

I did not have the opportunity to meet with Mr. Wright, but if I had met with him, I would have told him about the importance of whistleblowers and the need to listen to whistleblowers—any of them—in the Department of Energy.

Mr. Wright has spoken of the need to build out domestic energy through the use of multiple sources. I subscribe to an “all of the above” energy philosophy.

Some people only like all of the above the ground—wind and solar, as an example. Others only like all below the ground, like oil and gas. But when I say “all of the above,” I mean all of the above the ground and all the energy that can come from below the ground.

Iowa fits into this philosophy as a leader in alternative energy production. Over 60 percent of Iowa’s electricity comes from wind turbines, which also sustains over 4,000 jobs across the State. Iowa is the No. 1 State for biofuel production. Ethanol and biodiesel contribute nearly \$5 billion to the Iowa economy, often supporting rural communities.

Renewable natural gas is also a growing industry in Iowa, and I am hopeful to have nuclear energy join the generation mix once again as well.

I look forward to working with Mr. Wright to continue supporting America’s energy dominance through an “all of the above” approach.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

#### CABINET NOMINATIONS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, last week, the Senate processed two members of President Trump’s energy team. We confirmed Lee Zeldin to be Administrator of the EPA in a bipartisan vote. Doug Burgum received 79 votes when he was confirmed to be Secretary of the Interior. And, today, we will complete the President’s energy team with the confirmation of Chris Wright to be Secretary of Energy.

I spoke last week about our energy needs and about implementing an “all of the above” energy strategy. I spoke of an abundance of resources and the need to leverage those resources for our country’s energy security.

One of the most important resources is America’s ability to innovate—the knowledge and capabilities we have to

expand the realm of possibility. Some of that work is being done in my State at the Sanford Underground Research Facility in Lead, SD.

Other great work is being done by the private sector and at universities, often in partnership with the Federal Government. It is a big part of the work of the Energy Department, and it is what Chris Wright has spent his life doing.

Mr. Wright calls himself “a science geek turned energy nerd turned life-long energy entrepreneur.” And if he is confirmed, Mr. Wright will be notable among Secretaries of Energy for his depth of experience.

He has experience in nuclear energy, solar, geothermal, wind power, oil, and natural gas. He has worked on innovations in technology that have reshaped the energy industry, and he has seen what energy can do to improve human lives, bring people out of poverty, and remake entire societies.

Chris Wright is passionate about energy. He knows it is one of our most important assets, and he is ready to get to work.

Our colleague Senator HICKENLOOPER has known Chris Wright for many years, and he described him not only as a successful entrepreneur but as “a scientist who is open to discussion and someone who has that ability to assess what is possible and what isn’t.”

Chris Wright will be an asset to President Trump’s energy team, and I look forward to seeing what he can accomplish for our country’s energy future.

The Senate will also soon vote on the nomination of former Congressman Doug Collins to be Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Caring for the men and women who have served our country is an important obligation and one that President Trump takes very seriously.

Veterans are a top priority for the Trump administration, just as they were in his first term. To carry out this important mission, President Trump has tapped someone with a servant’s heart.

The son of a Georgia State trooper, Doug Collins just couldn’t shake the feeling that he had a duty to serve. After college, he served in the U.S. Navy. Still feeling called to ministry, he went to seminary and began pastoring a church. But after the attacks of September 11, he knew his country needed him again. He joined the Air Force Reserve in 2002 and is still proudly serving our country as a colonel and chaplain.

In 2005, Mr. Collins began law school. Within a few months of graduation, his unit was called up to go to Iraq. As a flight line chaplain at one of the largest U.S. bases in Iraq, Doug Collins met and prayed with troops who were on the frontlines of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He spent time in the hospital visiting injured servicemembers, praying with them, and giving them companionship in their recovery.

Turning to public service, Mr. Collins brought that same servant’s heart to

Atlanta and Washington, representing his native North Georgia. So when President Trump asked him to serve as VA Secretary, it is no surprise that he once again answered the call to serve.

There was a moment in Mr. Collin’s confirmation hearing that struck me. He said:

The VA does not exist in and of itself. It exists for the veteran.

Doug Collins has comforted wounded soldiers. He has taken calls from servicemembers contemplating suicide. He understands what it means to serve the veteran. I look forward to confirming him in this role and working with him to uphold our Nation’s commitment to those who have served.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

#### DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, before our very eyes, an unelected shadow government is conducting a hostile takeover of the Federal Government.

Friday night, the so-called Department of Government Efficiency, led by billionaire Elon Musk, gained access to the Treasury Department’s entire system of payments, including Social Security and Medicare benefits and Americans’ tax refunds. I will say more on this in a moment.

But that was not all. This weekend, DOGE staffers also executed what can only be described as an illegal seizure of the U.S. Agency for International Development or USAID. We don’t know who these DOGE staffers are. We don’t know if they have security clearances. We don’t know what legal authority they have to access USAID facilities, if any.

But we do know a few things. First, we know USAID has been completely ripped apart. Its offices are closed, its contracts have been broken, funding for its programs which protect American interests around the world have been halted, and Secretary Rubio said in an interview that he has been named the acting administrator and that they are “reviewing and potentially reorganizing USAID.”

But who is he kidding? There is virtually nothing left of USAID to review. Even the lifesaving assistance he claims are exempt are not moving.

Second, we know shutting down USAID puts American security in danger. USAID programs preserve America's influence in Africa, Asia, and regions across the world. Our humanitarian efforts are critical for fighting Ebola, which is spreading in Uganda right now. It is essential for countering terrorist activity. At the time of soaring egg prices, shutting off USAID programs that fight the global spread of bird flu is utterly asinine.

If America retreats from the rest of the world, China will fill the void; Russia's influence will grow; hatred against the U.S. will keep rising; our diplomatic influence will disintegrate.

Third, we know that unilaterally closing USAID is illegal. Donald Trump does not have the authority to erase an independent Agency created by Congress, nor can the Department of State absorb USAID, especially because now there is, basically, nothing left to absorb.

We also know this is just the beginning. If DOGE attacks USAID today, then you can be sure they will move on to another target tomorrow. Who knows, maybe it will be the Postal Service or the IRS or even the Social Security Administration—they could be next—or maybe our National Security Agencies.

We also know something else, by shutting down USAID, DOGE is doing the work of Russia and China at the expense of the United States. In 2 weeks, DOGE has done more to erode American global influence than Russia and China have been able to accomplish in a long time, for Russian President and Putin ally, Dmitry Medvedev, even celebrated DOGE's activities online. Russia is elated by what DOGE is doing.

Both Russia and China hate the work of USAID because it limits their own influence on the world stage. Now China and Russia have, in effect, their own propaganda machine within the Federal Government.

This is dangerous. This is against America's interests. And President Trump needs to show some leadership and rein in DOGE before it inflicts more harm on America's national security.

Finally, DOGE's behavior is part of the troubling pattern of Russian and Chinese communist sympathizers increasing their influence on American foreign policy. A few days ago, Donald Trump named Darren Beattie as acting Under Secretary of State. Mr. Beattie has long pushed the Chinese Communist Party line on the Uighur genocide. He has repeated Russia's propaganda on the Ukraine war. He has even advocated that the U.S. make a deal to allow China to take over Taiwan. And now he has one of the most senior positions within the Department of State and oversees a large swath of American diplomatic work.

Make no mistake: DOGE's conduct cannot be allowed to stand. Republicans in Congress must join us to take

action to restore the rule of law and stop any potential lawbreaking by DOGE. DOGE is spreading across the Federal Government like a virus, and it is the American people who will pay the price when their benefits and payments are illegally taken away.

On Treasury, last Friday, DOGE forcefully gained access to the Treasury Department's payment systems and to the most sensitive information of virtually every U.S. citizen. Donald Trump basically handed DOGE the Social Security data of virtually every American citizen. He gave DOGE access to America's personal tax refund data. He gave DOGE access to American people's Medicare and Medicaid benefits, disability data, veteran benefit data. Worst of all, we don't know what DOGE intends to do with this information.

If you want to know how an unelected shadow government operates, look no further than DOGE. DOGE staffers, whomever they are, now have unprecedented access to the most sensitive payment data in the entire Federal Government; unprecedented access with no transparency, with no guardrails, and, guess what, the one independent watchdog who could have provided oversight was fired by Donald Trump over a week ago.

The Treasury Secretary must revoke DOGE's access to the Treasury payment system at once. If he does not, Congress must act immediately.

That is why Leader JEFFRIES and I will work together on legislation to stop unlawful meddling in the Treasury Department's payment systems.

We must protect people's Social Security payments, Medicare payments, and tax refunds from any possible tampering by DOGE or other unauthorized entities, and that is what Leader JEFFRIES and I will work to do.

Let's be very clear: DOGE is not a real government agency. It has no authority to make spending decisions. It has no authority to shut programs down or to ignore Federal law. DOGE is operating, in essence, as a shadow government without accountability or transparency or regard for the rule of law. The American people did not vote to let DOGE get ahold of people's Social Security numbers. To give DOGE a choke hold on Treasury payments is outlandishly dangerous. It is like letting a tiger into a petting zoo and hoping for the best.

It is impossible to overstate that this is playing with fire. The Bureau of the Fiscal Service, which oversees these Treasury Department payments, executes over 1 billion transactions a year worth over \$6 trillion. If these payments were ever intentionally or even accidentally halted or manipulated, it could paralyze the economy if we are not careful. One mistake, and people's Social Security benefits could freeze. Disability payments, aid to veterans, loans to small businesses—they could all be in danger. The Treasury Department is already using extraordinary

measures to ensure we do not default on the debt. If DOGE's careless meddling were to cause us to default, it could trigger a financial crisis around the world.

This all begs the questions:

What does DOGE really want with all of this data? What possible reason is there to give rightwing extremists people's Social Security payments, Medicare payments, and personal information?

Will DOGE try to halt Social Security or Medicare or Medicaid? God forbid.

Will DOGE cut funding programs approved by Congress that Donald Trump decides he doesn't like? What about cancer research? food banks? school lunches? veterans' aid? literacy programs? small business loans?

How do we know DOGE won't use its access to the Treasury to enrich Donald Trump's billionaire friends?

What if they go after the business competition of DOGE's leadership? It is laughably naive to look at the wealthy billionaires who run DOGE, who make enormous sums through government contracts, and take them at their word that all they care about is efficiency. Give me a break.

The immense danger is that we have no clarity, no explanation, no details for what DOGE is truly after. The potential for corruption is too great. The Treasury Secretary must revoke DOGE's access to the Treasury payment system at once.

As I mentioned, Democrats in the House and Senate, Congressman JEFFRIES, and myself will introduce legislation to take action. We must halt this unlawful and dangerous power grab. DOGE has no business being anywhere near the Federal Government's payment systems nor Americans' private data.

#### TARIFFS

Mr. SCHUMER. Finally, Mr. President, on tariffs, this weekend, President Trump kick-started a golden age of higher costs for American families with his 25-percent tariffs on Canada and Mexico—two of our four biggest trading partners.

By issuing his tariffs, Donald Trump is yet again rigging the game for his billionaire friends while doing nothing to lower costs for American families. Thankfully, President Trump got immense blowback, and for now, he has decided to back off his nonsensical trade war with Mexico, but President Trump's retreat is not enough. He must also back off his tariffs on Canada or everyday Americans will see prices going up.

Listen to this: Economists predict that President Trump's tariffs are going to raise prices on American families by as much as \$1,200 a year. Let me say that again. President Trump's tariffs are going to raise prices on families by as much as \$1,200 a year.

To President Trump and his billionaire buddies, \$1,200 may be chump