

In August, he fired Dr. Susan Monarez from her position as Director of the CDC, despite the fact that she had been nominated by President Trump and confirmed by every Senate Republican just weeks before. Yesterday Dr. Monarez testified before the Senate HELP Committee about the circumstances surrounding her firing, and the revelations in her testimony were deeply, deeply troubling.

Dr. Monarez told the committee that Secretary Kennedy plans to upend our Nation's vaccine recommendation schedules this month. You see, the CDC's vaccine advisory committee meets regularly to make recommendations based on science on what vaccines Americans should receive at various points in their life.

States use these recommendations, professional medical recommendations, to develop guidelines for what vaccines our children should receive. Health insurance companies are required to cover the full cost of the recommended vaccines from this panel. Unfortunately, Secretary Kennedy unilaterally fired all of the members of the CDC Vaccine Advisory Committee, many of whom were infectious disease and vaccine experts. He fired them all. He replaced them with people who have espoused anti-vaccine views and aligned with extreme health-related conspiracy theories.

This new panel is set to meet today, and I fear they are about to upend decades of progress in preventing unnecessary illness by wiping out recommendations and access to childhood vaccines.

Dr. Monarez testified yesterday that she was fired from not preemptively agreeing to rubberstamp these new vaccine formulas absent scientific evidence that changes would warrant.

Think about that. Secretary Kennedy fired President Trump's pick to head the CDC because she insisted that the Agency's vaccine recommendations be actually backed by science.

Many States who see this anti-vaccine movement at the highest levels of our government are taking things to an even further extreme. Florida announced it would end most of its vaccine requirements, and other Republican States are likely to follow suit. The rising vaccine skepticism promoted by Secretary Kennedy and the Trump administration will cause a resurgence in preventable disease across America.

In Texas, two unvaccinated children died from measles earlier this year, the first such deaths in America in 10 years. Louisiana is experiencing its worse whooping cough outbreak in 35 years. More than 30 infants have been hospitalized, and many were not vaccinated with the DTaP vaccine that could have protected them. Tragically, two of these infants have already died.

Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., will be the first Secretary of HHS with a body count. He is a danger to the children of America. Kennedy's onslaught has tar-

geted more than just vaccines; he and President Trump have spearheaded a historic level of dysfunction at the National Institutes of Health. They have frozen medical research funding and fired scientists and researchers. Think about that. This is going to make America great again—firing medical researchers?

I have been a supporter of the NIH in all the time I have served in Congress. The research gives people hope when they are faced with devastating diagnoses.

For 10 years, I have been part of a bipartisan task force to raise the NIH research budget. In those 10 years, we increased the budget by more than 60 percent, raising it from \$30 billion to \$48 billion today. But Trump and Kennedy's proposed budgets for next year eliminates this \$18 billion increase in medical research. Every penny of the increase I fought for for the last 10 years is gone with this Trump budget. It will mean fewer novel cures and treatments for patients who need them. It will dramatically reduce research into Alzheimer's, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes. They have been suspended because of the Trump-Kennedy cuts.

Does anybody believe that America is greater as a nation with less cancer research? I don't. Patients desperate for cures for horrible conditions like glioblastoma are in agony today because President Trump and Secretary Kennedy canceled the research funding they depend on.

Secretary Kennedy's cuts will stifle a generation of researchers and jeopardize our medical research infrastructure. We will feel the effects of this rash decision for decades to come.

I call on my Republican colleagues to stand up to this public health massacre. Some of the Members are doctors or parents themselves who have vaccinated their kids or spent their careers trying to improve our healthcare system.

My colleagues know that Secretary Kennedy is unqualified, unhinged, and dangerous, and I hope they will find the courage to join me and speak out against the terrible decisions he has fostered. If they don't, I fear there will be dire consequences if we allow Secretary Kennedy to continue to serve in a role where lives are on the line, and he is clearly unqualified.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SHEEHY). The Senator from Nebraska.

REMEMBERING CHARLIE KIRK

Mr. RICKETTS. Mr. President, 13 years ago, an inspired and patriotic 18-year-old by the name of Charlie Kirk launched a political organization. He wanted to identify, train, and organize students to engage in American politics. His dynamism, his tenacity, and his convictions helped inspire a generation.

Charlie Kirk was participating in the very American act of political dialogue when he was assassinated. He was a

husband, a son, a father—had two little children—and he was murdered in broad daylight. It is horrifying. It is very disheartening not only for me but I know many young people.

Tragically, it is all too common. Charlie Kirk isn't the only political figure to be impacted by violence. In recent years, he has just been added to the list of people like Congresswoman Gabby Giffords, Congressman STEVE SCALISE, Minnesota House speaker Melissa Hortman, Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro, Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh, and, of course, President Donald Trump.

No matter our political beliefs, all of us should be able to affirm a simple truth: that violence against political figures is unacceptable. It is actually anti-American, period. It is an attack upon our very values. It is an attack upon our Republic.

Our level of sympathy should not depend on the political views of the person who violence has been perpetrated against. Our level of outrage should not depend on the political views of the victim or the perpetrator.

In our great country, we settle disagreements with ballots, not bullets. The way to combat speech you don't like is with more speech, not less speech. This makes us better, sharper, and more American. That is what Charlie Kirk was doing when he was assassinated.

It might seem unnecessary to say these things in the wake of an assassination, but the tragic reality is that not every American believes what I just said; not everybody believes these statements are true. A recent YouGov poll found that only 72 percent of Americans said that political violence is always wrong, and 11 percent said that political violence can sometimes be justified. Eleven percent of people think that it is justifiable to commit political violence. That number shocks the conscience. Let that sink in. The people who believe that are siding with the bad guys.

We must reverse this trend. We must make sure that political violence isn't normal, that it is not accepted. Each of us has a role to play in that. Each of us can be a part of restoring American civic virtue.

We need to focus on what we know to be good and true. Let's spend more time in prayer. Let's spend more time outdoors rather than on our phones or our devices. Let's spend more time getting to know our neighbors and investing in our community. Let's relearn civil discourse. Civil discourse sharpens our arguments and makes us better, and it is better for our communities. It is what makes us human and what makes us American. The civil discourse in our great Republic is what makes us great.

There is no time to waste, and we all have a role.

God bless Charlie Kirk, his wife Erika, and their children. May Charlie rest in peace.

Now, Mr. President, I would like to say a prayer not just for Charlie but for our entire country.

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: For thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

TRIBUTE TO ROSEMARY A. VASSILIADIS

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, today, I want to take some time to recognize a Nevadan and recognize specifically the legacy that Rosemary A. Vassiliadis has contributed to this country but to Nevada specifically.

On September 12, 2025, after 40 years delivering for Southern Nevada, including more than 28 years as an airport leader at Clark County's Department of Aviation, Director Vassiliadis will retire from her career in public service.

Rosemary started her career as budget chief for the city of Las Vegas in 1984 and has been working for her community ever since. I know; I have watched firsthand. I got to work side by side with her. She spent the last 12 years as the top executive of Harry Reid International Airport, leading one of the Nation's more dynamic airport systems.

Rosemary was appointed as the first woman director of Clark County's Department of Aviation in 2013 after nearly 16 years as deputy director.

I can't say enough about what she has contributed to Nevada, and I want to talk a little bit about it because, thanks in large part to her stewardship, Southern Nevada's aviation system has grown to a \$35 billion economic engine, employing more than 18,000 workers and serving as the gateway to the world's premiere tourism and convention destination. The system is anchored by LAS and includes four additional general aviation airports.

Rosemary's vision as head of LAS emphasized the importance of the airport as the first and last experience visitors had of Las Vegas, and she prioritized efforts to enhance that customer experience for all travelers. She worked to expand LAS to include the D gates and terminal 3, and her emphasis on strategic coordination helped move millions of travelers to the region during some of the country's largest sporting events, including the Super Bowl and the Formula 1 Las Vegas Grand Prix.

Under her leadership, the airport reached unprecedented milestones, including handling a record 58.4 million passengers in 2024. In the last 12 years,

the Harry Reid International Airport has welcomed visitors from new international destinations and solidified its spot as one of North America's top 10 commercial airports.

Rosemary has spent her career supporting the safety and security of all passengers and workers. During her tenure at the Clark County Department of Aviation, Rosemary led the airport system through extraordinary times, including navigating the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks and providing continued service during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Under her direction, LAS has also become a leader in the fight against human trafficking. I know this firsthand. As AG, I got to partner with her. As attorney general of Nevada, I got to partner with her and watch her focus on how we address this horrific human trafficking that is happening in this country. Rosemary was one of the first in her field to work with law enforcement and human trafficking experts to create the industry's most comprehensive initiative to train and educate airport employees, provide safe exit strategies for victims of human trafficking, and install multilingual signage in all the restrooms to help address this horrific, modern-day slavery that we are seeing.

Additionally, LAS remains an industry leader in security programs. Most people don't even know this. Rosemary established a partnership with the Transportation Security Administration and created a unique testing ground for new and emerging screening technologies in a live checkpoint environment.

Now, I have to stress this: This is the first and only innovation checkpoint, and Harry Reid Airport is designated as the Nation's only innovation airport. It is because of Rosemary and her team.

Rosemary has established the foundation for the Clark County airport system to continue to adapt as it serves the growing Southern Nevada population and the visitors the community welcomes each year.

As a lifelong Nevadan, I am so honored to have worked with Rosemary over so many years and greatly appreciate her tireless efforts to grow LAS and the Clark County airport system. Her leadership was revolutionary, and she will be missed.

But I want to stress even more. It is not just the work that she did as a civil servant, because I think that is a noble service, and that is what she believed in—always giving back to her community—but Rosemary is also an incredible, incredible mother, friend, neighbor, lifelong Nevadan who truly believed in her State and her community, and raised a great family.

Now I hope she has the opportunity, after all of the years she has given to so many people in Nevada and so many tourists—I am going to say to the staff I am looking at right now, if you have come to Las Vegas, you have come

through Rosemary's airport, and this is what it is about: making sure that people feel loved, support. She has not only done it for so many tourists, international and domestic, but she has done it for Nevadans and her family. I am so proud of her and got a chance to watch firsthand her commitment to her State, her country, and her family.

Rosemary, I wish you all the best. Wherever you go next, whatever the next chapter, know that you will always have my support and my friendship and I look forward to seeing what you do next.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

HEALTHCARE

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, we are in the middle of a full-blown healthcare crisis. Donald Trump and Republicans in Congress are ripping away healthcare from 15 million Americans. And now, thanks to Donald Trump, one in four nursing homes could close, community health clinics are on the brink of shutting their doors, hospitals, already filled to the brim with patients, are bracing for the biggest cuts in decades. Kids with cancer are watching as promising research, their only chance at treatment, is shut down and health insurance premiums are skyrocketing.

Talk to anyone in the country, and they will tell you that the cost of going to the doctor is already way too high because the reality is that healthcare in America was already failing families even before Trump and Republicans took a chain saw to it.

Massachusetts lost two hospitals last year in the biggest healthcare bankruptcy in decades. Our community health centers were already down to counting their nickels to keep the door open. And now, the Republicans have come in and said they want to take away money that helps cover mamas giving birth and neighbors who need wheelchairs and home health aides so that they can hand that money over to billionaire CEOs. Trump's one-two punch of chaotic tariffs and his Big Beautiful Bill is going to push middle-class families in America over a financial cliff.

Before working moms got broke from a cancer diagnosis, Congress must act. Before community hospitals are forced to shut down, Congress must act. Before your neighbor with the home health aide loses his care, Congress must act.

That is why Democrats are saying, if Republicans want our votes, they need to restore healthcare for Americans. We made it about as clear as we humanly can. The American people need affordable healthcare. No one should go bankrupt because they got sick and needed to see a doctor.

And if the Republicans want to shut down government so that they can keep increasing costs and cutting healthcare, then they need to explain that and not just to us; they need to