

Management and Budget deals with a lot of sort of the tentacles inside of government, where the wheels kind of turn, and you also get a glimpse of the opportunities to save money that have been neglected for far, far too long. We are \$36 trillion in debt. We are going to have an opportunity to vote on him I think tomorrow. We will see.

But the “hair on fire” histrionics we have heard the last couple days about—whether it is DOGE or Russ Vought, I am afraid my Democrat colleagues—they haven’t hit rock bottom yet. They don’t really get what November was about. They continue to be the ones that defend the status quo, the guardians of permanent Washington, of the establishment that—in an election cycle that was decided between the disrupters and the establishment, the people have weighed in.

So let them defend it. I think it is a fight that we want because you can’t really defend this kind of stuff: \$45 million for diversity inclusion scholarships in Burma; \$3 million for girl-centered climate action in Brazil; \$125 million to racialize public health; \$288,000 for diverse birdwatcher groups; USAID, which is in the center of the storm right now, and rightfully so, spent \$1.5 billion to “advance diversity, equity and inclusion in Serbia’s workplaces and business communities”; \$70,000 for the production of a DEI musical in Ireland; \$2.5 million for electric vehicles for Vietnam; \$47,000 for a transgender opera in Colombia—not Columbia, MO, or Columbia, SC, the country of Colombia; \$32,000 for a transgender comic book in Peru; \$2 million for sex changes and LGBT activism in Guatemala; \$6 billion to fund tourism in Egypt. This is what they are mad about, that the veil is coming down. Russ Vought is going to be part of this reform movement.

It is amazing to me the response I often hear on this floor: Well, what is \$2.5 million? What is \$6 million? What is \$1.5 million?

Tell that to the truckdriver working his tail off. Tell that to the waitress who is working an extra shift to afford to send her kid to a school that she wants them to go to or a family saving up to go to Washington, DC, to show their kids our Nation’s Capital. It is insulting. It is insulting to taxpayers.

So a reckoning, indeed, is coming. It is coming, and we have been waiting for far too long to have accountability in our government. Business as usual just isn’t working for working families anymore. So this team that President Trump has assembled and put together—I am excited for them to get to work. I am excited for a golden age of America. And I am excited for accountability finally to make its way to our Nation’s Capital.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BANKS). The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, over the last several weeks, we have worked at record pace here in the Senate on

nominations. This has been one of those tasks that happen literally every time there is a new President that comes in, but the pace we have moved on nominations has been epic based on the last two terms of different Presidents. We have confirmed more people now in the Senate than were confirmed in the first 3 weeks of the Biden administration and in the first 3 weeks of the first Trump administration combined. It is because we have been willing to be able to run the clock and to be able to compress this.

Now, the nominations process does take a long time. Every single one of the Cabinet officials requires 30 hours of debate here in the Senate. Each one of the other individuals requires 2 hours of debate here in the Senate, and we have 1,200 people total that we have to get through.

But, at the beginning of this time period, we focused on the Cabinet-level officials, moving, for instance, Marco Rubio the very first day of the President being inaugurated, and we came into this Chamber that evening and were able to move Marco Rubio.

We started the hearings before the President was even sworn in, to be able to make sure that we are ready. We are literally doing hearings in committees, cueing up the next people, even as we are dealing with the folks that are on the floor, to be able to make sure we can move as rapidly as possible. This is not just about President Trump. It is about the United States and about us having a good operation for our government.

Let me give you a “for instance.”

Mr. President, you know extremely well, because you were part of this group to be able to move him, but Sean Duffy was actually sworn in. His nomination was done, his hearings were done, we confirmed him on the floor of the Senate, and within 24 hours, we have gotten the worst airline disaster that we have had in 15 years. That Secretary of Transportation was literally on the frontline within 24 hours, dealing with a terrible accident.

It is important that we have people in these roles.

We moved Doug Collins yesterday. Doug Collins, who himself is an Air Force Reserve chaplain, a veteran himself, will now be leading the VA. He is able to step into that role today, taking care of all those issues because we were able to get him confirmed.

Pam Bondi and all the issues that we need to be able to resolve within Justice—she can actually get started on those issues now because she has been confirmed. She is the new Attorney General of the United States.

All these different roles, as we move through them and through the committees, are vital for us to be able to get done. We are fulfilling the task that we need to do, whether that be for Secretary of State in international policy and the chaos happening right now in the Middle East, or whether that is Scott Turner and his experience that

he is going to bring dealing with Housing and Urban Development, and with people in poverty in our country that desperately are in need of getting access to housing. We are moving on these folks to make sure that we can actually fulfill the promise that needs to be fulfilled.

Mr. President, I just want to be able to remind everyone, we have more to go. We are going to continue to be here this week to finish out the Office of Management and Budget and Russell Vought in that role, because if we are going to deal with spending and we are going to make the government more efficient, we have to have leadership in the Office of Management and Budget.

That will be done this week, to make sure that we can continue to be able to implement the policies to be able to help the Nation to continue to move forward.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

FENTANYL

Mrs. BRITT. Mr. President, on April 1, 2020, U.S. Marine Corps veteran Jaime Puerta lost his 16-year-old son Daniel.

That dark day, Jaime found Daniel lying on his bed nonresponsive, ultimately seeing what looked like to be a half tablet of oxycodone on his dresser. Paramedics arrived and tried their best, but Daniel’s brain had gone too long without oxygen. Five days later, Daniel’s parents had to make an unimaginably difficult decision to take him off of life support.

Soon after, Jaime got a call from the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Office. He ultimately learned that pill was not an oxycodone pill. It was actually fentanyl made to look exactly like a pharmaceutical-grade oxycodone. That is what killed Daniel.

My colleagues on the Senate Judiciary Committee and I heard, yesterday, Jaime’s story. We heard the passion in his voice. You could still feel the hurt. The name of this hearing was “The Poisoning of America.”

We not only heard his story; we also heard of Bridgette Norring, whose son Devin lost his life to fentanyl poisoning the same week that Daniel died at the age of 19.

Devin had suffered from blackout migraines and dental pain to the point that he sought black-market prescription drugs—opioids—on Snapchat. This was the same platform where Daniel found the counterfeit pill that killed him.

On April 4, 2020, Devin Norring took what he thought was a Percocet. His younger brother Caden, just 14 at the time, found him in his bedroom the next morning. That Percocet was actually a counterfeit pill containing a lethal dose of fentanyl.

Daniel and Devin’s stories and what their families have been through are nothing less than heartbreaking, and it exemplifies what we are going through as a Nation—a national nightmare.

I would like to thank them for sharing their stories and the courage they have shown in the face of gut-wrenching tragedy.

As a mom of two kids, what happened to Daniel and Devon is beyond a mother's worst nightmare. It is a nightmare that unfortunately is playing out every day across the United States of America, and it is long past time for America to wake up. It is long past time for Congress to act and ensure that no other family has to experience losses like the ones that I have just discussed.

The CDC has, over the past few years, consistently shown that drug overdoses and poisonings are the No. 1 cause of death for Americans between the ages of 18 and 45. Nearly 70 percent of those overdose deaths in 2022 were from fentanyl or other synthetic opioids. Twenty-two thousand pounds of fentanyl was seized at America's ports of entry between October 2023 and October 2024. It is more than 1 billion lethal doses. It could kill everyone residing in this country three times over.

It is 5 to 10 percent of what they say is actually coming into our country. You heard me right. They think there is 90 to 95 percent of fentanyl that is entering our Nation every year and we have no idea. For reference—it may be hard to picture—but fentanyl is 100 times more potent than morphine and 50 times more potent than heroin. That means 2 milligrams of fentanyl, the size of 5 grains of sand, can be fatal. Meanwhile, it takes 250 milligrams of morphine or 200 milligrams of heroin for a fatal dose. Fentanyl is 100 times deadlier than heroin. That is the scope of what we are dealing with.

So why are we not doing something about it in this Chamber? According to the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General, our government has failed to prevent the flow of fentanyl in our country in far too many ways. According to the Homeland Security OIG, screening of participants in the Free and Secure Trade Program, which expedites processing for carriers and commercial drivers thought to be low risk, is far too lax.

In February 2021, the OIG reported, Customs and Border Protections had deployed just over a quarter of the surveillance and subterranean technology solutions President Trump ordered 4 years prior. And in 2023, a vast majority of CBP employees said their field locations, which means the points of entry into the United States, were not adequately prepared or staffed.

President Trump has worked to target the Mexican cartels and transnational narcotics trafficking. He directed Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth to present a plan assigning our Armed Forces to the mission of sealing our border and repelling the drug trade.

I heard Pete the other day discuss it. Secretary Hegseth said: My generation went and fought diligently to secure other countries' borders. This genera-

tion has the opportunity to secure ours.

Ultimately, President Trump reached an agreement with the Mexican President—10,000 Mexican soldiers placed at the U.S.-Mexico border to stop the flow of fentanyl and illegal migrants into our Nation. And President Trump pushed the Canadian Prime Minister to take significant action to stop the flow of fentanyl across our northern border.

These are all steps in the right direction. And as chair of the Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee, I will work to make sure the people tasked with protecting the public from this poison have the resources they need to help.

But what yesterday's hearing made clear is that we have more to do.

Last Congress, I cosponsored Senator JOHN KENNEDY's Fairness in Fentanyl Sentencing Act, and I am proud to be a cosponsor once again this Congress. That bill would change the quantity thresholds triggering mandatory minimum prison sentences for fentanyl distribution. It would also direct the U.S. Postal Service to increase its chemical screening and dedicate more personnel to the task of interdicting fentanyl and other illegal substances imported into our country.

Our children's lives are worth it. We must do more now.

Additionally, last Congress, the House passed the HALT Fentanyl Act. It passed in an overwhelmingly bipartisan fashion. I am proud to support it here in the Senate. Leading it is Senator CHUCK GRASSLEY, BILL CASSIDY, and MARTIN HEINRICH. While I cosponsored it last time, I am proud to cosponsor it again this Congress.

This bill takes the necessary steps of placing fentanyl-related substances under schedule I classification and ensuring law enforcement has the tools necessary to actually end this epidemic.

On January 20, it was a new day in America when President Trump was sworn in. It was a new day in the Senate when we passed the Laken Riley Act, which President Trump signed into law last week. Congress can get this done. Republican majorities in both Chambers have proven we can and will lead the way and are willing to work diligently with our colleagues across the aisle to ensure that happens.

No doubt, we have shown that we mean business. We made promises to the American people that we would work to protect them, and we will keep that promise. We delivered on our promise that we would not tolerate criminal illegal aliens roaming free in our country. Now we need to deliver for the American people once again.

Mr. President, the era of open borders is over. The era of allowing deadly fentanyl to flow into our country is over. The American people need us to act now, and that is exactly what we are doing. We are going to clean up our streets. We are going to protect our families. We are going to secure our

borders. And we are going to ensure that our children actually have the opportunity to live their American dream.

Let's make America safe again, and let's continue to talk about this issue. Our kids and their safety should come first.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

NOMINATION OF RUSSELL VOUGHT

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, our constituents, our country, and our Constitution are under attack by Donald Trump and Russell Vought.

Democrats are fighting back. Russell Vought—also pronounced “vote”—is the mastermind of Project 2025 and of all of the chaos and the lawlessness that Trump has unleashed across our country.

Today, my Republican colleagues are trying to jam through the confirmation of this man, Russell Vought, and it is our job to say “stop” because this man is incredibly dangerous to the foundations of our Republic, the system of laws and checks and balances of our Constitution. When you put into the Office of Management and Budget an individual who willfully avoids and rolls over the laws of the country and says he will not abide by the separation of powers, that is a fundamental danger that all of us, having taken an oath to the Constitution, must stop.

He is Donald Trump's most dangerous nominee. Oh, you may not have heard of him as much as you have heard of the nominee for the Secretary of Defense, Mr. Hegseth. You may not have heard about him in the same way you have heard about Tulsi Gabbard, who went to Syria without the permission of the State Department to consult with a dictator. But this man, who is the chief engineer—the chief engineer—of the Trump train—a train that plans to disregard the law and the Constitution—is a bigger danger to our Republic. That is why Democrats are taking the floor now and will continue to hold the floor over every minute allowed under our rules to say: This is a mistake.

To colleagues across the aisle, you, too, took an oath to the Constitution. You have a responsibility to defend it, and the only way to defend it at the end of this 30 hours is to vote no on Russell Vought.

The American people are watching us today, and I know they are feeling rage about what Trump and Vought are doing. I know this because, this last weekend, I had five townhalls in Oregon, and we had three to eight times the number of people turn out who turned out a year ago, which was an election year, which has a bigger turnout than a normal year.

They wondered: How is it possible to break the law in firing inspectors general? How is it possible to break the law in firing a member of the National Labor Relations Board in the middle of an 8-year term when the law doesn't allow you to do that? How is it possible