

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

CABINET NOMINATIONS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, tomorrow, the Senate will be voting on the nomination of Russell Vought to be Director of the Office of Management and Budget. I could talk about the extensive experience, policy experience, that has helped prepare him for this position, but Mr. Vought has an even bigger qualification for this position, and that is the fact that he has already held it. That is right. Mr. Vought has already served as Director of the Office of Management and Budget in President Trump's first administration, and so there is no question that he will be able to hit the ground running.

As Director of OMB, Mr. Vought will have the chance to address two key economic issues: cutting burdensome government regulations and addressing excessive spending.

Government regulation has a direct effect not only on our economy but on Americans' pocketbooks. Regulations can drive up Americans' energy bills. They can drive up the cost of housing, of a new car, of appliances. The list goes on and on.

The history of the past 4 years under the Biden administration is a history of burdensome new regulations. Republicans are determined to alleviate that regulatory burden for the sake of economic growth and to improve the lives of hard-working Americans, and I know that Mr. Vought will make getting rid of burdensome regulations a priority.

I know that Mr. Vought is already also committed, I should say, to addressing our spending problems. Our country is currently on a dangerous spending track, with debt held by the public set to hit a staggering \$52 trillion by 2035. That is not sustainable. Identifying ways to rein in our spending and to target government waste has to be a priority, and I am confident Mr. Vought will help lead that charge.

One of my top priorities for the Senate at the beginning of this year was processing President Trump's nominees. I am very pleased to say that Mr. Vought's confirmation will bring the total number of nominees confirmed since the inauguration to 13. That is roughly twice as fast as nominees were confirmed at the start of the two previous administrations.

The Senate will take up additional nominees next week, and we will maintain an aggressive pace to get the President's full team in place as soon as possible.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. President, while our focus in the Senate has been on nominees, we have managed to work in votes on a few pieces of legislation. Last week, the President signed one of those pieces of legislation into law.

The Laken Riley Act, which the President signed last Wednesday, is

Congress's first installment in our work to combat illegal immigration. It is not, of course, a comprehensive bill, but it will ensure that illegal immigrants who steal, assault a law enforcement officer, or kill or seriously injure another person are detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement instead of being allowed back out on the street. Had such a law been in place last year, it is possible that Laken Riley would still be alive today, and I am thankful that we were finally able to pass this important legislation. The Laken Riley Act joins the work the Trump administration has been doing to keep dangerous illegal immigrants off our streets.

Since President Trump's inauguration, his border czar and Homeland Security team, now led by Secretary Noem, have been working around the clock to take murderers, rapists, gang members, and other dangerous criminals into custody in preparation for being deported. Reading lists of crimes these individuals committed is horrifying, and it is incredible that they have been allowed to remain in our country. I am grateful that we now have a President who is serious about protecting Americans from criminal aliens.

Republicans in Congress are working on legislation to support the President's efforts, and we will ensure that the President has the manpower and detention space needed to detain and deport individuals who threaten the safety of our streets.

It has been a busy few weeks here in the Senate. I am looking forward to more as we continue to confirm the President's nominees and deliver on an agenda for the American people.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SHEEHY). 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, Leader JEFFRIES and I announced legislation to stop unlawful meddling by DOGE or other entities in the Treasury Department's payments system. Our bill will deny access to the payment system by anyone designated as a "special government employee"—in other words, people who aren't required to disclose conflicts of interest.

Our bill will deny access to anyone with conflicts of interest or lack of appropriate clearance. Imagine where all the Federal funds are going out and someone has a conflict of interest and has access to those funds and can do something with them. That is a formula for waste; that is a formula that

makes sure that money isn't spent wisely but is spent to accommodate the needs of a special few.

And our bill will ensure that Treasury payments can only be accessed by those with proper clearance. Everyone should agree that making the government more efficient and more effective is a good thing. But DOGE's scorched-earth policies are dangerous and unlawful. That is their approach.

History shows that when this kind of stuff is done in the dark of night with no guardrails by a limited group of people who don't really know the programs they are dealing with, it leads to bad results. If Treasury payments were ever intentionally or even accidentally halted or manipulated, it could paralyze the economy.

DOGE has said they want to cut \$2 trillion, \$2.5 trillion from the budget—well, that is going to be massive cuts done, again, by people who don't know the programs, don't know the whole extent of what the government is doing. Some of it might be wasteful. Get rid of it. But much of it is good and needed. One mistake and people's Social Security benefits could freeze. One mistake and disability payments to veterans, loans to small businesses could all be in danger.

If DOGE's meddling caused us to default, it could compromise the full faith and credit of the United States, and that would hurt everybody because interest rates would go up on everything—cars, homes, you name it.

The OMB funding freeze last week was disastrous enough, but a DOGE funding freeze would be far worse if guardrails are totally thrown out the window. And that seems to be what is happening. We don't know any guardrails. They sure haven't been made public.

We should talk about reform here in the open, in the Halls of Congress, in the public forums of the people's government. That is how it has been done by Democrat, Republican, liberal, conservative for centuries because we all know—the Founding Fathers knew, historians know—democracy doesn't work in the shadows—autocracy does, not democracy.

Democracy does not skirt the rule of law. The American people deserve to have a seat at the table when these important decisions are made. But so far, DOGE is operating entirely in the dark.

Our legislation would correct it. We are going to do anything and everything we can legislatively to try and get this done. And maybe, at some point, we will get some help from the other side of the aisle if they see how bad DOGE's actions are.

NOMINATION OF RUSSELL VOUGHT

OMB and Vought. If you want to understand the risks of letting DOGE take over the Treasury Department, all you have to do is look at what happened last week at OMB. OMB unilaterally froze trillions in potential spending, and it unleashed chaos. That is

why today, I will join every single Democrat in opposing the nomination of Russell Vought. All 47 Democrats are opposed to Vought's nomination, and we will take the floor early this afternoon and spend the whole night discussing how bad this nomination is, how badly it affects working families.

His confirmation would be a disaster for working families and a godsend to billionaires who don't pay their fair share in taxes. All they want, these billionaires: Cut any program. We don't care what they are; we don't care what the consequences are; we don't care how it hurts people as long as we, the ultrawealthy, can get a deeper tax break—even though they are doing very well right now.

So we will come to the floor and sound the alarm on Russell Vought through the night. We will expose his ultraright record as the chief architect of Project 2025. We will expose how he is turning Project 2025 into the White House agenda.

When Donald Trump was running for President and 2025 was made public, it was regarded so horrifically by the American people that Donald Trump had to say: I don't know anything about it. But right now, with Vought, who is one of the chief architects of Project 2025, as head of OMB, all of it, much of it—damaging and dangerous for the American people—will be implemented.

That is why Americans do not want Russell Vought, the author of 2025, to head such an all-powerful, all-encompassing Agency as OMB. We will hold firm in standing against Russell Vought because of all the ways he stands against the working people of America.

HEAD START

Mr. President, now on Head Start and the effect of the funding freeze—even a week after Donald Trump backed off his ill-designed funding freeze, the collateral damage still lingers for millions across the country. He was forced by public pressure, by Senate Democrats and by others, to back off on the funding freeze. But that doesn't mean the harm all went away. It is still being done.

And a painful example is the damage done to Head Start programs everywhere. Every single Head Start program was halted last week, despite White House claims they were exempt. And that is a fact. Just go ask your Head Start program in your State.

Does Donald Trump realize what Head Start does? It is childcare for kids, dental care for kids, adult education. Does he realize that most families in America are either single-parent families or families who have two parents but both are working? And if there is no Head Start, the families can get in a panic almost: Who is going to watch the kids? Do I have to take off from work? Will my boss dock me in pay? Will my boss fire me? How do I get good care for the kids if Head Start isn't working?

It is a nightmare for people throughout the middle class in America. That is why childcare is so important.

Why then?

With that kind of trauma people would face, that daily worry about how you find childcare if Head Start is gone, it is supremely cruel and it is going to make life more difficult, more expensive for working families.

Do you want to know where the idea to eliminate Head Start comes from? Russell Vought and Project 2025.

When we are talking about how bad 2025 is and they say we just want to get rid of waste—oh, no, they want to eliminate the whole thing. They explicitly want to eliminate the program all together. “Who cares,” they say, “what it does to help kids and parents?”

That is another reason why Democrats will never, never support someone like Russell Vought to lead the OMB. We will all oppose him on the floor and speak about it, as I said, through the night.

Even in a week after the funding freeze supposedly ended, I am still getting calls from Head Start programs throughout New York. They are missing funds, suffering technical issues, or unable to operate at all. There is no one to answer the phone.

You are a Head Start program. You get money every 2 weeks. You have to pay the rent. You have to pay the workers and you call up and say: I haven't gotten my check. You say the freeze is over. There is no one at the other end of the line. No one to answer.

It is chaos—cruel chaos.

In Upstate New York, the Head Start program that serves Cattaraugus and Wyoming Counties—very conservative areas; Republican areas—they haven't received funding in over a week and have been forced to temporarily close. Two hundred kids have lost out on childcare from this one incident. Every single staffer has been laid off.

This is the handiwork, my fellow Americans, of Russell Vought and Project 2025. Put him in OMB, and you are going to see a lot more of this—a lot more damage to average working families. And this is not just happening in New York. It is happening across the country, in States like Washington, Michigan, Connecticut, Wisconsin. All of this chaos with Head Start is precisely what Russell Vought and Project 2025 want.

I am writing to HHS and demanding they take immediate action to fix the problems with Head Start. First, we need HHS to fix the payment system and get out the money that is now overdue, and we need them to do it now. Second, the Trump administration must stop the disruptions and fix every glitch preventing Head Start from accessing funding. And, third, we need HHS to stop leaving our childcare providers in the dark. They need to explain what went wrong and how they will fix it and how quickly they will fix it and when people will be getting the dollars they were promised to pay the

rent, to pay the workers, to care for the kids.

NOMINATION OF KASHYAP PATEL

Finally, Mr. President, the FBI.

Yesterday, the FBI handed over to the Justice Department a list of thousands—thousands—of employees involved in the January 6 investigation. These actions have political retribution written all over them, and it will get worse if Kash Patel is named FBI Director.

The Senate should not rubberstamp a patently partisan nominee like Kash Patel to lead the FBI. I join the Senate Democrats on the Judiciary Committee. I am demanding a second hearing of Mr. Patel. He clearly withheld information from Senators about plans for political retribution of the FBI. These agents are now on the firing line, which wasn't known when he first had the hearing that that would happen, so he clearly withheld that information from Senators. Either Mr. Patel serves the interests of the American people or he serves the interests of Donald Trump, which, of course, all too often diverge.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

NOMINATION OF ERIC TURNER

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, the Senate is soon going to vote on the confirmation of Scott Turner to be the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

He grew up in Texas and dreamed of a career playing in the National Football League. He achieved not just that dream but a great deal more. He used his platform as a player to help others achieve their own dreams. These leadership qualities are fundamental to who Scott is. They are going to serve him well as the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

Scott also has extensive experience in State government and the Federal Government. After playing in the NFL, he served his community in the Texas legislature. In 2019, he oversaw investments in opportunity zones under President Trump. In that role, he secured more than \$50 billion in private investments for over 8,700 economically distressed communities. These investments helped to revitalize many forgotten communities.

Senator TIM SCOTT of South Carolina, who is now the chairman of the Banking Committee, created these opportunity zones in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017. Scott Turner was instrumental in their success. He is the right man to help restore opportunity now. He is going to put his experience and his leadership skills to work for the American people, and I strongly support his nomination.

BORDER SECURITY

On a separate matter, Mr. President, President Trump and Republicans were elected to secure the border. That is exactly what we are doing.

In his first few weeks in office, President Trump declared an emergency at