his master's in business administration from the Stanford Graduate School of Business.

After working as a consultant at McKinsey, he returned home to North Dakota, and he literally bet the family farm to purchase a nascent accounting software company, Great Plains Software. Over time, Doug hired thousands of North Dakotans to build and grow Great Plains Software, eventually launching a public offering in 1997. Then, ultimately, Great Plains Software was purchased by Microsoft in 2001, and it is now known as Microsoft Business Solutions. The vision of Microsoft actually goes back to the company that he built and to this day I think employs several thousand people in and around Fargo, ND.

Great Plains Software, as I said, became Microsoft Business Solutions. He remained at Microsoft for a number of years, actually hiring the current CEO during his time there. He then left Microsoft in 2007, started a number of other companies, went into philanthropy and helped really revitalize downtown Fargo, continued his support for NDSU, and just had a very significant impact in many different aspects of business of philanthropy.

It is because of his countless contributions to North Dakota that, in 2009, during my time as Governor, I named Doug as the 37th recipient of the Theodore Roosevelt Rough Rider Award, which is our State's highest honor.

I remember he looked at me at that time and said—it was kind of funny. We had this big event for him and gave him this nice State honor. He looked at me and said, "Gee, JOHN, this is really great, but I sure hope I am not done accomplishing things at this point," you know, as he was getting the award. I remember that very clearly. Obviously, he was far from done.

In 2016, Doug was elected as the 33rd Governor of North Dakota, and then he was reelected in 2020. He has been a true partner as we worked together to

grow North Dakota into an energy powerhouse for our Nation.

When I started as Governor, we produced less than 100,000 barrels of oil a day, going down, and we have gotten it up all the way to 1.5 million barrels of oil a day—at that point, second only to Texas. It has gone back a little bit under the Biden administration, but we look forward to continuing to grow not just oil and gas but all the different sources of energy—coal-fired electricity, renewables, hydro. Just a real energy powerhouse for our country. So he brings that incredible energy experience to his new role.

Doug did a great job as Governor, and then he ran for President. He was the first Presidential candidate, when he left the race, to endorse President Trump—first one to do it.

President Trump knows the importance of a big energy agenda, and he knows what energy dominance means for our country, for our economic and national security. President Trump saw that Doug is not just the right fit to head the Department of the Interior as Secretary; President Trump also tapped Doug to lead the newly formed National Energy Council. Doug will do a tremendous job leading this integrated effort to truly make our country energy dominant, and he will work with President Trump to do that—vitally important for our economy, vitally important to bring down inflation, vitally important for national security, and vitally important to our allies so that they get energy from the United States rather than buying oil from countries like Russia or Iran and fueling either Russia's war machine or Iran's state sponsorship of terror.

But Doug not only understands energy, he is also a rancher, a hunter. He loves our national parks, and he loves the great outdoors. That is what you want in a Secretary of the Interior because all of those are part of his portfolio at Interior.

He has extensive experience in Native American affairs, and not only does he have the support of all of the Tribes in our State, he has the support from more than 180 Tribes from across the Nation.

Doug received overwhelming bipartisan support from our Energy and Natural Resources Committee. He came out of committee 18 to 2. So I strongly urge all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to vote for his confirmation when we vote here very soon on his approval to be the next Secretary of the Interior for the United States of America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, notwithstanding rule XXII, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on confirmation of the Burgum nomination at 6:15 p.m. today and that if cloture is invoked on the Wright nomination, all postcloture time be considered

expired and the Senate vote on cloture of the Collins nomination; further, that if cloture is invoked on the Collins nomination, all postcloture time be considered expired and the votes on the confirmations of the nominations occur at times to be determined by the majority leader, in consultation with the Democrat leader, no earlier than Monday, February 3.

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

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum calls with respect to the Wright and Collins nominations be waived.

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

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

REAGAN NATIONAL AIRPORT FLIGHT ACCIDENT

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I rise to join my colleagues in mourning the 67 people who were killed in the tragic aircraft collision last night near Reagan National Airport.

Among the victims, as reported in the news: a woman from my State, from Mahtomedi, MN—a wonderful town. It will be very hard to talk to her family; figure skaters we lost from the U.S. team and Russia who will never get to compete in the world championship; families flying in from Wichita to Washington, DC, who will never get to see our Nation's Capital; and three American soldiers, whose moms and dads will get the call that every parent dreads when their son or daughter signs up to serve our country.

This was a horrific tragedy. While there is still so much more that we need to know about this crash, we know we must get to the bottom of what happened.

My thoughts are with the victims' families and loved ones and the first responders who led the recovery operation last night and then, of course, are leading the operation today in the icy waters of the Potomac.

TRUMP EXECUTIVE ORDERS

Mr. President, I turn to another topic that is completely different, which is what is going on right now in the Halls of Congress and over at the new administration.

I also join my colleagues in expressing serious concern about the chaos that we have seen in just the first week of this new administration.

Earlier this week, the administration issued an order to cut off support that families across the country rely on, including funding for first responders. It was actually a two-page memorandum from a guy named Mr. Vaeth in the Office of Management and Budget. I have never heard of him, but he issued this two-page memorandum that made the intent very, very clear. He cut off loans and grants and announced that this was, in fact, the position of the administration and that they were going to freeze—or pause, in their words—loans