

nomination of Pam Bondi to serve as Attorney General. Ms. Bondi is an experienced prosecutor who has earned a reputation as a tenacious lawyer who is tough on crime.

In her 18 years as a State prosecutor in Florida's Hillsborough County, Ms. Bondi worked with law enforcement, visited crime scenes, and spent countless hours in the courtroom.

Those who know Ms. Bondi have spoken of her toughness and her skill as a prosecutor. They have also spoken of her character, of her willingness to work with anyone to solve a problem, and of her deep commitment to the victims of crime and their families.

In 2011, Pam Bondi became Florida's first female attorney general. At that time, so-called pill mills were a major problem in the State and a major contributor to the opioid crisis.

On the campaign trail, Ms. Bondi would hear heartbreaking stories of addiction and loss, and families would give her photos of the loved ones lost to the scourge of drugs. As attorney general, she filled her office with those photos and got to work.

She worked with the Florida Legislature to pass a bill to crack down on the pill mills, which our colleague, then-Governor RICK SCOTT signed into law.

And that was just the start. She tracked issues like human trafficking, and she worked with her counterparts in other States, regardless of party and politics. She also worked to keep politics out of the important work of enforcing the law in Florida, something she is committed to doing at the Department of Justice if she is confirmed.

In recent years, many Americans have lost faith in the Justice Department. They have seen Federal prosecutors go after pro-life activists while attacks against churches have gone unprosecuted.

There was Attorney General Garland's infamous memo targeting parents who attended school board meetings and another infamous FBI memo suggesting traditional Catholics could be violent extremists.

The American people should be able to trust that the Department of Justice is not targeting Americans based on their political opinions or religious beliefs. Pam Bondi has promised to get the Department back to its core mission: prosecuting crime and protecting Americans from threats to their safety and their freedoms. And I look forward to confirming her later today.

The Senate will also soon vote on the nomination of Scott Turner to be Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. This is an important role. Our country is facing a housing crisis affecting big cities, rural areas, Tribal lands—literally, every part of our country. Higher construction costs and burdensome regulations have made homebuilding challenging. And what homes are on the market are too pricey for many Americans. Many parts of the country have homelessness challenges. Too many distressed communities are

struggling to turn their fortunes around. And despite a windfall of additional funding for HUD, these problems are, in many cases, getting worse.

Fortunately, President Trump has nominated someone to lead Housing and Urban Development who knows a thing or two about overcoming adversity. Scott Turner grew up in Plano and Richardson, TX, in challenging circumstances, but he was determined to achieve the American Dream.

At age 10, he told his mother he would play professional football. With a lot of determination and hard work, he graduated from the University of Illinois and was drafted to play in the NFL. In the 2003 offseason, a time he could have used to take a break, this NFL athlete was interning in a congressional office.

And since he hung up his cleats, Scott Turner has spent his time working to make a difference. That has included founding an organization to help children in poverty, serving as a Texas State legislator, and helping to lead the White House Opportunity and Revitalization Council during the first Trump administration.

The 2017 Republican tax relief legislation did a lot to help revitalize the economy. One of the things it did was create the Opportunity Zone Program championed by our colleague Senator TIM SCOTT. It was Scott Turner who oversaw this program for the White House, visiting opportunity zones across the country in an effort to revitalize America's distressed communities. And I am confident he will bring that same concern for distressed areas to his work as Secretary.

President Trump has made it clear that we are going to be building things in America again. One of those things we are going to be building is communities. It is a big job, but Scott Turner has the grit, the determination, and passion to get it done, and I look forward to working with him on this important mission.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative 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 Democratic leader is recognized.

DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, yesterday, Elon Musk took issues to my warning that DOGE is operating in many ways like a shadow government. Here is what I said.

I said:

DOGE is not a real government agency.

DOGE has no authority to make spending decisions.

DOGE has no authority to shut programs down or ignore federal law.

DOGE's conduct cannot be allowed to stand.

Congress must take action to restore the rule of law.

His response? Here is what Musk said:

Hysterical reactions like this is how you know that @DOGE is doing work that really matters.

This is the one shot . . . American people have to defeat BUREAUcracy . . . and restore DEMOcracy. . . .

Give me a break. Nothing screams democracy like having a secret squad of company men pull off a hostile takeover of America's Social Security and tax information in the dead of night.

That is democracy? No openness? No hearings? No discussion? No hearing the other side? From a small group of limited people who have limited backgrounds, who probably don't even know about the programs they are cutting and how they actually work.

Whatever DOGE is doing, it is certainly not—not—what democracy looks like or has ever looked like in the grand history of this country, because democracy does not work in the shadows. Democracy does not skirt the rule of law. Democracy does not shun accountability and restraint, does not run away from transparency but welcomes it, and does not give privilege to the needs and even the ideas of a small group of ultrawealthy people at the expense of working people.

They are the only people who seem to be in the room to make the decisions. Working-class Americans are excluded—are excluded.

Now, reform is a worthy cause to seek—no question about it. Everyone agrees and everyone should agree that we should find ways to improve the effectiveness; we should find ways to improve the efficiency of government. But do you know what history shows? When it is done in the dark of night by a very limited group of people of limited experience, it never works. When ideas are not brought into conflict, when people have different views, when there is not debate, when there is not openness, when there is not transparency, things always get messed up. It leads to very bad results. Yet that is just what DOGE is doing. They know better than everybody else. Certainly, they are entitled to have their viewpoint—certainly—but to just do things in the dark of night, to just fire people without even talking to them—what they do, what their needs are—makes no sense and, again, is going to lead to bad results.

We should talk about reform, but we should talk about it in the way it has always been done in America—in the Halls of Congress, in the public forums of the people's government. That is what the Founding Fathers wanted. If the Founding Fathers were to be like DOGE, a small group of them would get together and just dictate what should have been done in America. It didn't. They set up a Congress. They set up debate.

The American people—mark my words—the American people will not

stand for an unelected, secret group to run rampant through the executive branch.

Being innovative is good. But, Mr. Musk, this isn't a tech startup. These are public institutions that deal with things like Social Security and Medicare and national defense and provide for the well-being of the American people, and the American people have a right to be part of that debate—part of that debate.

The elections occurred, and one viewpoint got a few more votes than the other. But that doesn't mean we throw out democracy. That doesn't mean what has been done for centuries in this country should just go out the window and be substituted by a small group of people who think they know a lot more than the wisdom of the American people.

So that is why, this week, Leader JEFFRIES and I will join together to push legislation to prevent unlawful meddling in the Treasury Department's payment systems, to prevent everyone's records from being made available to a small group of people who can look at them at will when this has always been kept secret and always been protected—your tax returns and your payment systems and things like that. It affects average Americans. And who knows—next they will say: Let's slash all of this stuff. That is what they seem to want to do in their \$2.5 trillion desire to cut government.

We must protect people's Social Security payments, their Medicare payments, and their tax refunds from any possible tampering by DOGE or any other unauthorized entity. That is why Leader JEFFRIES and I will join together to push this legislation.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The 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.

NOMINATION OF PAMELA BONDI

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, the Justice Department needs a leader—a leader who has the qualifications, the experience, the determination, and the moral clarity to keep our Nation safe. Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi is that leader. She has my vote and my vocal support.

The Attorney General is America's top prosecutor. The role should be filled by an experienced prosecutor. Attorney General Bondi has prosecution experience—a lot of it. She spent almost 30 years as a criminal prosecutor and then a State attorney general. She has more trial experience than any modern-day U.S. attorney general. Attorney General Bondi is the most experienced career criminal prosecutor ever to be America's chief law enforcement officer. She is ready to lead on day one.

In Florida, Attorney General Bondi prosecuted a range of violent crimes and criminals. She locked up the worst of the worst for the worst offenses. Her signature achievements were in fighting illegal drugs and in fighting human trafficking.

When she first became Florida's attorney general in 2011, the State was overrun with things known as pill mills. They were operations that were running to sell opioids. Pam shut them down. She locked up the drug dealers. She pushed for stronger laws, and she stopped the spread of synthetic opioids. Under her leadership, Florida led the fight against this deadly epidemic.

Attorney General Bondi also protected victims of human trafficking in Florida. She pledged to make human trafficking an area for her to combat. It was a top priority at her justice department in Florida. She is a fierce advocate for safety, and she is a skilled leader.

The Department of Justice is a huge Agency. It controls 40 separate organizations. It employs more than 115,000 people. It oversees all 94 U.S. attorneys across the country. Leading the DOJ is an enormous undertaking. Pam Bondi is up to the challenge.

The Florida Attorney General's Office is one of the largest in the Nation. It handles a broad scope of civil and criminal investigations, just like the U.S. Department of Justice. She led that office effectively and efficiently, and she will do the same thing now as Attorney General.

She has received overwhelming support from all across the country. More than 100 former senior DOJ officials wrote a letter to the Judiciary Committee in support of Pam Bondi. Here is what they said about her track record: It shows "the no-nonsense, law and order, pro-law enforcement approach she will bring to the Department of Justice." The Fraternal Order of Police also urged the Senate to confirm Pam Bondi. This is an organization of more than 377,000 members of law enforcement. She has also earned the support of Second Amendment advocates.

U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi will stand in stark contrast to the prior administration's Justice Department. The previous administration gave us two tiers of justice. It labeled parents as "domestic terrorists" when they attended school board meetings. It brought charges against pro-life protesters, then threw them in prison. It worked with leftwing judges and prosecutors to try to throw President Trump in jail. That is what we had in the last administration. This doesn't even begin to get into the Russiagate hoax or covering up for Hunter Biden. In those cases, we saw rogue Federal agents try to subvert the democratic process.

At her hearing before the Judiciary Committee, Attorney General Bondi promised a different path. Instead of playing politics, Pam Bondi pledged to

enforce the law fairly, fully, and faithfully. She said in her opening statement that she will return the Department of Justice to its "core mission of keeping Americans safe and vigorously"—vigorously—"enforcing the law."

Her commitment to the Constitution, to public safety, and equal justice under the law is exactly what our Nation needs today. The partisan, politicalized, and polarizing prosecutions are now over. Pam Bondi will usher in a new era of safety, of sanity, and of justice. She has my vote to be the U.S. Attorney General.

NOMINATION OF DOUGLAS COLLINS

Mr. President, on another matter, today, the Senate is going to confirm former Congressman Doug Collins. Congressman Collins is the nominee to be the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Caring for our veterans is a top priority for President Trump and Republicans. As Abraham Lincoln famously said, our Nation has a duty to "care for him who shall have born the battle." That is why I am glad that President Trump has nominated Congressman Collins. Congressman Collins knows what it means to be a veteran because he is a veteran, as are you, Mr. President. He deployed to Iraq as a military chaplain. He visited wounded servicemembers in the hospital. He prayed for them. He comforted them.

In Congress, Congressman Collins continued to serve our veterans. He received bipartisan support from the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee. The vote was 18 in favor and only 1 opposed. Looking at his record, it is obvious why. Congressman Collins will improve veterans' access to care, not get in the way.

He will also address the alarming rate of veterans' suicide and homelessness. As he told the committee:

We will not stop until we succeed on behalf of the men and women who have worn the uniform.

Congressman Doug Collins will pursue his mission with duty and with devotion. He has my full support.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CURTIS). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

NOMINATION OF ROBERT F. KENNEDY, JR.

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, I would like to make a statement regarding my vote in committee on behalf of Robert F. Kennedy to be the Secretary of HHS.

First, I thank everyone who has contacted me over the last few days. Almost all have been respectful and seek the best for our country. I have been contacted by text, by phone, and by email. If I didn't respond to anyone, it was not to be rude; it is just that I was