

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 redtape. 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.

In addition to baseball, Reagan called a variety of other sports, including basketball, boxing, and the prestigious Drake relays. And they still are a prestigious relay. It was also during this time that Reagan had the opportunity to call the 1933 World Series between the Cubs and the Washington Senators. During his time in Iowa, he improved his speaking skills, later gaining the title of the "Great Communicator."

For this Senator, 1980 marked a turning point in our Nation's history—a time when Americans demanded change. It was the year that Ronald Reagan was elected President, and I had the honor of being elected to the U.S. Senate. Reagan's 1980 campaign slogan, "Let's Make America Great Again," reflected a call to restore confidence in the United States during a time of economic struggles, particularly high inflation, foreign policy failures, and widespread dissatisfaction with government leadership.

Now, does that sound familiar?

Much like Reagan's vision, President Trump aims to restore America's strength and leadership. President Trump is taking action to secure our southern border. I look forward to working alongside President Trump and his administration to continue the fight for a stronger, a safer, and a more prosperous America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

NOMINATION OF RUSSELL VOUGHT

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, as we gather here on the Senate floor, over at the U.S. Department of the Treasury, Elon Musk—the richest person in the world, not elected by a single American—has gained access to the U.S. payment system—payments that go to about \$2 trillion worth a year.

He has gained access to the personal information of millions and millions of Americans—Social Security numbers, bank accounts, and all sorts of sensitive information that we do not want to be shared. It compromises people's privacy. That kind of scenario is playing out across the Federal Government. Elon Musk and his so-called DOGE boys are in many other Departments, and every day that we wake up, we hear about another one.

One Department that we know they are in is the Department of State and, specifically, USAID. What we are witnessing here is the result of the most corrupt bargain in American history because Elon Musk spent over \$280 million to elect Donald Trump, and Donald Trump has handed the keys of the U.S. Government over to Elon Musk. Damage is being done every day, and it is hurting the American people and the interests of the American people.

I want to focus for now on the situation at the Agency for International Development, which has been a critical piece of our overall national security and foreign policy strategy. AID has enjoyed bipartisan support in this body for its work for decades, and I want to

thank the great patriots—the men and women who work for AID—for the important work they are doing for our country as we speak.

But when President Trump turned the keys to the government over to Elon Musk, Elon Musk began dismantling the Agency for International Development.

Here is what he said in recent tweets about his plan to destroy USAID:

We spent the weekend feeding USAID into the wood chipper. Could have gone to some great parties. Did that instead.

He said—this is Elon Musk:

USAID is a criminal organization. Time for it to die.

I think my colleagues on both sides of the aisle would be surprised to know that they have been supporting a criminal organization all of these years by voting to support the Agency for International Development.

Let's make no mistake that his effort to dismantle AID is a gift to our adversaries. It is a gift to China. It is a gift to Russia and others who want to do us harm around the world. In fact, one of Putin's cronies immediately posted on X, "Smart move by Elon Musk," referring to dismantling AID.

So this is not "America First." This is "America in Retreat," and it has nothing to do with government efficiency and everything to do with aiding and abetting our adversaries. In fact—and I think the Presiding Officer knows this—when you talk to our military leaders, they will tell you that our investment in AID is an important component of our overall foreign policy and national security strategy.

We spend about 50 percent of our discretionary budget on defense—actually, a little more than half of our discretionary budget on defense. We spend about 2 percent on AID. In fact, if you look at our overall budget, it is 0.6 percent for AID.

Now, having a strong military is important. We all agree. But in addition to demonstrating the power of our military, we have always worked to also demonstrate the power of our example, trying to work with people around the world, to provide a little bit more opportunity, a little bit more stability, and, yes, help stop diseases from spreading around the world.

Poverty and violence and disease—they spread like fire. And if your neighbor's house is on fire, you don't build a wall; you go for water.

When you have an outbreak of disease in one part of the world, like we saw with Ebola in Africa, by helping stop the spread of disease—of course, we help people in other parts of the world, but we also save American lives when we prevent diseases from spreading elsewhere.

If the world doesn't trust America to help—and, believe me, at this moment, they are doubting us—they will turn to China and Russia, and those adversaries will be itching to fill the vacuum.

Elon Musk's crusade against USAID is not only a security risk; it is also a

purge of dedicated public servants who have committed their lives in service to the values our country holds dear.

Thousands of AID employees have now been furloughed, many fired, and direct hires are being put on administrative leave. There is absolutely chaos in the AID system. As Elon Musk said, he wants it to die, and that is what he is trying to accomplish.

Those men and women who serve our country as part of AID are being ordered to come home immediately. Thousands of our AID staff overseas were called back with just a few days' notice. Their kids are being pulled out of school in countries overseas. Many of them don't have homes to come back to at this moment. They could be homeless upon their return. They are being ripped out of their lives where they are doing that important work for our country.

USAID has more than 13,000 total employees worldwide. On Monday night, the email was sent out to all staff and then subsequently posted on USAID's website—you can go and look at it right now—telling all of them that they will be "placed on administrative leave globally"—"placed on administrative leave globally." This is absolutely cruel and an unnecessary infliction of punishment on Americans and others who have been our partners in this effort, in supporting humanitarian causes and advancing U.S. priorities around the world.

I am hearing from many of these USAID employees. What is really inspiring at the same time that it is heartbreaking is that they are not worried about themselves, but they are worried about the impact and cost and harm that will be done to the people they are trying to help in places around the world.

What is happening here is just plain illegal. Secretary Rubio said he wanted to give a waiver for all essential life-saving treatment. He said that on Wednesday, but the New York Times uncovered that no money has actually gone out. Money is still missing, and people are still in danger of imminent death. Even if the money got out the door, who is going to service it when everybody has been put on administrative leave, fired, or otherwise told not to show up to work?

I went down to the AID building on Monday when I heard what was happening, when I heard that Elon Musk told everybody not to come in to work. I literally went up to the doors and asked if we could come in to talk to employees who might still be there. We were denied access. The folks there were told and instructed not to allow Members of Congress to get into the building.

Presidents are not kings, and you don't get to pick and choose what part of the law you decide to apply. And Elon Musk doesn't get to shut down the USAID operation legally. He may be a dictator at Tesla, and he may be playing one here in Washington, DC,