

get for 7 months. He had support staff who had been working there for years. But with this directive, they couldn't pay the bills. OK? I am not even quite sure what their status is right now, but with that directive imposed on the director of the program—this horrible decision—they were in no capacity to have any confidence whatsoever that he could meet payroll.

Why would you do that? You know, if you have a plan where you are saying, "Hey, we are spending too much money. We have got to figure out how to tighten our belts," then you take some time to have a plan, and there is some consultation with the Agency and the people who are affected. That is a responsible way to proceed but not to have just a bolt out of the blue, when you open up your inbox and you are told you are shutting down. There are the ripple effects that that has on a community. Then, of course, people who work there have to make their plans because they can't wait indefinitely to get the decision as to whether they will or won't have a job, whether it be a community health center will stay open or it will close. There is a lot of destruction that goes into an action that the administration took with that.

You know, we had a couple of roundtables because people were really, really stressed and calling all of our offices. We are a small State like the Presiding Officer is, and, you know, one of the privileges that I think he and I both have is that of being a Senator in a small State, we really get to know an awful lot of the people we represent. I know I have talked to the Presiding Officer about this: The great joy we get is in that interaction with the folks we represent, and that is whether we agree with them or not, whether they voted for us or not. It also makes it a little more painful because it is very real; it is not abstract.

So I will just tell a few stories about some of the Vermonters who got affected.

Sarah Robinson is with the Vermont Network Against Sexual and Domestic Violence. She said:

Federal funding in Vermont supports emergency shelter and hotline services for victims of domestic and sexual violence.

If they get a call in the middle of the night that a woman is getting battered, they respond. They have a network of volunteers who goes out. They will bring that woman to safety, and they will have a safe house for her. That is a pretty amazing service—and, suddenly, that is cut off.

Andy Barter is from the Little Rivers Health Care Center. That is the one I was talking about earlier up in Wells River.

He said:

This has been a week like none other that threatened the continuation of our health center in operations and has dearly affected the feeling of safety for our staff and patients.

You know, you get these local institutions, and they are so important to

everyday people. You count on being able to bring your daughter or your son to the doctor, and it is somebody you know.

I mean, again, I have such respect for the Presiding Officer and admiration in his career as a physician and in the healing he does. I know, you know, the joy he gets in that service; but, suddenly, we have got doctors who end up having that same ethic that you have in Vermont, and, suddenly, the people who depended on them can't go there.

Vermont State Representative Kate Logan, who works at Elevate, said, "Our agencies are currently serving 78 [young people]—youth," and if they don't get the resources, they are not going to be able to continue their services. This is about housing and homelessness. Of course, that problem in Vermont, like in all of our States, has increased very, very significantly.

Sonali Samarasinghe, U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, said:

We have 79 families in temporary housing. This is very challenging for us. We don't have the funds, and it's a public safety issue because there's homelessness, and we don't have the funds to go on paying their rents.

So this is not new funds they are seeking. These are the funds that have been authorized and have been committed and—boom—out of nowhere, they are told they are out of business.

Karen Price, the Vermont Family Network. She said:

The Executive order and the memo have thrown all of our funding that we have relied on into disarray . . . We suspended all of our planned activities. We talked about furloughing our employees . . . Cashflow for a nonprofit like the [Family Network] is tight. We cannot sustain a prolonged nonreceipt of funding. Every day since Tuesday has been filled with anxiety and uncertainty.

Steve Schmida from Resonance: They do a lot of work with USAID.

He told me: "Seventy percent of our work is with the [USAID] and the State Department. Before the Secretary of State's and Secretary Marco Rubio's foreign assistance stop work order . . . 62 of those have now been laid off.

This is in the inbox: You are not working anymore.

It is no different than if we went home tonight—each one of us—had a nice meal with our families, went to bed, looking forward to resting and getting up and facing today, getting up and—boom—in the inbox, we are told: Don't show up for work.

The two features that I have seen so far in this administration, it really is a continuation of the January 6 ethic, is a willingness to disregard the law—the shattering of norms—and a casual inflection of cruelty for no reason on everyday Americans who just want to keep doing the job that they have and do the work that needs to be done.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. McCORMICK). The Senator from Michi-

MAIDEN SPEECH

Ms. SLOTKIN. Mr. President, thank you for being here.

Thank you to the floor staff, to the clerk, the entire Capitol team here who has been here overnight.

This is actually the first time that I have ever spoken on the floor. I am a freshman Senator, newly elected from the State of Michigan. I did not anticipate doing my maiden speech so quickly and in reaction to what is going on right now in the country. They tell us that the maiden speech is supposed to be something you think about and you build up to it. In the first 3 or 4 months, you give your first speech. And I find myself here early in the morning, participating in an attempt to stand up on behalf of something very, very simple, which is the U.S. Constitution.

Before I was a Senator, I was a dedicated career public servant. I was a CIA officer. I am what is called a 9/11 baby. I happened to be in New York City on my second day of graduate school when 9/11 happened. It completely changed my life.

I got recruited by the CIA right out of grad school, and within a year, I was on my first of three tours in Iraq alongside the military.

I worked at the CIA, I worked at the Pentagon, and I worked very proudly for both Democratic and Republican administrations.

I was detailed to the Bush White House, the George W. Bush White House. I was there the Friday that he left office and the Monday that Barack Obama walked in. I did the same job proudly for two very different Presidents from two very different parties. In those two administrations, I briefed the President and other senior officials on the most serious national security issues.

I eventually went on to be nominated to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense. I was at the Pentagon for 7 years, and that is where I was until 2017.

In 2018, I decided to run for Congress. This was never a body I was looking to be a part of. When you grow up in the national security world, briefing Congress, doing hearings, you are not often looking to be a part of this body, but to me, it was important to get in the fight for the country that I love.

In 2018, I won my first race for Congress and then just most recently won my first race for the Senate.

I am very keenly aware that I won as a Democrat on the same ballot as Donald Trump. So that means the very independently minded voters of Michigan voted for Donald Trump and ELISSA SLOTKIN on the same ballot. That gives me a very specific mandate. That means wherever I can, I am going to be looking for places that I can work together on things like veterans issues or broadband internet or agriculture, but I think every day, my challenge is going to be to figure out what are the things I have to compromise on and

what are the things I should never compromise on.

In my short 30 days here, what has become clearer and clearer to me is that the issues that I should never compromise on go right to the heart of who we are as a people; that is, our Constitution, our democracy, and our rights.

I think there are going to be plenty of areas where I can overlap with Trump policies. The auto industry, agriculture, dealing with China, I think there is going to be overlap. But what has disturbed me the most in my first month here, 30 days on the job, is the willingness of people in the city and in this body to roll over as the Constitution, our most sacred document, is pushed aside.

NOMINATION OF RUSSELL VOUGHT

We are here all night because of the nomination of a guy that probably most people in Michigan, I know, have never heard of—Russell Vought. He is to potentially run an Agency that most people have probably never heard of—the Office of Management and Budget. But what they don't know about this wonky side of Washington, they felt last week. They felt it.

For the first time, the Trump administration reversed something that they did in their first 2 weeks. Why did they do that? They reversed themselves on a full Federal freeze of all funding. The Trump administration froze every single dollar that was going out across the country, not for a future budget but money that had already been appropriated by this body, by people who sit in this room, by people who have been here for 30 years.

Again, that might not have really caught much notice in a place like Michigan except for the fact that that money had already been planned for and in use by thousands upon thousands of organizations and people. So we had an unprecedented number of calls in my office. I think we had 5,000 calls come into my office when that funding freeze went into place.

We heard from people in law enforcement. I had deputy sheriffs in my office saying: Hey, we get a chunk of money to pursue sexual assault cases. We hire deputies with that money. Do I need to fire those deputies or let them go?

We heard from cancer researchers and scientists, who said: I am trying to research better treatment for cancer, and it has just been cut off.

One of the most painful calls that I got was from a doctor at the National Institutes of Health, a pediatric oncologist who does critical trials for very sick children, who said: I don't know if I can continue my trial or not.

We heard from Head Start. We heard from our superintendents. We heard from people Democrat and Republican. This was not a partisan thing. These were people who had built a budget and who were serving the people of Michigan and who now couldn't receive their money.

We organized a very quick Zoom. We had a thousand RSVPs.

I think while it created chaos in the system and instability in the system and questions about what these Agencies and organizations could do, it spoke to a bigger issue, and that was the constitutional issue of who gets to decide how to appropriate money and who doesn't.

Luckily, we have a very easy guide for this. You just have to read the Constitution of the United States and the division of powers. It made this body a coequal branch of government and said that money that is appropriated by this body must be spent in that way.

The reason I bring this up, first, the Trump administration reversed themselves in less than 48 hours because they don't like being unpopular. They don't like when people in places like Michigan are unhappy with them—Democrat, Independent, Republican—so they reversed themselves very quickly.

But Mr. Vought, Russell Vought, who is up as the nominee for the Agency that spends the money, that puts it out into the world, has said very clearly that he does not believe that this branch of government is, as the Founders intended, able to appropriate money for a specific reason; that the President of the United States can actually decide how to spend it.

I had the opportunity to personally question Mr. Vought. I am on the Homeland Security Committee. He came in front of our committee. I don't care that he has been in Washington for 25-plus years, that he has been burrowing himself in in think tanks and has very specific kind of Washington, DC, ideas about things. I don't care about that. What I cared about and the one fundamental question is, Will you uphold the Constitution?

You are going to swear an oath. Every single person who gets sworn in swears an oath to the Constitution to protect and defend it. I have taken it many times. Many in this room have taken it. You do not swear an oath to protect and defend any one person, any one President, any one king; you protect the Constitution. And he could not articulate that if he was asked to do something that contravened the Constitution, he would push back.

Again, this is a small soda-straw issue on a much bigger trend that is happening in the first couple of weeks that President Trump has been in office.

I personally do not question that President Trump won the election. I do not question that he and his administration have the right to nominate their own people, and they have the right to create a new budget, forward-looking budget, that they propose here. I don't question that they are going to perform policies and put out policies that I am going to fundamentally disagree with. That is not in question.

To me, the only thing that matters is that any administration uphold the Constitution because if not, what are we? What are we doing here? I cer-

tainly don't know what my colleagues across the aisle are doing in this body if they are not interested in being a coequal branch of government.

I understand you can have those conversations in private. I understand people are concerned about sticking their necks out. We have a culture of fear that is dominating Washington right now. But to me, it is important to stand up for the very core things that make us Americans.

Now, we all know that we are going through something as a country right now. That is not hidden from anyone, no matter what your political affiliation. We are going through turmoil. We are pendulum-swinging between parties. Just look at going from Bush to Obama to Trump to Biden to Trump again.

We make policies every 4 years, and then the next President comes in and undoes them. That is not normally our tradition in this country. Our tradition in this country is that administrations have different policies, but they don't radically swing from one to another.

If you come from a State like Michigan, where my neighbors on both sides are devoted Trump voters, where we are purple, and we have political views that differ even within families—Thanksgiving dinner has become uncomfortable in the State of Michigan—we understand that there is something going on that is just different in the United States of America.

So how do we understand what is going on? For me, I am aware that next year, we will celebrate our 250th anniversary as a country. While that seems like a long time on some scales, in the scale of human history, that is not a long time. We are a pretty young country. I personally believe we are going through our teenage years. We all know what it is like to have a teenager who can't make up their mind, who is angry and then happy and then sad and then excited and who is turning against their own family and their friends but then wants a hug from those same family and friends. We all know what it is like to deal with a teenager.

What do you do with a teenager who is putting themselves at risk, who is putting themselves at risk with their behavior? You just try to get them through alive. You just try to get them through those teenage years out the other side, where they are sort of settled, have a bit more maturity, and can say: I am going to think clearly about what is important in my life.

That is what I see as our job as senior elected leaders in the United States. There are 100 of us. We have the responsibility to see our country that we love through this period in our history, through our teenage years. And how do we come out alive? What does it mean for our country to survive? We have to support the Constitution. We have to invest and believe in our democracy and not wipe it aside because we happen to like one politician over the other.