

When we gather in this building at a weekly Prayer Breakfast—that is bipartisan and that only includes Senators and our Chaplain—we pray for the blessings of the American people and our opportunity to do good and make a difference in the world.

For us to abandon so abruptly and completely our opportunity to make our Nation and our people safer and stronger, to push back on the malign forces of extremism of China, of Russia, of others who will take opportunity of this moment, and to abandon our work that for so long has made such a difference to millions is a shameful chapter in this institution's history and our Nation's history.

We should not walk away from all the good we have done, from all the knowledge we have built, from all the ways we have advanced and defended the American people's interests through this work, and we should not put down these tools.

#### NOMINATION OF RUSSELL VOUGHT

So, Mr. President, I have come to the floor today to join my colleagues in speaking against Russell Vought to be the next Director of OMB. And as I have laid out, in calls and letters and emails from Delawareans, I have heard about the terrible impact on veterans, on career civil servants, on nonprofits and organizations across my State and our country—the uncertainty, the instability, the chaos of these first 2 weeks of the Trump administration.

And I am speaking against Russell Vought because I know his plan. It is called Project 2025. He wrote it out in detail, and it makes clear that the chaos is the point; that he intends to take a chain saw to the American civil service and Federal Government. And the losers will be our communities and our families, police and fire departments, daycares, senior centers, nursing homes, universities' and colleges' research institutions, our strength and our security.

Sure, folks, when they hear “cut the Federal workforce” or “cut Federal spending,” they cheer. They say, “yes, cut the spending,” until you get to the specifics of what is going to be cut.

My phones have been ringing off the hook with alarm and concern as Delawareans realize that this nationwide Federal spending freeze that President Trump signed in an Executive order was going to impact things that affect them: the VA, the local volunteer fire company, a senior center, a daycare.

The Federal Government funds, through grants, an unbelievable array of powerful, meaningful, purposeful work in our home States, in the county where I served for a decade, in the town where I grew up, in the city where my family and I live today. We would not be as strong, as safe, as united, as productive, and as prosperous a nation without the good work of these organizations that are so callously now being cut not with a scalpel, not trimmed, not reformed, but slashed, cut to the bone, virtually destroyed.

As I have laid out, our entire foreign aid system, the network of USAID and other organizations—the Millennium Challenge Corporation, the Development Finance Corporation—that have been built up in a bipartisan way over years to be our tools in the world, to push back on our adversaries, to build up our alliances, to strengthen the families and communities around the world that look to us for partnership—abandoning that, shutting that down, attacking that, that was the first step.

Next, they are coming for the Department of Education; after that, the Department of Labor. And folks, whether in these first 2 or 3 weeks or a little bit farther, they are coming for something that impacts you, your family, your community, your country.

The messages I read from home from a veteran who served 21 years, a civil servant in the Department of Defense who served 5, who is alarmed, who is embarrassed, who is offended by the communications he is getting, trying to push him out of Federal service; the messages I have gotten from leaders of our universities, of our hospitals, of our daycares, of our community nonprofits, have elevated my sense of concern to alarm that Russell Vought, the nominee to be the next Director of OMB has a plan; that that plan will face no meaningful opposition from the other party; that he will be confirmed and that he will do lasting damage.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HAGERTY). The Senator will suspend.

#### PRAYER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule IV, paragraph 2, the hour of 12 noon having arrived, the Senate having been in continuous session since yesterday, the Senate will suspend for a prayer from the Senate Chaplain.

Thank you, Senator COONS.

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Sovereign Lord, permit us to feel Your nearness and to know the inspiration of Your presence. May our closeness to You help us to choose light over darkness, love over hate, and good over evil.

Today, continue to provide for the needs of the Members of this body. Move among them, instructing, lifting, and guiding them, so that whatever they do in word or deed, they will glorify You. Give them the confident security and peace that comes from developing a friendship with You as they open their hearts to the inflow of Your spirit.

Lord, show them what needs to be changed and give them the courage and wisdom to do Your will.

We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware is recognized.

#### NOMINATION OF RUSSELL VOUGHT

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I have joined my colleagues on the floor today. We have held the floor all night speaking out against the nomination of Russell Vought to lead the OMB, the most powerful Federal Agency you have never heard of, because it has the power to suspend payments, to direct funding, to cut things off, or to make funding flow. Russell Vought has a plan, it is called Project 2025, and it laid out how if President Trump were reelected—although he disavowed it on the campaign trail, he is implementing it now as President—he would issue Executive order after Executive order to slash Federal funding and shut down Federal programs.

I have spoken about how this is impacting Federal aid all over the world, foreign assistance, and how that is making us less safe and less secure; how those who cheer are the Chinese and Russians, the human traffickers and the drug cartels; and I have read from e-mails, calls, letters that I have gotten in my offices in Delaware and here in Washington, the alarm, the embarrassment, the concern of folks being pushed out of the Federal workforce and whose partners and programs are being shut down.

We will be less safe. We will be less strong. We will be less the America that we all promise we will work hard to be if Russell Vought is confirmed to lead the OMB.

I wouldn't trust this man to run a Wawa or a sports league or to run a 5K, and we are voting to empower him to run the most important and powerful Federal Agency you have never heard of but that will impact your life.

I will vote no, and so should all my colleagues.

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

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

The majority whip.

#### TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I have just come from a meeting with the Prime Minister of Israel, Binyamin Netanyahu. Our meeting comes on the heels of incredibly good news for everyone, and that is that hostages are coming home.

Earlier this week, Keith Siegel, an American hostage, was released. He is a 65-year-old American citizen, currently lives in Israel. He is a father; he is a grandfather. On October 7 of 2023, he was abducted by Hamas, taken to their underground tunnels, and his wife was also taken hostage. He was held prisoner by the terrorists for 484 days, and the conditions, we know, were hellish. He is finally free, reunited with his family, and recovering in a hospital.

We look forward to more of these moments. These are the results of bold action by President Donald Trump. As

Prime Minister Netanyahu said this week, President Trump is the “greatest friend Israel has ever had in the White House.”

We celebrate this good news. We are also keeping an eye on alarming news; the news is the rise of anti-Semitism around the world. A prime example is the International Criminal Court. It is a kangaroo court.

Last year, it issued arrest warrants for Israeli officials. One of those officials is Prime Minister Netanyahu. The charges, of course, are bogus. The Senate had an opportunity last week to fight back. Senator TOM COTTON of Arkansas, chairman of the Intelligence Committee, introduced a bipartisan bill to impose severe sanctions on the ICC.

The House of Representatives passed the same bill last month. The vote was bipartisan. Passing this bill in the Senate would have sent a very strong message that America stands with Israel, that we wouldn't let our ally stand alone.

Democrats in this body of the U.S. Senate filibustered in spite of the fact that 45 Democrat Senators voted to abandon our closest ally. Two now Democrat Senators voted for this same bill last year when they were Members of the House, yet when the opportunity last week to support Israel in the Senate came, they voted no.

Democrats' filibuster is the reason why the ICC is not facing the crippling sanctions that it deserves. This very topic came up in our discussion with the Prime Minister of Israel.

We did point out the fact that ICC is a kangaroo court, refuses to point out the difference between right and wrong, and the vote of the Democrats to block this bill in the U.S. Senate was an affront to the people of Israel, and the Prime Minister specifically asked the Democrats to get this passed, to support this legislation, which is united support by the Republicans, had bipartisan support in the House, but was held up on this body by a unanimous vote of the Democrats or near unanimous vote of the Democrats to stop this legislation in its tracks and to allow the so-called International Criminal Court to continue with their lack of justice in a court they claim to have, where I see having no jurisdiction.

So where do we go from here in terms of what we have seen today and in our discussion with the Prime Minister? What is the path forward for peace and prosperity in the Middle East? That is what we just spoke about.

First, peace and prosperity in the Middle East begins with American support for Israel. President Trump and Republicans in the Congress stand with Israel and have from the beginning.

Our support is unwavering; it is unbreakable; and it is unequivocal. It is not what we have seen from the other side of the aisle. Additionally, the biggest barrier to peace and prosperity in the Middle East continues to be Iran.

As the largest State sponsor of terror in the world, Iran controls a vast, violent network of proxies. These Iranian terror proxies include Hamas, Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen.

Iran funds its terror proxies. Where does the money come from? Well, by selling oil to communist China. Last year the Iranian regime's oil sales to China averaged over 1½ million barrels of oil each and every day.

How did that happen? Well, the Biden administration allowed it. They looked the other way. Tanker loads of oil to China, pay at a discount, tanker loads of cash back to Iran.

To break Iran's choke hold on the Middle East, America must bring back maximum pressure. President Trump is going to do that. He is tough on Iran. During his first administration, he imposed crippling sanctions and enforcement measures that brought Iran to its knees. President Trump is now back into the White House and so is his successful maximum-pressure campaign.

This week, he restored sanctions on Iran. This comes after he relabeled the Houthis as a foreign terrorist organization. It is a strong start, and we can still do more.

In the Senate, stopping Iran terror is a priority for the Republican majority. Now, deterring Iran means restoring peace through strength. Republicans are supporting our military. We are ready to make key investments to make our military more lethal and the most powerful force on earth.

With Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth now in place, we are already seeing morale return and recruiting numbers rise.

We are also working to bring back American energy dominance. Energy is America's most critical national security asset. We, as a nation, are an energy superpower. We have enormous natural resources. We ought to behave that way. And under this administration and this majority, America will unleash American energy.

A stronger America makes our allies stronger and also makes the world safer. Strength deters enemies.

We will work with Israel every step of the way. Together, America and Israel will bring a new era of peace and prosperity to the Middle East.

#### NOMINATION OF RUSSELL VOUGHT

Mr. President, on a separate matter, Democrats last night filibustered another one of President Trump's well-qualified nominees. I sat in the presiding officer's chair during the wee hours of the night listening to concerns by the Democrats.

The Democrats continue to want to slow things down. Republicans are not going to allow it to happen. We will push through their blockade. We will man the chair, continue with the Senate in session, and tonight we will confirm the 13th member of President Trump's Cabinet.

We are confirming the Cabinet twice as fast as Democrats confirmed Presi-

dent Biden's Cabinet in 2021. This week, we will have confirmed five Cabinet members in just 4 days. Tonight's confirmation is for Russ Vought. He is going to be the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

President Trump deserves to have his nominees in place and do it quickly. Our pace has matched the urgency of the moment. We will push forward and move deliberately to confirm more nominees, that includes Robert Kennedy, Jr., to be the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. It also includes Tulsi Gabbard to be the Director of National Intelligence.

When necessary, we are voting late into the night, early in the morning, on weekends, and that is exactly what Republicans said we would do. We are serious about spending the time and pushing through the work to make sure the President has his Cabinet and his team in place.

We are moving with the speed and commitment that we said because we know the President has a strong and active and bold agenda, and we are part of it, and he needs his team in place in order to accomplish it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire is recognized.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I come to the floor to join a number of my colleagues in expressing my opposition to Russell Vought to head up the Office of Management and Budget.

#### INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

Mr. President, but I want to start, before I do that, in responding to my colleague from Wyoming. We have worked closely together over the years. We have both been on the Foreign Relations Committee.

To his comments on the ICC, because I was also in the meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu. I also share concerns about the way the ICC has operated. I think we should be able to come to an agreement, to a compromise, on how this bill gets written. And, in fact, that is what the Prime Minister and his entourage suggested—that this Senate should work together to get this done.

But, unfortunately, what we saw was an unwillingness on the part of my Republican colleagues to come to a compromise, to actually provide the protections that we are hearing from American businesses that they need in order to continue to not be sanctioned for work that they have already done for the ICC; that we are hearing from our colleagues from the European nations who have people working at the ICC that they need so that they are not sanctioned.

And, unfortunately, the Senator from Arkansas, with who we worked to try and get this done, was not willing to look at the compromise. Five words divided us on the ICC. And because he didn't think we were serious, he said “No, I am not going to compromise