

teacher—of young people. He helped educate millions of young Americans about patriotism and conservative moral values.

His organization, Turning Point USA, is largely credited with President Trump's unprecedented success with young voters in this past election.

But he didn't just reach out to conservative students. He was a champion of free speech for everybody.

Over the past week, I have enjoyed seeing many, many, many videos of Charlie's debates with college students all over our great country.

The first thing you notice when you watch these videos is how brilliant Charlie was. He could beat anyone in a debate and, clearly, had a great career in front of him.

But the second thing you notice about these debates is how kind Charlie was. He never raised his voice. He never said anything hateful. If you looked up the words "positive attitude" in the dictionary, Charlie Kirk's name would come up.

I don't know if I could stay as calm as he did while he was talking with some of these confused young students, to be honest with you. But Charlie always rose above it and extended grace, even to the people he disagreed with the most. That was clearly because of his Christian faith, which influenced everything that Charlie did. He was extremely outspoken about Christianity, and I truly believe this is one of the main reasons that he lost his life.

He was also an incredible, devoted father and husband. He talked often about how the most meaningful thing you can do in life is to get married and have kids. What a powerful and much needed message for our young people to hear.

There is so much more I could say about Charlie, but I think the outpouring of love and support after his death speaks for itself. If you notice, there haven't been riots this past week. Businesses have not been forced to board up their windows. Instead, prayer vigils have been held for Charlie not only across the country but around the world. Pews and parking lots were overflowing in churches this past Sunday. I have seen countless social media posts of people saying they purchased their Bibles for the first time this week because of Charlie.

When Charlie was asked how he wanted to be remembered in an interview earlier this year, he said he wanted to be remembered for having courage for his faith. And that is exactly how Charlie is being remembered.

Charlie may have gone home to be with the Lord, but his work here on Earth won't stop.

I am glad to see that Turning Point has had more than 54,000 requests for new chapters at colleges and high schools across the country.

I have a granddaughter Rosie Gracie, and I will absolutely encourage her to get involved in Turning Point when she is just a little bit older.

To Charlie's grieving wife Erika and his two beautiful children, we are praying for you. Just know how grateful we are for Charlie's life and legacy. I will continue fighting every day for the values that Charlie believed in: faith, family, and freedom.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MORENO). Without objection, it is so ordered.

AUTHORIZING THE EN BLOC CONSIDERATION IN EXECUTIVE SESSION OF CERTAIN NOMINATIONS ON THE EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

(The remarks of Mr. LANKFORD pertaining to the introduction of S. 2859 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

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

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

NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I don't normally come to the floor to give somewhat lengthy remarks, but today I am doing so because of a deep and, frankly, rising concern for the future of our intelligence community and, in turn, the security of the United States.

For months now, we have watched President Trump's administration, led in this arena by his handpicked Director of National Intelligence Ms. Gabbard, systemically undermine the men and women whose mission is to keep this country safe. These are professionals who serve under Republican and Democratic administrations alike. They are career officials who put duty before politics, who swear an oath not to any President but to the Constitution of the United States.

Yet as this administration fires and denigrates these very men and women, as expertise that takes literally decades to build is being thrown away as it conflicts with political talking points, as assessments grounded in fact are being shelved in favor of conspiracy theories, our adversaries are conspiring, sharing intelligence and military capabilities and strategizing over how to weaken the United States while advancing a very different authoritarian vision for the world.

At the same time, I fear the integrity of our intelligence is being sacrificed on the altar of partisan convenience.

This is not some kind of inside-the-beltway turf battle, and it is not another partisan disagreement. I believe at stake is something much more fundamental: whether America will continue to have an intelligence community free to speak truth to power or whether political pressure will blind us to the very real threats our Nation faces.

(Mr. BUDD assumed the Chair.)

History shows us what happens when intelligence is ignored, manipulated, or kept from those who need it most. In 1941, the U.S. Navy intercepted communications showing that Japan was planning to attack Pearl Harbor. That knowledge ended up being of little use because it was not communicated to the people who could have taken action to protect the fleet. The result was the devastating surprise that cost thousands of American lives.

In the aftermath, Congress resolved that we could never again afford to be blindsided. So in 1947, in a bipartisan way, Congress created the Central Intelligence Agency, the modern Department of Defense, and other institutions to ensure that unfiltered, unbiased intelligence is provided to the President, to Congress, and to our military. These institutions are meant to protect us from surprises and to give policymakers the truth, even when it is inconvenient or uncomfortable.

Now, for the most part, this system has worked, and all of us who work up here know it has never been perfect. The abuses revealed by the Church Committee in the 1970s made clear why strong congressional oversight is essential. That is why the Senate Intelligence Committee was established in 1976 and our House counterpart the following year.

Today, while not flawless, these committees—of which I know the Presiding Officer is a member—remain the best check we have to ensure that intelligence Agencies uphold American values and laws and avoid repeating past mistakes—and hopefully learning from them when they do occur. Even with our modern system of congressional oversight, we have seen tragic failures. Intelligence failed to predict the collapse of the Soviet Union. We failed to connect the dots before 9/11. And perhaps most foreboding, in the runup to the Iraq war, intelligence was distorted to fit policy preferences. Intelligence about weapons of mass destruction and Saddam Hussein's ties to al-Qaida were inflated and cherry-picked. Analysts who even at that time raised doubts were ignored.

The result was a devastating war in Iraq, fought under false pretenses, that cost literally thousands of American servicemembers their lives and limbs. But we learned from those failures.

After the September 11 attacks, Congress placed additional safeguards and created a new position: the Director of National Intelligence. The objective was to better coordinate our intelligence Agencies, to avoid the so-called

groupthink, to remove silos amongst our now 18, 19 intelligence Agencies, and to ensure that analysts could provide thorough, candid assessments—again, even when the truth was uncomfortable or unwelcome.

That was the commitment I asked President Trump's nominee and the current Director of National Intelligence, Ms. Gabbard, to make during her confirmation hearing, and she assured our committee and the American people that she would protect the independence of the intelligence community to ensure that the IC is never politicized. She even pointed to the runup to the war in Iraq as the clearest example of what happens when intelligence is bent to fit policy and the President is told only what he wants to hear. She pledged that she would never allow those mistakes to be repeated on her watch.

Mr. President, but in only 6 months, we have seen the opposite from this administration. We have seen career FBI agents, people who have risked their lives for this country, forced out of their positions simply for investigating crimes committed in the January 6 insurrection. These were professionals following the law, performing their sworn duties, and yet their service was treated as disloyalty. Careers were ended and decades of expertise were discarded just for doing the job they were entrusted to do.

We have seen the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the National Intelligence Council dismissed because their well-documented, evidence-based assessment of the Venezuelan Tren de Aragua criminal network did not align with the administration's preferred narrative. These analysts presented carefully sourced intelligence showing that the gang of bad guys acted, actually, independent of the Venezuelan Government, not at the behest of foreign officials. Yet their findings were rejected and their leadership positions removed simply because the truth didn't fit a politically convenient story.

And again, to be clear, there is no question that Maduro's regime in Venezuela and the TDA are ruthless actors who pose real threats, but punishing officials—punishing intelligence officials in particular—for telling the truth only weakens our ability to confront them.

We have seen the three-star general leading the Defense Intelligence Agency pushed out after analysts produced a straightforward, evidence-based assessment showing that Iran's nuclear program had not been obliterated, as President Trump so loudly claimed. Rather than face those facts, the administration decided to punish the messenger, and he was let go from DIA.

We have seen, more recently, analysts, literally with decades of experience on Russia, stripped of their security clearances or reassigned at the very moment that their years of expertise is needed most.

More recently, DNI Gabbard has personally revoked the clearances of at least 37 individuals in a transparently political act of vengeance in a single stroke of a pen and, at least in one case, exposing an official working undercover. That alone—putting someone who has worked undercover and identifying that identity—in past administrations would have been grounds for firing.

We have seen statutory requirements to keep Congress fully and currently informed ignored, oversight stymied and obstructed, and inspectors general who are supposed to keep their eyes on these Agencies—inspectors general and their personnel silenced, forced out, or removed.

And I remind my colleagues, in terms of oversight for the intelligence community, that is not a right that all 100 Senators have. There are literally 17 of us. As chair or vice chair over the last few years, I am part of the so-called Gang of 8. If we don't do our jobs, nobody is watching all of these intelligence Agencies.

Even more damaging, we have seen highly sensitive intelligence declassified and released, clearly for political purposes, without proper coordination with the Agencies responsible for protecting sources and methods—that is how we do our work and who are the people involved. The disclosures actually risked revealing the identities of assets—and those are human beings—and the techniques we rely on—those are the technology and skills we have—and the credibility of ongoing operations, all for the sake of advancing a political narrative. The very tools that protect lives and maintain America's strategic advantage are being treated as leverage in a partisan game.

Let's remember, the so-called Russia hoax and that assessment, which this administration continues to disparage, was a coordinated, unanimous finding by the entire intelligence community. Our committee—on a bipartisan, unanimous basis—reviewed it and validated it extensively. Not a single one of my Republican colleagues objected to its findings, including the current Secretary of State, then-committee chairman Senator Rubio.

And what did that assessment actually conclude? I think every one of us understood that Russia conducted a sweeping, systematic campaign to interfere in our 2016 election; that Moscow's goal was to sow chaos, to undermine faith in American democracy, and specifically to boost Mr. Trump's candidacy. These findings were not partisan talking points; they were sober judgments of career professionals, backed by evidence, and affirmed by both parties in Congress.

And during the first Trump administration, they responded to that report appropriately and put resources to make sure the 2020 election was the safest election on record. Kudos to the first Trump administration in doing that.

But with all of this happening, as troubling as all of this is, what may be most astonishing is who seems to be calling the shots now: not seasoned national security leaders, not career intelligence professionals, but conspiracy theorist Laura Loomer, a figure who has called the 9/11 terrorist attacks an inside job, who described herself as a “pro-White nationalist” and a “proud Islamophobe,” and who has made openly racist and anti-Muslim statements. This is not someone with even a shred of credibility, let alone the experience or judgment we should demand from those influencing U.S. national security decisions.

Yet, time and again, we have seen senior officials pushed out of their posts because Ms. Loomer decided they were not sufficiently loyal to the President. National Security Council staffers, people well-known and respected on both sides of the aisle, including staffers who worked for my Republican colleagues in the Senate, were shown the door at her demand; the two top officials at the National Security Agency, including a well-respected four-star general, Timothy Haugh, forced out, along with the Agency's general counsel, again at Loomer's behest.

These are critical posts in one of our most important intelligence organizations, vacated not because of misconduct or failure but because of the whims of a political provocateur whose public record is filled with hate and conspiracies. And don't take my word on these actions. Ms. Loomer's own social media feed claims all of these firings and dismissals almost as trophies.

And just a few weeks ago we saw something that I believe should trouble every Member of this body, regardless of which party you belong to. My staff and I had arranged a visit to the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency located in my State of Virginia so that I could go ahead and do my constitutional duty of oversight and, in that meeting, meet with intelligence professionals who also happened to be my constituents. Yet, at the last minute, that visit was blocked—again—and apparently, as she claimed, by Laura Loomer.

What does it say about the state of our national security when a self-proclaimed White nationalist and Islamophobe with a personal vendetta against U.S. Government officials—and, by the way, no security clearance, no sworn duty to defend the Constitution—can dictate who serves in critical intelligence positions and even prevent Members of this Chamber from conducting basic oversight?

I have to ask again: Why is this administration going to war against the very professionals sworn to keep our country safe? Why are decades of service and sacrifice being tossed aside?

Why? Because they think they are still obliged to provide the truth and speak truth to power. But, instead, it appears that sometimes those truths

are inconvenient because sometimes their assessments are not what the DNI and the President want to hear.

These safeguards we put in place and the oversight this body provides—again, only 17 of us have seen these classified programs—these safeguards only work if intelligence officers know that they can tell the truth without losing their jobs. If analysts who analyze the facts and try to come up with conclusions believe their careers will be destroyed for offering inconvenient assessments, then we will only get intelligence the White House wants.

Imagine the consequences if our intelligence community is forced to spend its time chasing down conspiracy theories instead of monitoring terrorist networks, cyber threats, or foreign adversaries. Imagine if analysts stop flagging real dangers because they fear political retaliation. Imagine if experienced officers walk away from service altogether because they know their expertise will be diminished or punished. That kind of environment doesn't just weaken our intelligence community, it puts every American family at risk.

Again, this is not some kind of partisan point. Democrats and Republicans alike have relied on the intelligence community to keep the country safe. Every President, whether they liked what they were hearing or not, has depended on accurate, independent analysis to make decisions that affect millions of lives.

That is what makes this current moment so alarming. We are dismantling trust in institutions that literally took generations to build. We are eroding morale among some of the most dedicated professionals in public service. And I fear that we are sending a clear message to young officers, whether they are at the CIA or any of the other intelligence Agencies: Don't bother building a career in intelligence if you plan on telling the truth.

Meanwhile, these aren't actions in a vacuum. Our adversaries aren't slowing down. Cyber attacks, disinformation campaigns, nuclear proliferation, terrorist attacks, transnational criminal organizations—these threats are real, and they are not going to wait for us to get our house in order.

If we continue to allow politics to dictate what intelligence is acceptable, we are effectively flying blind. That is why, again, I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle: Please, for God's sake, take this seriously. We can disagree about policy, but we cannot allow the facts themselves to be corrupted.

The intelligence community must remain independent, professional, and committed to the Constitution above all else.

I have had the opportunity in my tenure on this committee to work with a lot of these men and women. I didn't know many of them before I was on the Intelligence Committee. They are dedicated professionals. I never asked a sin-

gle one what their party affiliation was. They oftentimes put their lives in harm's way and, candidly, never get the attention that our military does. They work in secret.

The truth is, these professionals and the work they do deserve to be respected, honored, and listened to because if you corrupt the intelligence and bend it to political wills, we have seen constant examples of what happens.

The truth is, the American people deserve nothing less.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, as many Americans know, the current budget is going to expire at the end of September, and if an agreement is not reached, the government will shut down, which is, frankly, not anything that anyone wants. The question that we now have to address is how we keep the government open and serve the needs of the American people.

As Americans know, Republicans have a majority in the House and in the Senate, and they also control the White House. They run the government. Republicans have the responsibility, therefore, to keep the government open.

My understanding is that there will be a vote tomorrow on a continuing resolution to fund the government until November 20. In the House, a simple majority wins, and I would imagine that, by a very slim vote, Republicans will have the votes they need in order to pass their resolution.

In the Senate, however, the rules are different—historically different. In order to pass a continuing resolution, it will take a 60-vote majority to pass. That means that at a time when there are 53 Members of the Republican caucus and 47 Members of the Democratic caucus, it will require bipartisan support. That is what Senate rules are about.

In other words, Republicans will need Democratic and/or Independent votes—I am an Independent—in order to keep the government open.

Bottom line: Republicans will need to negotiate. That is how the Senate works, and that is how democracy works.

Speaking for myself and I believe many millions of Americans, here is some of what it will take to get my vote:

No. 1. Republican leadership, don't take away healthcare from 15 million Americans by making the largest cut to Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act in history.

No. 2. Republican leadership, don't increase health insurance premiums by 75 percent on average for over 20 million Americans who get their healthcare through the Affordable Care Act.

No. 3. Republican leadership, do not undermine modern medicine and the

health and well-being of our children by rejecting the scientific evidence regarding vaccines.

No. 4. Republican leadership, do not allow our great country to be moved toward authoritarianism by putting Federal troops on city streets without a request from a Governor or a mayor. Do not have ICE agents snatch people off our streets without due process. Do not undermine the Constitution of the United States and the rule of law by allowing an administration to refuse to spend money appropriated by Congress.

Let me be more specific. As I think almost every American understands, our current healthcare system is dysfunctional, it is broken, and it is cruel. At a time when we spend almost twice as much per capita on healthcare as any other major country—over \$14,000 per person—85 million Americans are uninsured or underinsured—85 million Americans.

The Republican continuing resolution in the House does nothing—nothing—to prevent 15 million Americans from being thrown off the healthcare they currently have, as a result of Trump's so-called Big Beautiful Bill. In other words, instead of lowering the number of uninsured and underinsured, if we do not act, 15 million more Americans will be uninsured. We cannot allow that to happen.

This is a life-and-death issue. Studies have shown that up to 50,000—50,000—Americans every year will die unnecessarily if we do not reverse these cuts.

So we are talking about here, if we do not act, going from 85 million uninsured and underinsured to 100 million uninsured and underinsured. Those cuts must be rescinded.

But it is not just preventing 15 million Americans from losing their health insurance; everybody in this country—every businessperson, every union worker—knows that the cost of healthcare in this country today is astronomically high and unaffordable. I don't care what State you are in—people cannot afford healthcare today. Yet, if we do not act right now, in this continuing resolution, the Affordable Care Act tax credits will expire and premiums will skyrocket by 75 percent on average for more than 20 million Americans.

Let me repeat: Healthcare premiums for 20 million working-class and middle-class Americans will go up by 75 percent on average if we do not extend those tax credits in this coming legislation.

Let me say that I wish very good luck to my colleagues, whether they are Democrats or Republicans, who want to go home to their constituents and explain why healthcare premiums are going up by 75 percent in order to pay for \$1 trillion in tax breaks for the 1 percent. I do wish you the best of luck in trying to explain that one. I do not intend to.

Further, let me be clear: Vaccines work—not exactly a controversial statement. It is a statement supported

by every major medical organization in the United States and around the world. Vaccines are safe, they are effective, and they have saved millions of lives in our country and tens of millions of lives worldwide. In fact, vaccines are one of the greatest public health achievements in modern history.

At a time when the Secretary of Health and Human Services has dismantled the vaccine review process, narrowed access to lifesaving COVID vaccines, fired leading public health experts, and filled scientific advisory boards with conspiracy theorists and ideologues, we must stand with the scientific and medical communities and rescind Secretary Kennedy's dangerous policies.

This is not about politics. It doesn't matter whether you are Republican, Democrat, or Independent. We are talking about protecting our children from polio, measles, whooping cough, and other preventable diseases.

The American people, slowly but surely, are catching on. No matter what their political view may be—Democrat, Republican, Independent—they understand that our current economic system is rigged. They understand that the very richest people in this country are becoming much richer, while 60 percent of Americans are living paycheck to paycheck and millions of people are trying to survive on starvation wages.

The American people understand that while billionaires are getting huge tax breaks, they are finding it harder and harder to afford healthcare, to pay the rent or their mortgages, to afford childcare, to be able to send their kids to college, to pay for the prescription drugs their doctors prescribe, or to buy decent quality food for their kids.

The American people understand—painfully and depressingly—that unless we change the way the economy functions, their kids will likely have a lower standard of living than they do. In the richest country in the history of the world, it is likely that the younger generation will have a lower standard of living than their parents, while almost all new incoming wealth goes to the people on the top.

Today, we have more income and wealth inequality than we have ever had in the history of the United States. Today, we have one man, Mr. Musk, who owns more wealth—if you can believe it—than the bottom 52 percent of American households—one man, more wealth than the bottom 52 percent of American households. And, by the way, he is on his way, it appears, to become a trillionaire—even richer and richer.

Today, the top 1 percent owns more wealth than the bottom 93 percent—top 1 percent, more wealth than the bottom 93 percent. And the CEOs of major corporations now earn over 350 times what their average employees make.

While the billionaire class becomes richer and richer, real inflation accounted for weekly wages that are

lower today than they were 52 years ago—huge expansion of worker productivity, and yet the average worker, in many cases, is worse off than he or she was 52 years ago.

Enough is enough. At a time of massive income and wealth inequality, it is insane to be giving a trillion dollars in tax breaks to the top 1 percent. If President Trump and the Republican leadership want my vote, they will have to rescind that tax break for their oligarchic friends.

Our country today faces not only major economic crises, we are looking at extraordinarily threatening—a threatening moment to our democratic form of government. Frankly, we now have a President of the United States who does not believe in our Constitution and the separation of powers; who does not believe in freedom of speech and the right to dissent; who is moving us, every day, toward an authoritarian form of government with more and more power into his own hands.

Too many Americans from my State of Vermont and every other State in this country have put their lives on the line and sometimes died in order to defend democracy and our way of life: the right of people to live without fear, the right of people to express their point of view—no matter what it may be. You disagree with me, that is great. That is called American democracy—the right of people to vote without intimidation.

Today, in an unprecedented way, we have Federal troops in cities in America who have not been requested by a governor or a mayor. Today in America, we have people who are being snatched off the streets—taken right off the streets or out of their workplaces—by masked Federal agents, thrown into vans, and dispatched to detention centers without due process. Does anybody think that that is what America is supposed to be about—somebody walking down the street, getting picked up by masked men, thrown into a van, and taken God knows where? Today, we have a President sending some of these people to South Sudan, Uganda, El Salvador—we don't know where. People have no relationship to the country they are being sent. Imagine being plucked off the street, sent to South Sudan, country in the middle of a civil war, virtually no government. That is not acceptable. That is not what our great country is supposed to be about.

These undemocratic, unconstitutional policies must be rescinded. The movement toward authoritarianism in this country must be ended.

In this very difficult moment in American history, let us stand with the American people and listen to their needs. Let us not throw 15 million working-class people off of the healthcare that they have so that 50,000 people a year die unnecessarily. We cannot allow that to happen.

Let us not raise healthcare premiums by 75 percent for 20 million Americans. People can't afford healthcare today.

What happens when your premiums go up by 75 percent? Let us not endanger the children of this country by undermining modern medicine and making it more difficult for people to get the vaccines they require.

And at a time of massive income and wealth inequality, let us not give a trillion dollars in tax breaks to the top 1 percent.

And, lastly, as we observe growing authoritarianism every single day, as we see more and more disrespect for the great Constitution of our country—which has made us an example to the entire world—let us—Republican, Democrat, Independent—let us stand together and save American democracy.

If the Republican leadership does those things, you have got my vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. RES. 404

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, in the Republican "Beautiful For Billionaires" bill that Senator SANDERS was just referring to, there were a great many dirty tricks tucked in there to hurt people and make billionaires wealthier and happier and more free to pollute.

Of all the dirty tricks in that bill, perhaps the trickiest was the one that was so hidden that it wasn't even mentioned in the bill, and that is, about a half-trillion dollars in cuts to Medicare.

We have heard a lot about the trillion dollars in cuts to Medicaid. But without ever mentioning it, the Republican "Beautiful For Billionaires" bill will cut Medicare by half a trillion dollars, give or take.

How does it do that? It does that by adding \$4.1 trillion to the deficit—one bill, one act of Congress, \$4.1 trillion piled on our national debt.

There is another law that exists on the statute books of the United States of America, the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act. What does that do? It requires a look at bills that create enormous additions to our national debt. And to protect our fisc, it requires mandatory cuts to other accounts.

That is supposed to discourage running up the debt by trillions in the first place, and it is supposed to remedy that defect with automatic cuts.

Guess what is lined up for automatic cuts under the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act? Yep, Medicare. The same Medicare that we saw that huge demonstration from Republicans about during President Biden's State of the Union speech when he said Republicans want to cut Medicare, and they rose in ire and anger to say: No, that is not possibly true. And he said: Oh, I think we have unanimity here. I think we have agreement: no cuts to Medicare.

Well, that didn't last long. The cuts to Medicare just had to be well hidden, and that is what this bill does.

We have asked the Congressional Budget Office what it means. How big will the cuts be? When will they take place?

Well, here is the outcome: Given the magnitude of this massive increase, it will create a \$45 billion cut to Medicare in 2026—next year. Next year, \$45 billion cut to Medicare.

Unfortunately, it is not a one-time thing. It is going to keep going. In the following year, it goes up and up. By 2034, the end of the 10-year budget window that we work in, the annual cut to Medicare will be \$76 billion.

If you stack up all those cuts year after year to Medicare, starting in 2026 and going through 2034, the total cut to Medicare from the “Beautiful For Billionaires” bill is \$491 billion. That is where I get half a trillion from. I am rounding the \$491 billion number CBO gave us for the total hit to Medicare done by Republicans in their “Beautiful For Billionaires” bill.

To head this off, we are going to have to pass legislation that exempts Medicare from those coming PAYGO cuts that are going to happen automatically by operation of law unless we take that step.

Now, Republicans could have, at the time, put a simple provision in their “Beautiful For Billionaires” bill saying: For purposes of this bill, Medicare is exempted from the PAYGO Program.

It could have protected, with very simple language, against a looming half-trillion-dollar cut to Medicare. They chose not to. They chose not to.

The question is, Was that an oversight or is this a trick to try to tee up cuts to Medicare that they don't have to own? Well, here is a clue as to whether that was a trick or an oversight: On the other side of this building, over at the House of Representatives, the Republican-controlled House is sending over a continuing resolution to fund the government. They could have put this correction in that bill. They could have added a simple line saying that when it comes to Medicare and the huge addition to the debt from our “Beautiful for Billionaire's” bill, pay-go sequestration will be lifted. Again, they chose not to do that.

The American public might not be familiar with sequestration and automatic cuts and how all that works, but I will tell you what—people around here are. Lots of people around here know very well that when you dump \$4 trillion-plus onto the national debt, it is going to cascade into cuts to these other accounts, and those other accounts include Medicare.

So to plead innocence about this not being the intention all along is completely unsupportable. To say that it was just an innocent oversight in the “Beautiful for Billionaire's” bill is unsupportable. And now, with the continuing resolution coming over from the House, we have more proof that this is a deliberate cut targeted at Medicare done exclusively by House and Senate Republicans.

I want to focus on protecting Medicare. I have a Medicare and Social Security Fair Share Act that would require people with incomes over \$400,000

to pony up equivalent to what regular workers pay on the higher part of their salary. That would protect benefits and Medicare as far as the eye can see—as far as the actuarial eye can see—for Medicare and Social Security.

I want to put everybody here on record that we need to undo the looming half-trillion-dollar cut to Social Security before it starts to hit families in Rhode Island and elsewhere around the country.

To that end, as if in legislative session and notwithstanding rule XXII, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of my resolution, S. Res. 404, submitted earlier today; that the resolution be agreed to; that its preamble be agreed to; and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The majority whip.

Mr. BARRASSO. On behalf of the chairman of the Budget Committee, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, there we are.

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. MARKEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. MOODY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. RES. 407

Mr. MARKEY. Madam President, the First Amendment is the beating heart of our democracy. It protects the right of Americans to speak freely, to criticize their leaders, and to entertain and inform without fear of government reprisal. The Framers did not write an exception for late-night comedians or for political satire. They did not carve out an exemption for monologues that offend those in power. The principle is clear: In America, the government does not get to decide which jokes are permissible and which criticisms are punished.

Yet, yesterday, we saw a shocking breach of this constitutional order. Brendan Carr, the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, went on a partisan podcast and threatened ABC, the American Broadcasting Company, and its parent company, Disney, over a joke told by comedian Jimmy Kimmel. Carr called Kimmel's comments the “sickest conduct possible” and suggested revoking the broadcast licenses of ABC affiliates.

He then delivered a line toward ABC and Disney. It sounded like something out of “The Godfather.” He said:

We can do this the easy way or [we can do it] the hard way.

Let me say that line again:

We can do this the easy way or [we can do it] the hard way.

That is not oversight; that is intimidation. That is not regulation; that is retaliation. That is “The Godfather” giving Disney an offer they can't refuse from the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission. That is the language that mobsters use to shake people down, and it came from the mouth of the FCC Chairman of the Federal Government, with vast legal authority to punish Disney and ABC and their affiliates.

The chilling effect was immediate. Within hours, Disney and ABC indefinitely suspended Jimmy Kimmel from the air. A comedian was silenced because a government regulator, the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, flexed his authority.

This is not an isolated slip of the tongue; it is part of a broader pattern by the Federal Communications Commission under Brendan Carr's leadership. Over and over again, he has used his office to attack and undermine journalists and broadcasters and news organizations that dare to speak in ways which he personally dislikes. He has threatened media companies with investigations for their editorial choices. He has amplified partisan attacks on reporters who cover him critically. He has turned the FCC into the “Federal Censorship Commission,” with his being the censor in chief.

These are not the actions of an independent regulator; they are the actions of a partisan censor. And make no mistake, if left unchecked, this campaign will not stop with ABC or with Disney. Every newsroom, every broadcaster, every local affiliate will hear the message loud and clear: Criticize the people in power, and you risk your license, your livelihood, your very ability to operate.

That conversation is taking place in newsrooms all across our country today. Look what happened to Disney. Look what happened to ABC. Be afraid. Don't think that the First Amendment protects you anymore. Don't think that you have a right to speak what your opinion is.

The FCC was created to ensure that the public airwaves—our shared national resource—are used in the public interest. It was not created to dictate what late-night hosts may joke about. It was not created to punish networks for broadcasting opinions that government officials dislike. It was not created to be the speech police for the United States of America.

The Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, sitting in his office, watching TV, saying “I don't like that. I am taking away their license,” is not what the Federal Communications Commission was established to do in our country. Yet Chairman Brendan Carr has pretended otherwise. He has distorted the FCC's mandate to serve his own partisan ends. Instead of acting in the public interest,

he is trying to force broadcasters to act in Donald Trump's interest. If you say something that Donald Trump doesn't like, we will take away your license. We won't allow you to be a broadcaster anymore. We will fine you.

He should know better. It was not too long ago, before he was Chairman, when Brendan Carr was singing a completely different tune. He actually condemned perceived attempts by "government officials to silence political speech that they don't like." That is the old Brendan Carr. He defended talk show hosts, saying:

From internet memes to late-night comedians, from cartoons to the plays and poems as old as organized government itself, Political Satire circumvents traditional gatekeepers and helps hold those in power accountable. Not surprising that it's long been targeted for censorship.

Did I say that? No. Brendan Carr said that—Brendan Carr. But this is a different guy now. He just got a job in the Trump administration, so he is bending the knee to Donald Trump on all of these issues, because, then, he rightfully defended the First Amendment. He said:

Free speech is not a threat to democracy—censorship is [a threat to democracy].

Chairman Carr has betrayed those principles, and he should resign. He is not fit to be the Chair of the Federal Communications Commission. He is using it now to intimidate people whom he considers to be political enemies of Donald Trump. That is not his job.

But that is not enough. The Senate must speak with one voice in rejecting his unconstitutional actions.

The resolution I bring before this Chamber today condemns Brendan Carr for weaponizing government power against Disney and ABC. It affirms that the Federal Communications Commission does not and must not have the authority to punish broadcasters for the content of their programming. It declares that no American—whether a comedian, a journalist, an ordinary citizen—should ever have to fear government retaliation for speaking their mind. And it doesn't make any difference whether you are a Democrat or Republican, whether a Democrat doesn't like what a Republican said, whether a Republican doesn't like what a Democrat said.

We have to stand for the Constitution, not for censorship, to stand for freedom and not intimidation, to stand for a free press, not a government-controlled press.

Chairman Carr has shown himself unwilling and unable to uphold the responsibilities of his office, but the Senate can still uphold our responsibilities to the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution—the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, the one they put up first because they knew that free speech and freedom of the press was what ultimately would protect the democracy against dictators and Kings and those who would subvert our Con-

stitution to their own individual whims.

By passing this resolution, we can make clear that the First Amendment is not negotiable; it is not partisan; it is not subject to the whims of a single regulator.

From my perspective, again, the First Amendment is the beating heart of our democracy. It protects the right of Americans to speak freely, to criticize their leaders of both parties, and to entertain and inform without fear of government reprisal.

So, Madam President, as if in legislative session and notwithstanding rule XXII, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 407, submitted earlier today; and, further, that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. MULLIN. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

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

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

VOTE ON S. RES. 377

Mr. LANKFORD. Madam President, I know of no further debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

If not, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the en bloc nominations provided under the provisions of S. Res. 377?

Mr. HEINRICH. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Indiana (Mr. BANKS) and the Senator from Utah (Mr. LEE).

The result was announced—yeas 51, nays 47, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 526 Ex.]

YEAS—51

Barrasso	Cruz	Johnson
Blackburn	Curtis	Justice
Boozman	Daines	Kennedy
Britt	Ernst	Lankford
Budd	Fischer	Lummis
Capito	Graham	Marshall
Cassidy	Grassley	McConnell
Collins	Hagerty	McCormick
Cornyn	Hawley	Moody
Cotton	Hoeven	Moran
Cramer	Husted	Moreno
Crapo	Hyde-Smith	Mullin

Murkowski	Schmitt	Thune
Paul	Scott (FL)	Tillis
Ricketts	Scott (SC)	Tuberville
Risch	Sheehy	Wicker
Rounds	Sullivan	Young

NAYS—47

Alsobrooks	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Baldwin	Hirono	Sanders
Bennet	Kaine	Schatz
Blumenthal	Kelly	Schiff
Blunt Rochester	Kim	Schumer
Booker	King	Shaheen
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Slotkin
Coons	Lujan	Smith
Cortez Masto	Markey	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Merkley	Warner
Durbin	Murphy	Warnock
Fetterman	Murray	Warren
Gallego	Ossoff	Welch
Gillibrand	Padilla	Whitehouse
Hassan	Peters	Wyden
Heinrich	Reed	

NOT VOTING—2

Banks	Lee
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The en bloc nominations provided under the provisions of S. Res. 377 were confirmed, as follows:

Executive Calendar No. 89, Jessica Kramer, of Wisconsin, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency

Executive Calendar No. 105, Dario Gil, of New York, to be Under Secretary for Science, Department of Energy

Executive Calendar No. 107, Brandon Williams, of New York, to be Under Secretary for Nuclear Security

Executive Calendar No. 121, Tristan Abbey, of Florida, to be Administrator of the Energy Information Administration

Executive Calendar No. 122, Leslie Beyer, of Texas, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior

Executive Calendar No. 123, Theodore J. Garrish, of Maryland, to be an Assistant Secretary of Energy (Nuclear Energy)

Executive Calendar No. 124, Andrea Travnicek, of North Dakota, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior

Executive Calendar No. 132, Justin Overbaugh, of Florida, to be a Deputy Under Secretary of Defense

Executive Calendar No. 133, Scott Pappano, of Pennsylvania, to be Principal Deputy Administrator, National Nuclear Security Administration

Executive Calendar No. 135, Michael Cadenazzi, of Rhode Island, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense

Executive Calendar No. 136, Sean O'Keefe, of Virginia, to be a Deputy Under Secretary of Defense

Executive Calendar No. 137, Michael Obadal, of Virginia, to be Under Secretary of the Army

Executive Calendar No. 139, Katherine Sutton, of Illinois, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense

Executive Calendar No. 141, William L. Doffermyre, of Texas, to be Solicitor of the Department of the Interior

Executive Calendar No. 142, Kyle Haustveit, of Oklahoma, to be an Assistant Secretary of Energy (Fossil Energy)

Executive Calendar No. 152, Matthew Napoli, of Virginia, to be Deputy Administrator for Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation, National Nuclear Security Administration

Executive Calendar No. 153, Richard Anderson, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Air Force

Executive Calendar No. 154, Conner Prochaska, of Texas, to be Director of the Advanced Research Projects Agency—Energy, Department of Energy

Executive Calendar No. 156, Tina Pierce, of Idaho, to be Chief Financial Officer, Department of Energy

Executive Calendar No. 157, Jonathan Brightbill, of Virginia, to be General Counsel of the Department of Energy

Executive Calendar No. 161, Robert Gleason, of Pennsylvania, to be Director of the Amtrak Board of Directors for a term of 5 years

Executive Calendar No. 177, Sean McMaster, of Virginia, to be Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration

Executive Calendar No. 180, Donald Bergin III, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs (Congressional and Legislative Affairs)

Executive Calendar No. 185, John Squires, of Florida, to be Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office

Executive Calendar No. 251, Daniel Aronowitz, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Labor

Executive Calendar No. 276, Michael Dodd, of Indiana, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense (New Position)

Executive Calendar No. 277, William Gillis, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Army

Executive Calendar No. 278, Jules Hurst III, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Army

Executive Calendar No. 279, Brent Ingraham, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Army

Executive Calendar No. 283, George Wesley Street, of Virginia, to be Director of the National Counterintelligence and Security Center

Executive Calendar No. 285, Peter Thomson, of Louisiana, to be Inspector General, Central Intelligence Agency

Executive Calendar No. 289, Jeffrey Bartos, of Pennsylvania, to be Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations for U.N. Management and Reform, with the Rank of Ambassador, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as an Alternate Representative of the United States of America to the Sessions of the General Assembly of the United Nations

Executive Calendar No. 290, Jennifer Locetta, of Florida, to be Alternate Representative of the United States of America for Special Political Affairs in the United Nations, with the rank of Ambassador, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as an Alternate Representative of the United States of America to the Sessions of the General Assembly of the United Nations

Executive Calendar No. 297, Dudley Hoskins, of the District of Columbia, to be Under Secretary of Agriculture for Marketing and Regulatory Programs

Executive Calendar No. 298, Scott Hutchins, of Indiana, to be Under Secretary of Agriculture for Research, Education, and Economics

Executive Calendar No. 303, Benjamin DeMarzo, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development

Executive Calendar No. 305, Jovan Jovanovic, of Pennsylvania, to be President of the Export-Import Bank of the United States for a term expiring January 20, 2029

Executive Calendar No. 324, Richard Fordyce, of Missouri, to be Under Secretary of Agriculture for Farm Production and Conservation

Executive Calendar No. 344, Paul Roberti, of Rhode Island, to be Administrator of the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, Department of Transportation

Executive Calendar No. 346, Jonathan Morrison, of California, to be Administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Executive Calendar No. 352, Jason Evans, of Texas, to be an Under Secretary of State (Management)

Executive Calendar No. 356, Edward Aloysius O'Connell, of the District of Columbia, to be an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia for the term of 15 years

Executive Calendar No. 362, Katherine Scarlett, of Ohio, to be a Member of the Council on Environmental Quality

Executive Calendar No. 365, Bryan Switzer, of Virginia, to be a Deputy United States Trade Representative (Asia, Textiles, Investment, Services, and Intellectual Property), with the rank of Ambassador

Executive Calendar No. 149, Callista Gingrich, of Florida, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Swiss Confederation, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Principality of Liechtenstein

Executive Calendar No. 286, Kimberly Guilfoyle, of Florida, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Greece

Executive Calendar No. 302, Christine Toretti, of Pennsylvania, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of Sweden

Executive Calendar No. 350, Peter Lamelas, of Florida, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Argentine Republic

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HUSTED). The Senator from Texas.

RECESS

Mr. CRUZ. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess until 5:45 p.m.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 5:03 p.m., recessed until 5:45 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. HUSTED).

AUTHORIZING THE EN BLOC CONSIDERATION IN EXECUTIVE SESSION OF CERTAIN NOMINATIONS ON THE EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, on behalf of leadership, I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

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

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

AUTHORIZING THE USE OF FUNDS FROM THE SENATORS' OFFICIAL PERSONNEL AND OFFICE EXPENSE ACCOUNT FOR SECURITY ENHANCEMENTS AND SERVICES PROVIDED TO SENATORS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I will shortly ask for unanimous consent to

authorize Senators to use their office accounts for security purposes. Every Senator will now have additional flexibility to address the security concerns they face as public officials. Along with the additional investment in security in the continuing resolution that Republicans have put forward, there is ongoing bipartisan work to address Member security in the legislative branch appropriations bill, which I hope House and Senate will complete work on in the very near future.

We are also actively working with the Sergeant at Arms to identify additional authorities for security options for Senators. I am grateful to the Senate Sergeant at Arms and the Capitol Police for their work on this and for the collaborative efforts of many Senators from both parties.

Mr. President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 413, which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 413) authorizing the use of funds from the Senators' Official Personnel and Office Expense Account for security enhancements and services provided to Senators.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, I thank the majority leader for his comments and commitments regarding improving Member security. I know that he, Leader SCHUMER, Chairman McCONNELL, and I all share the same goal. I think all 100 Senators share that goal.

We continue to see an unprecedented rise in threats targeting Members of Congress, with the Capitol Police on track to investigate over 14,000 threat cases in 2025. That represents a 50-percent increase over the nearly 9,500 threats Capitol Police reported in 2024.

We are witnessing disturbing incidents of politically motivated violence across the Nation, targeting elected officials and high-profile individuals associated with both political parties.

Whether it is the horrific assassination of Charlie Kirk at a college campus in Utah or the tragic assassination of former speaker of the Minnesota House of Representatives Melissa Hortman and her husband in their home, it is tragic; it is unacceptable. And we would be foolish not to take notice.

The House acted on a bipartisan basis to provide new funding for enhanced Member security this past July. Even before the June shooting of Minnesota State officials, the Senate Sergeant at Arms proposed a program for enhanced security options for Senators. Bipartisan Senate Appropriations leaders have expressed support to fund that effort.

Unfortunately, progress has been slow despite strong interest from Senators of both parties. So today's resolution is a step in the right direction.