

with you. I am going to have this my way or the highway."

Well, that is not the way we get things done in the U.S. Senate. That is not the way we should get things done in our government. And I think we are ready to come back to the table at any time, but we need to see a willingness to work together to get this bill done. And I stand ready to do that; I know Leader SCHUMER stands ready to do that; but we need to see our colleagues on the other side of the aisle also stand ready to do that.

So I will yield my time to Senator SCHUMER, and then I will come back to speak on Russell Vought.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I thank my friend from New Hampshire who cares so much about this issue and has done a great job. And I will just be brief on that because I want to talk about Russell Vought.

As is clear, we Democrats—I, certainly—I hate the ICC. I have hated it for 40 years. We have to come to—we have to get something done, but there has got to be a fair compromise. And the compromise has nothing to do with weakening any efforts that the ICC will be punished for what they do to Israel, which I think is anti-Semitic.

But there are other things in that bill that would sanction other people—other countries, other leaders, other businesses, American businesses—that have nothing to do with Israel.

JEANNE SHAHEEN, our Senator from New Hampshire, made a valiant effort to compromise, and we could have had it done, because there was problems with the rest of the bill. It was poorly drafted and went way beyond what it was supposed to do.

We are ready to compromise. We are ready to sit down and get this bill done.

The Israeli Ambassador said, at our meeting, he wanted a bipartisan compromise, and I told him we are ready to sit down and do just that.

NOMINATION OF RUSSELL VOUGHT

Mr. President, now, on Mr. Vought. This morning, it is not business as usual on the Senate floor. Russell Vought is not a business-as-usual nominee. He is one of the most fringe and hard-right individuals the Senate has seen in a very long time.

For the last 20 hours, virtually every single Democrat has come to the floor of the Senate to tell the American people how bad Russell Vought will be for them, to sound the alarm on Russell Vought. We were here yesterday. We were here all last night. We are here today. And we will be here throughout the day to let the American people know exactly what is about to happen if Russell Vought is confirmed.

He is the chief architect of Project 2025. He is going to make Project 2025 the official policy of the Federal Gov-

ernment. And in OMB, he has the power to implement it to hurt every American—whether it is Medicare or Medicaid, Social Security, whether it is owning a home, helping afford a home, whether it is help for schools, for Head Start, for veterans, you name it. If you look at Project 2025, they want to slash so many of those things to bits.

And here you have the wrong man, Russell Vought; in the wrong place, OMB; with the wrong philosophy, Project 2025. It is, unfortunately, three times bad: wrong man, wrong place, wrong philosophy. And deeply, deeply so. Deeply wrong.

His policies will hurt children. His policies will hurt seniors. His policies will hurt veterans.

And I say to our Republican colleagues: You will regret your vote on Vought because he will do such harm to the American people, and you will hear about it day in and day out. But don't say we didn't warn you. Don't say we didn't let you know. We have been on the floor for now close to 24 hours. We will be on the floor close to 30 hours, the maximum we are allowed, to tell America from one end to the other that this man is dangerous, not just abstractly, not just in terms of Democrat-Republican, but in terms of how average people lead their lives and how we can make their lives better.

Just imagine what will happen if Russell Vought and DOGE team up, as they seem to be doing, to eradicate funding they allege is wasteful. Imagine what the awful combination of Vought and DOGE together would make for kids who struggle to get a good meal at school, for veterans who need help with healthcare, for parents who struggle to pay for groceries, for couples looking to buy a home.

Confirming the most radical nominee who has the most extreme agenda to the most important Agency in Washington is a triple-header of disaster—a triple-header of disaster. Again: wrong person, wrong ideas, wrong place to be to put those horrible ideas into effect.

So we are going to keep going and going and going for these 30 hours because we know how bad this nominee is.

DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY

Mr. President, yesterday, in another effort, we wrote a letter with my Democratic colleagues to Secretary Bessent, Treasury Secretary, demanding he meet with us face-to-face about the risky things DOGE is doing at Treasury. I thanked Vice Chair MURRAY, Vice Chair WARNER, Ranking Member WYDEN and WARREN and PETERS for joining me on this important matter.

Bessent has made time in his schedule to talk with Republicans in the House about DOGE. He has a responsibility to meet with Senators from across the aisle, especially because we have such deep concerns about what is happening at Treasury under his watch. His written responses have been wholly inadequate.

He came before the committee before the Treasury payment system was invaded. And he should not be evasive. He should come before us and answer questions.

In this letter, we speak not just for the caucus but for millions of Americans who say this is an urgent matter. Secretary Bessent should meet with us so the American people have confidence that our government will continue to function effectively and that their privacy remains protected.

Again, I thank my colleague from New Hampshire for ceding me a little bit of her time and look forward to her remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

NOMINATION OF RUSSELL VOUGHT

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, now I would like to go back to my concerns about the nomination of Russ Vought to be the head of the Office of Management and Budget because that is an office that determines the services that millions of families and small businesses rely on. And yet he supported unilaterally taking away those services and help for more than 2,600 Federal programs that were ordered to cease activities with less than 24 hours' notice.

And in every State in the country, we heard confusion and panic and chaos. Since then, I have heard from thousands of Granite Staters who are worried about what those cuts mean for them and their families. I have heard from healthcare providers from our community health centers, from our nonprofits, from our police departments, from so many people who provide services to the State of New Hampshire.

And it has now been more than a week, and despite not one but two Federal judges ordering the Trump administration to stop holding up funds, we are still hearing reports of frozen payment systems and missed reimbursements. I know my Republican colleagues are hearing those concerns, too. But despite this outpouring, we are still here today contemplating confirming Russell Vought, the architect of this reckless, unprecedented, and misguided policy.

He was directly involved in drafting the memo that OMB sent out that started all of this last Monday. That memo was so extreme that it provoked concern and outrage from both sides of the aisle about the breadth of payments that were being halted.

Russ Vought then had to walk back parts of the memo that he worked on just the day before. And all of this happened, and he wasn't even a confirmed nominee. I am very worried about what he is going to do if he actually gets confirmed for this job. We know from what we saw that last week was just a short preview of what he plans to do.

The justification that we have heard since that memo is that the memo wasn't meant to cut off funding to all of the programs that saw their funding

halted. It wasn't meant to stop Medicaid in every State or to shut down HUD's system of rental assistance or homelessness funding. But I will tell you, if that is your defense, that just means that OMB sent a memo that was so poorly drafted that Agencies across the Federal Government thought it required them to cut off all these programs that people and towns depend on.

So either the OMB, under Russell Vought's direction, deliberately stopped funding for 2,600 programs for water and sewer projects, for housing, for meals for seniors, or they were so incompetent that without meaning to, they sent a memo to the whole Federal Government that had that effect.

Well, regardless of which answer it is, I think the person who is behind that, Russ Vought, the man leading that effort, should not be running the Office of Management and Budget that determines how funding goes out in the Federal Government. I think this is especially true because there is no question that Russ Vought and President Trump intend to take away some of the funding that Congress has provided on a bipartisan basis to help families in New Hampshire and around the country save money on things like their energy bills, to help address pollution, like PFAS.

I would just remind folks that we passed the bipartisan infrastructure law on a strong bipartisan vote. Nineteen Republican Senators voted with the Democrats to invest in our communities. We worked shoulder to shoulder, Republicans and Democrats, to prioritize things like energy efficiency, water infrastructure—funding that this administration says it is looking at cutting off even though communities are depending on it.

Well, I plan to continue to stand up and defend funding that Congress provides to make necessary investments in all of our communities. I hope my Republican colleagues will do the same.

Then this past weekend, we learned that Elon Musk, the world's richest man, who has never been elected, along with unelected, unconfirmed DOGE employees—the “DOGE boys,” we call them—now has access to the payment system at the Treasury Department. That is a system that processes more than \$5 trillion worth of payments every year. That is everything from tax refunds and Social Security checks to reimbursing towns for work they are doing on sewers or roads. They have access to Social Security numbers, to health information, and so much more.

This is a system that the vast majority of people working at Treasury can't access and they shouldn't be able to because this is private information.

You may have heard that Treasury only gave “read only” access, but if that is the case, why is Elon Musk talking about using this access to stop payments to a charity that helps seniors with housing? What is he doing in

the Treasury records anyway? Why does he need that information?

This week, we are hearing confirmation that Musk's team didn't just have “read” access. In fact, they had administrator-level access, giving them the ability to make changes to this payment system.

One specific Treasury employee refuted Treasury leadership's denial that they gave a DOGE staffer write access. That is the ability to change the code and to change the checks that get sent out by Treasury. The employee said:

I am looking at his access request right now, and it has the Deputy Assistant Commissioner instructing the team to disregard all previous instructions and assign him—

The DOGE person—
read/write privileges for the database.

So he can change what is in that database. That doesn't sound like read-only access to me.

I think it is unacceptable for an unelected billionaire to be taking over the payment system that our government relies on—that millions of Americans rely on—and trying to stop those payments.

Fortunately, the original OMB memo is rescinded, but this fight is not over. Instead, this access to the Treasury's payment system could be the next front in stopping funds going out to the American people.

We can and we do intend to continue to push back on these illegal actions to stop funding that is required by law.

Despite knowing better, Russell Vought has never shied away from his belief that the executive branch can disregard the law and override spending decisions that are made by Congress. He clearly believes that this administration should be above the law and should be able to take away funding that helps millions of Americans.

Russ Vought is the architect of Project 2025. That proposed a budget that would cut Medicaid—just Medicaid—by \$2.1 trillion over 10 years. It would slash SNAP, the food program, by \$400 billion. We have people in New Hampshire who count on the SNAP program in order to be able to feed their kids. His proposal would cut funding that helps low-income Americans go to college by more than \$250 billion. It would eliminate the Affordable Care Act tax credits that help millions of Americans afford healthcare.

These are not cuts that lower costs. These are not cuts that create jobs. These are not cuts that enhance public safety and make it easier for people to afford their rent and their groceries. It is beyond ridiculous that anyone could propose these cuts with a straight face while also supporting trillions of dollars in tax breaks for the wealthiest individuals and corporations in this country.

I am not one to claim that the Federal Government can't be run more efficiently. I think we can always do everything better, and it is important to all Americans to make sure that our government runs effectively and effi-

ciently. But indiscriminately freezing hiring across the board and pushing out thousands of civil servants makes that problem worse, not better.

Last week, more than 2 million Federal employees received emails offering to pay their salaries for the rest of the fiscal year in exchange for resigning now. I mean, that in and of itself is questionable because this Congress hasn't appropriated dollars to pay those employees. And why would somebody who wants to improve the effectiveness and efficiency in government pay people to go home and not work? That is what this email said.

At the time, this included hundreds of thousands of individuals working in critical national security roles. It included, for example, every single air traffic controller in the country just days before we tragically saw the worst aviation incident in nearly 30 years. They have since walked that offer back, stating that it should not apply to employees who are critical to national security.

But, like the claim of the funding freeze, they say that was always their intent, that they must have made a mistake. I am not sure which option is worse—that we are short more than 3,500 air traffic controllers and Russell Vought really wanted to pay the ones we do have not to work or that he blasted out an irresponsible, reckless, nontargeted effort that could have had devastating consequences for critical positions without taking the time to think it through.

What is more, they tried to convince us this offer will save money, making it clear that even if we lose thousands of key employees with no plans to replace them, we will be better off. Well, tell that to the people in New Hampshire who are trying to get answers on their Social Security or their income tax checks; tell that to the students who need help with their FAFSA form so they can apply and get help to go to college.

Vought has relentlessly attacked the millions of career civil servants who show up every day, no matter who is in power, to keep the lights on and the wheels turning. Some of these have served our country for 30, 40, even 50 years, through countless Presidents and Congresses. We are not talking about political appointees here; we are talking about people who write the checks at the Social Security Administration, about the caseworkers at the Department of Housing and Urban Development who make sure that people have roofs over their heads and food to eat.

We are talking about doctors and therapists at VA hospitals who work around the clock to provide lifesaving care and benefits to the veterans who have sacrificed so much for our country and program operators at the Small Business Association who help entrepreneurs get loans.

They are the forest rangers who show up in all weather conditions—like the

White Mountain Forest in New Hampshire—to ensure there are safe and enjoyable recreational opportunities for hundreds of millions of visitors to our national parks and forests.

Speaking of the weather, there are the meteorologists at the National Weather Service, the people we rely on to prepare for hazardous storms.

These employees contribute to the maintenance of nuclear submarines, which is an essential tenet of our national security, a crucial part of our capability to deter major conflicts. Any impact to our shipyard—we have the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard between New Hampshire and Maine that does maintenance on our nuclear submarines. Any impact to that workforce will strain our shipbuilding industrial base that is already saturated with demands to meet the requirements of our Navy. So why did they get an email giving those employees the option to resign?

This administration has said repeatedly that it wants to restore the “warrior ethos” at the Pentagon, but if Russell Vought gets his way, there isn’t going to be anybody left at the Pentagon.

Now, we are hearing that Elon Musk’s team is plugging into our air traffic control system. The National Air Traffic Controllers Association has repeatedly asked for what they need—more funding, targeted investments in workforce development, shorter hours, and upgraded technology. We need to get to work in this Senate, in this Congress, on legislation that addresses these issues. Handing the keys to the Nation’s air traffic control system over to an unelected, inexperienced billionaire who cuts first and asks questions later isn’t the solution.

Russell Vought will tell you over and over again that government doesn’t work, but he says this at the same time that he is doing everything in his power to break it, with zero regard for how that is going to hurt you and your family.

This week, we have seen and we heard more horrifying parts of Russell Vought’s agenda. He is teaming up with Elon Musk.

Last year, for the first time, thanks to PEPFAR, more than half of new HIV infections were outside of Sub-Saharan Africa—one of the most successful health programs ever in U.S. history, put in by George W. Bush. One of the only things that has stood between Americans and so many of the diseases that come from overseas is USAID.

I was listening to the Prayer Breakfast this morning. I heard President Trump talking about his admiration for Billy Graham, for Franklin Graham, for the good work that they do. Then a few minutes later, I heard the morning news, and I heard them talking about what is happening in Sudan, where we have a famine and millions of people desperate because of a conflict there and what is happening.

The news report said: If we don’t get our foreign assistance turned back on

to help the Sudanese, 8 million people are going to starve to death in the coming months.

I can’t imagine that Billy Graham or Franklin Graham would have supported or supports the idea of 8 million Sudanese dying because we have turned off the foreign assistance that we provided because Elon Musk doesn’t like the U.S. Agency for International Development. I think Billy Graham and Franklin Graham—Billy Graham when he was alive and his son Franklin—would say: These are also God’s children, and it is important for us to support people around the world who are dying.

You know, it is not just those kinds of situations like we have in Sudan. We have significant diseases that are breaking out in parts of the world, and we don’t have people on the ground. There is the outbreak of Ebola that is happening in Africa. Some of us remember in 2014 when Ebola came to the United States. We don’t have any aid workers anymore because, under Elon Musk’s order, they have shut down those programs. They are bringing those people home. So there is nobody there to make sure that that Ebola outbreak doesn’t go across borders and doesn’t wind up in the United States.

There is a Marburg outbreak—another hemorrhagic disease—that is happening in Africa. It has a 90-percent mortality rate. Right now, we have no real treatment and no vaccination for the Marburg virus. Yet, again, we have taken our teams of people who have helped in-country to treat the Marburg virus—we have taken them home. We have said: Go ahead. Cross whatever country lines you want. Come to the United States because we are not going to prevent that.

And do you know we have got a bird flu epidemic now? You may have heard there is a new strain that has just been discovered in a house in Nevada. We have had about 70 people who have been infected with bird flu. We have had somebody die from that. We used to monitor bird flu outbreaks around the world, but under this shutdown of USAID and its programs, we are not monitoring bird flu anymore. So that bird flu can come to the United States. We don’t know. Nobody seems to care in the Trump administration if that happens.

These things don’t just happen overseas. They affect us here in America. It is in our interest to ensure that these efforts that help with diseases and that help prevent Vladimir Putin and Russia from their nefarious activities in Europe and Moldova and Romania and Ukraine. That has also happened, the aid to help Ukraine in this war against Russia. That has all been cut off. That doesn’t make America safer. That doesn’t make us stronger. That doesn’t make us more prosperous.

I hope my colleagues will stand against Russell Vought, who has been the architect of so much of this carnage. Sadly, I don’t think my col-

leagues on the other side of the aisle will do that. I hope that we can reverse some of this harm that is being done to so many people around the world that is going to come home to roost in America if we don’t address it.

So I have taken all of my time. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, today, we will vote on the nomination of Russ Vought to be the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Mr. Vought served as the OMB Director for much of President Trump’s first term, and before that, he was Deputy Director of the same Agency. So he is clearly qualified for this job.

My discussions with Mr. Vought focused on the Nation’s dismal fiscal trajectory, overregulation, congressional oversight, and respect for whistleblowers.

With the Federal Government running a \$2 trillion annual deficit and a national debt approaching \$37 trillion, a fiscally sound budget is more important than ever, and I am counting on Mr. Vought to help the President chart a new fiscal path that will not be an easy job.

In addition to reining in spending, Mr. Vought understands the need to cut red tape. For too long, overzealous and unelected bureaucracies have sought to use regulation to stretch the meaning of laws beyond congressional intent. The Supreme Court’s recent decision, last year, in *Loper Bright* should be used by OMB to place a check on out-of-control rulemaking.

Mr. Vought and I also had a good discussion on the importance of responding to congressional letters and respecting whistleblowers. He not only agreed with me but expressed an interest in helping ensure timely responses to Congress and respect for whistleblowers as the norm across government Agencies. I look forward to working with Mr. Vought to right-size the Federal Government.

REMEMBERING RONALD REAGAN

Now, Mr. President, I would like to take about 3 minutes for a little history.

Today, we are celebrating the birthday of our Nation’s 40th President, Ronald Reagan.

He was born in a small, second-story apartment above a tavern in Tampico, IL, on February 6, 1911. After graduating from college and struggling to find a job in Illinois during the Depression, Reagan moved to Davenport, IA, where he landed a job at WOC Radio. He started off calling University of Iowa football games, quickly becoming the voice of Hawkeyes football. Soon after, he moved to Des Moines to work for WHO Radio as the chief sports announcer, where he called Chicago Cub games from the studio of that radio station. If you know the history of that sort of way of telling about baseball, you read off the teletype and tried to put in as much color as you could.