

They are a manufacturer. That is what we want. And there are no margins on it. They work with sheet metal and cardboard. He said these tariffs create a whole burden to determine what is tariffed—the type or shape of aluminum—and he is bracing to respond to whatever chaos comes next.

This company has been in business for 29 years, and it employs 275 people. That is a big deal in our State of Vermont—a big deal. Why mess with him? Why?

Rock Gaulin at H2O Innovation—they make—we have better maple syrup than New Hampshire, I am sorry to say, and definitely better than Canada. They make the equipment that is used in maple syrup production, and this is going to increase their costs and threaten jobs.

And it really does threaten jobs, OK. And then, if you lose a market, by the way, then it is hard to get it back. So this company that might face this huge increase in the cost of aluminum to manufacture its product could lose market share and not be able to claw their way back.

Mike Tetreault from Poulin Grain: Poulin Grain is a great Franklin County, family-run—actually Northeast Kingdom, too—family-run grain dealer. They have been around for generations. And they have kept—they are a huge contribution to keeping our dairy farms going. They import organic grain, a huge market in Vermont. Their products are heavy to transport—think of corn and canola and oats—so they need to buy nearby, and they buy from Canada. And importantly, it is 30 to 40 percent of what they buy. And these tariffs could cost them about \$10 million.

And it is just like the fuel dealers. They have got a contract, but they honor their customers. They can't eat \$10 million. It just can't be done.

So the Poulin family is really worried about the costs rising for farmers, who are on the thinnest of thin margins. And nobody works harder than our dairy farmers. That is hard work. But it is so important to us in the State of Vermont, that we give them every chance to succeed when they are facing tough odds every day.

And why in the world would an act of the President of the United States add to the burden these dairy farmers already face when they are trying to hang on? It just doesn't make any sense to me.

Mike also said something that is really important: The unknown and uncertainty is very difficult.

There seems to be a point of view in the Trump administration—the President, I will be candid—that he thinks chaos is a good negotiating tool. I will leave it to others to decide their view on that, but if the chaos creates this uncertainty for the Poulin Grain Company, for the dairy farmers in Franklin County, for a family that is hoping they can build a house and they thought they had a price, for a family

that is struggling to pay for groceries at the end of the month, that uncertainty is really an infliction of distress. It is unfair.

And to create uncertainty in everyday people who are trying to live in their community, do a good job for the people that they serve; families that are trying to make their contribution in the community and keep the well-being of their family together, and they are on a tight margin—it is cruel to inflict unnecessary uncertainty.

The people from Vermont, the people from New Hampshire—and I think this is true around the country—they are OK with facing hard and grim circumstances, and they will grit their way through it. And they will take care of their kids, and they will take care of their community. They will be generous.

But—you know what—when the hardship that is something they have to deal with is a hardship that has been arbitrarily inflicted upon them by authorities or powers in Washington—in this case, the President—and, in my view, totally improper invocation of so-called national security with our biggest ally, Canada, then they start to wonder. That makes the burden even more and more difficult.

So another person was there, Sarah Mearhoff, who was a representative of the General Contractors of Vermont. And they do all the building. They have been incredible with the infrastructure challenges we have had after Tropical Storm Irene—that was a while ago—and then the floods that we had in July of 2023 and then again in July of 2024.

The cost of raw materials is already very expensive. And she quoted one of her members—Kevin Moyer from Vermont Frames—saying:

Tariffs have always been bad for everyone. As a business owner who buys a lot of timber from Canada, I'm very worried about the impact of tariffs on my company. I cannot absorb those costs, and will have to push them through to my clients in the form of price increases, which will make my company less competitive versus other construction techniques like conventional framing.

So I keep asking myself: Why are we doing this to folks who are so essential to the well-being of the communities that we represent?

And, by the way, you have got two border State Senators here. And we have a lot in common, but everything we have said applies to similar businesses in every single State in the country. So this is not a Republican or Democrat deal. These tariffs are going to cost our families—our families that the Presiding Officer represents, that the senior Senator from New Hampshire represents, and that I represent—it is going to cost them more money. And for what? What are we getting in return?

So I, too, am very relieved, actually, on behalf of the people of Vermont and the people in New Hampshire and the people of this country, that there has been a temporary pause in these tar-

iffs, but the uncertainty goes on. There will be no more justification 30 days from now to impose these tariff taxes on Vermonters and on New Hampshireites than there is today. And today, there is no justification. In 30 days, there will be no justification.

And I would call on the President to get real in accepting the consequences to everyday families, to small businesses. These aren't billionaires. These are really hard-working people in Vermont and in New Hampshire, and they just, rightly, don't understand this.

So, yes, it is good the tariffs have been suspended. It is really bad that they were ever threatened to be imposed. They will never do any good when there is a bogus reason—so-called national security—and a real abuse of that authority by the President, to invoke that with respect to our closest ally and neighbor in the trenches with our soldiers in every war we have been in.

So I just urge President Trump to do the right thing here. He can be tough. He can pursue his policies. But the first principle that every one of us in public office should respect is that we do no harm to the people we represent by the policies we advocate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

USAID

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, over the past 2 weeks, political operatives in the administration of President Trump and Elon Musk have shown the American people and the world that they plan to destroy as much of the professional workforce in the executive Agencies as they can get away with.

Whether it is illegal—and it is—or unconstitutional—and it is—is of no concern. Inspectors general and career civil servants who have served the American people for decades—some for their entire professional lives—are being summarily removed without any due process at all—due process they are legally entitled to.

They are being replaced with Musk-approved partisans who have little, if any, government experience or little, if any, substantive knowledge. They do have a qualification, and that is total loyalty to the President.

On top of Mr. Musk's list of Agencies to eliminate in the United States is the U.S. Agency for International Development, or USAID, as we know it. That has been the subject of a ferocious attack by Mr. Musk.

That Agency is one that not many Americans know about but which fulfills a vital mission. It has a relatively small budget—less than 1 percent of the total Federal budget—and it has a large responsibility to support humanitarian, economic development, and governance programs in more than 100 countries.

Whatever "savings" Elon Musk might obtain from cutting USAID would have no appreciable impact in

offsetting Mr. Trump's huge tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans. It wouldn't even amount to a rounding error. And the manner in which this has been done I find extremely disturbing.

Mr. Musk—and, by the way, for all his brilliance, he has no government experience himself—he called USAID a “criminal organization.” Dozens of USAID's dedicated senior officials, including the Office of the General Counsel, were purged. That has not happened before. That has not happened before in this country. And over the weekend, Musk called USAID “evil” and a “viper's nest of radical-left marxists who hate America.”

Others in the administration have accused USAID personnel of insubordination and acting against American interests without producing any evidence to back that up, reminiscent of the McCarthy era: Make the accusation, destroy the reputation, and move on. That is a serious question, and we should—each of us—be asking the implications of this language.

I find Mr. Musk's accusations appalling. I know they are factually baseless, and, frankly, I find them despicable. It is also curious because, in 2022, his company Starlink received millions of dollars from USAID for Starlink's operation in Ukraine, not to mention the incredible amount of taxpayer subsidies that helped Tesla become the major company that it is. Mr. Musk—he is a billionaire, as we know—has no reluctance to take taxpayer funds from USAID. None. He took money from USAID. It was a good organization when the money was coming to him to help us in Ukraine, but now he is calling it a criminal organization.

And I doubt that he knows what 99 percent of USAID employees do or the positive impact they have on the lives of people around the world and on U.S. national security—the obligation all of us have as Members of the U.S. Senate. I wonder if he has ever met or has ever spoken to anyone who works at any of the 60 overseas missions or seen with his own eyes what USAID does in countries like Indonesia, Ethiopia, Haiti, Mozambique, Ghana, or Guatemala, just to name a few, where the lives of countless people really do benefit from USAID.

And being billionaires, President Trump and Elon Musk may not be aware that fully 1 billion people in the world live on less than \$1 a day. They may not be aware that the lives of hundreds of millions of people, especially children, are threatened by diseases that can be prevented or cured with drugs that cost only a few pennies.

Or maybe Mr. Musk is not aware that the life of every American is threatened by the spread of infectious diseases. We saw that with COVID, and there is other diseases out there where that we do elsewhere protects the health and safety of people right here at home.

Or maybe Mr. Musk isn't concerned that the Earth's tropical forests and

endangered species are being decimated by illegal miners, loggers, and wildlife traffickers, who are often in collusion with local police and transnational criminal organizations, to feed, by the way, China's insatiable demand for minerals, timber, and wildlife—consequences to the environment be damned. USAID works with local governments and organizations to protect forests in South and Central America, central Africa, and in Indonesia, and to train wildlife rangers to combat poaching and trafficking.

It may make absolutely no difference to Mr. Musk, as it clearly doesn't to President Trump, that the rising acidity of the oceans and plastic pollution are destroying what remains of the world's coral reefs and marine species at the bottom of the food chain, due to the burning of fossil fuels. And USAID works to protect marine ecosystems and support reduction of fossil fuels, carbon emissions, and reduced plastic waste.

Government corruption, repression, and impunity may not be a priority in other countries for President Trump and Elon Musk to take on, even though they are major causes of the poverty in the world, political instability and violence, narcotics trafficking and migration in our own hemisphere. So what happens in these countries makes a difference in what happens here, especially with respect to immigration.

And these are just a few of the many complex global problems that USAID personnel work to address every day—every single day—partnering with foreign governments and thousands of nongovernmental organizations. Those are real people; they are doing real work, even though they aren't CEOs. They are doing their best to address poverty, environmental degradation, corruption in governance.

It is affecting nongovernmental organizations, contractors, and institutions of higher education in Vermont, this attack on USAID. These are Vermont organizations that have a long history of implementing USAID humanitarian and development programs. I will mention a few. World Learning, Tetra Tech/ARD, Resonance, and the Vermont Afghan Alliance are examples; they are being decimated as a result of this order.

Suddenly, out of the blue, without even an hour's notice, these organizations and others were forced to shut down programs and lay off staff with no idea of what comes next. Many of their employees are working overseas where they are stranded without even the ability to have funds to pay for flights home. That is how sudden it was. And unlike Mr. Musk, they don't have their own private jets.

This sends a message to the people of those countries that the United States can't be relied on; it is pretty cruel to create that uncertainty, that confusion, and then that desperation.

The U.S. Agency for International Development, like any Federal Agency,

is not perfect, and any time there is talk of reform coming from your side of the aisle or ours, I am all ears, because anything we can do to make what we have work better, we all have an obligation to do our part.

But USAID was established by an act of Congress more than 25 years ago, and constitutionally, no President and no unelected billionaire can unlawfully shut a congressionally authorized Agency down. There is no authority to do that, and we shouldn't stand by and essentially abdicate our article I authority and cede the capacity to a President to pick and choose among Agencies, legally authorized by the Congress, as to whether he will destroy it or continue it.

You know, some folks have said that shutting down USAID is part of the President's plan to reduce the national debt; it isn't. You know, I think the President cares a lot less about the national debt—it went up by more than \$7 trillion to pay for tax cuts, and eliminating the USAID would make no dent in that at all.

Some have said that we need to better align USAID's programs with the policies of the State Department. That is something that is worth discussing, and I would have some confidence in Secretary Rubio taking a serious look at how that can be done.

But that is already being done, by and large. Diplomacy is the job of the State Department. It is not the same as development, which is what the USAID does. And you don't shut an Agency down, freeze billions of dollars in authorized programs, silence or remove entirely the senior staff, and lock thousands of employees out of their offices. I mean, this is unbelievable. They locked the door, so people show up for work and they can't get in. And you do that without any notice before having any discussion. This is the difference between disruption, that can be good, and destruction, which is terrible.

And I believe that it is our job as Senators to speak up in defense of the civil service, the foreign service, their families, USAID's autonomy, and the foreign assistance programs that Republicans and Democrats have strongly supported for generations, programs that have been the building blocks of U.S. security partnerships and alliances around the world that we depend on to prevent conflict, respond to humanitarian disasters, and by the way, create markets for U.S. exports and counter the malign influence of our adversaries.

As my colleague, the senior Senator from South Carolina, has said year after year when speaking about USAID:

Soft power is a critical component of defending America and our values.

He has been a consistent defender of USAID's workforce and budget, as have many other Republican Members of Congress, leaders of the U.S. business community, and senior military officers who understand that diplomacy

and development are as important to preventing conflict as the threat of military force and a strong military, which we support.

It wasn't long ago that Secretary Rubio—then our colleague Senator Rubio—praised USAID's work in global health, in aiding victims of natural disasters, in supporting Venezuelans who were persecuted by that dreadful Maduro. Until Elon Musk decided that it is "time for [USAID] to die"—really said that, "time for [USAID] to die"—USAID previously had always received bipartisan support.

This is no time for the Congress of the United States, the U.S. Senate, to stand by passively while an Agency that plays a unique, indispensable role in protecting the interests and the influence, the security and the reputation of the United States around the world is decapitated and dismantled. Those responsible for this self-inflicted disaster have no respect for the law, no respect for the will of Congress, and no respect for the thousands of truly patriotic public servants who have devoted their lives to defending the interests of the United States and presenting a positive face of America in some of the world's most dangerous places.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CURTIS). The Senator from Nevada.

#### TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Ms. ROSEN. Mr. President, it has now been more than 2 weeks since President Donald Trump took the oath of office, and there have been virtually no actions—virtually no actions—to lower costs at the grocery store.

On the campaign trail, Donald Trump made promises, over and over, that he would address rising costs. In fact, he said, "On day one, we will end inflation and make America affordable again." On day one.

And he said, "When I win, I will immediately bring prices down, starting on day one."

Well, way past day one, it is now day 16 of his Presidency, and so far, the Trump administration has failed to meet the President's own goal and promise to hard-working families.

Just look what it costs to buy milk, bread, and eggs. When Nevadans are going to the grocery store, many are seeing empty shelves where the eggs are supposed to be. And the eggs people do find, well, they cost an arm and a leg.

So just look at this picture here from Reno, NV, a grocery store there, empty shelves, that is where the eggs would be. And meanwhile, the Trump administration is doing nothing to help fix this or stop corporations from jacking up the prices. Instead, President Trump has been cozying up to billionaire CEOs and taking actions that will hurt families and drive prices up and up. Trump's first actions were to push through a whirlwind of Executive orders, including to roll back actions to lower prescription drug prices.

So I want to repeat that. One of President Trump's first actions was to stop efforts to lower your prescription drug costs. And just this past weekend, President Trump announced reckless tariffs on Mexico and Canada. This is essentially a new tax on hard-working families for products from these two countries—our biggest trading partners, by the way.

While he has promised to delay his tax on Canadian and Mexican goods for a month, ultimately these tariffs will hurt our economy. Canada is Nevada's biggest export partner. They provide us with chicken, with grain, sugar, and livestock. And the impact of these tariffs, well, they don't just stop at the grocery store shelves; they will also increase what you pay at the fuel pump. They will increase the price of construction materials, making housing even more expensive.

And so I ask everyone in this Chamber, I ask everyone across the Nation: How does that help you? How does that help you? How does it help lower costs? How does it help provide financial relief for families? How does it make your paycheck go farther? How does it put more money in your pocket? It doesn't.

President Trump, he is now even saying that inflation is no longer his No. 1 issue. He has flipped on his promise to you. He has flipped on his promise to you. And the fact is as Americans work hard every day, Nevada families, the finest families in our Nation, they work hard every day, and many are struggling to get by because prices have skyrocketed over the last few years.

It is why I have been taking action to lower costs for families and reduce their financial burden to give folks some much-needed breathing room, to make their paycheck go even farther. I am working to lower housing costs by investing in our construction workers to increase our housing supply. I helped lead the charge, last year, against the proposed Kroger-Albertsons megamerger that would have let grocery stores jack up prices even higher than they already are.

And there are steps we in Congress can take and have been taking to tackle inflation.

I urge the President to take this issue seriously and tackle it head on, and I am willing to work with him and work with anyone else if it means lowering costs for hard-working families.

But we need to get going right now. So I urge my colleagues, Democrats and Republicans, to come together and prioritize solving kitchen-table issues, instead of pushing extreme wedge issues. It is what the American people need us to do for them. That is what the American people are counting on us to do for them. We need to get busy and do that.

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. DURBIN. 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. DURBIN. Mr. President, shortly, Senate Republicans will confirm the nomination of Pam Bondi to serve as Attorney General and lead the Department of Justice in the new administration.

Yesterday, I came to the Senate floor to discuss the Trump administration's decision to purge Department of Justice officials and warned that Ms. Bondi's record suggests that she will aid in this effort to pack the Department of Justice with loyalists seeking retribution against President Trump's political rivals.

Since the Watergate era, there has been bipartisan support for the principle that the Department of Justice investigations and prosecutions must be independent from the White House. Over the years, both Republicans and Democrats have asked many individuals seeking the office of Attorney General one basic question: Will you be willing to tell the President no?

Given that Ms. Bondi, when speaking about President Trump's criminal indictments, threatened "the prosecutors will be prosecuted, and the investigators will be investigated," I have serious doubts about her willingness to really say no to this President.

This concern is even more pressing because, over the last 16 days, the Trump administration has purged dozens of senior career law enforcement officials at the Department of Justice and at the FBI. This purge has been particularly focused on dedicated, non-partisan prosecutors and investigators working in the National Security Division and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

On its first day, the Trump administration removed or reassigned as many as 20 experienced professionals with invaluable national security expertise, without any comparable replacements, including the veteran career Deputy Assistant Attorneys General in the National Security Division. These are men and women we have entrusted with the responsibility to keep America safe. They were summarily dismissed by this new President just days into his administration. Those who have been reassigned are reportedly being put in roles concerning immigration enforcement, for which they have little expertise.

We had a hearing this morning about fentanyl and talked about some 70,000 Americans each year losing their lives to this terrible drug. We are all concerned and expressed it at this hearing. But some of the very people who are working in drug enforcement are going to be removed and put into mass deportation of immigrants.

We have said over and over again that if the President is setting out to do what he promised he would do, he