

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,

but he doesn't get to shred the law of the land.

That is why I am expecting that in the coming days, just like we saw judges in Rhode Island and here in the District of Columbia issue temporary restraining orders on President Trump's efforts to freeze important Federal funds going to communities all over our country, that that same argument will be used with respect to this illegal action and takeover of USAID.

I want to close with this, because you would think that all of us, regardless of party, would want to stand up for the law; that we wouldn't want Elon Musk to be able to shred it unilaterally. We got this letter from Secretary Rubio a few days ago. Clearly, he is playing catchup here. Clearly, he is not in control of AID even though it says that he is now taking control of the operations at USAID.

Here is what the letter says:

This letter provides notice and advises you of our intent to initiate consultations with you regarding the manner in which foreign aid is distributed around the world through the United States Agency for International Development.

"Consultations." He really should talk to Elon Musk, who is tweeting out that he is putting AID in the wood chipper and that he is killing AID.

All of us are prepared to sit down for a conversation about how we can reform AID, if we want to better integrate it into our overall foreign policy operations. That is a matter for Congress to deliberate on in consultation with the State Department. But Secretary Rubio sent this down after the doors had been closed on AID. This is just a coverup for the fact that he wasn't controlling what was going on.

I think as Members of the Senate we have an obligation, if we care at all about our lawmaking duties and care at all about whether or not, when we appropriate funds for AID, they are actually spent as we indicated—we all have an interest in making sure that this process operates in a legal way. What Elon Musk is doing is flat-out illegal, and if our colleagues won't join together on a bipartisan basis to do it, the courts are stepping in. But the courts shouldn't have to do our job.

So I appeal to my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, if you care about the Constitution and if you care about article I, you should be rising up when Elon Musk is talking about putting AID through the wood chipper and saying it should die.

I will be back a little later on the floor to talk about Russ Vought's place and the role he plays in this operation, but for now, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Ms. LUMMIS. Mr. President, when I was growing up, I thought about foreign aid as helping people in foreign countries who needed food or shelter, who were struggling because their country was having a civil war and they had been cut off from having

clean water, enough food for their families, or someplace for shelter. I think that is what most Americans think foreign aid is; that we want to help people around the world because the United States is blessed. God has given us more than he has given most nations, and we need to respond in ways that are helpful to our fellow man.

But today, I hear my colleagues blaming a guy named Elon Musk for doing away with foreign aid. If anybody is to blame, it is us; it is the Congress of the United States for taking our eyes off the mission of our country to provide aid to those around the world who need it.

Millions of taxpayer dollars are being wasted on leftwing pet projects that don't benefit us here at home, that actively work against our interests and do not help those in need around the world.

I believe that American taxpayer dollars should be spent making lives better for Americans and better for those around the world who have far less than we have.

I have been talking about our national debt since I was first elected to Congress in 2009. At that time, our national debt was just turning over from \$9 trillion to \$10 trillion. I was apoplectic. How can we let our national debt get over \$9 trillion?

Today, our national debt is \$36 trillion. That is absolutely inconceivable. It is inconceivable to the American people. It is certainly inconceivable to the people in my State. They want answers. They want to know, where is all this money going? That is why they elected Donald Trump.

They didn't like seeing people come into our country illegally. They didn't like seeing inflation make their lives harder, make their family pay \$1,000 to \$1,500 more per month with no change in their lifestyle. Inflation is eating away at the lives of American people. They are working harder than ever, and our dollar is going less far.

So now we are talking about Elon Musk being to blame. I am proud that President Trump chose to include Elon Musk in his administration because President Trump is already getting results—the kind of results that the Congress has turned a blind eye toward.

We all know that Washington is addicted to spending, and it isn't getting any better. For too long, my colleagues have had meltdowns anytime somebody suggests we should cut spending. But I had always thought that we all agreed we need to take a look at some of the Federal programs into which we are pouring taxpayer money.

Well, thanks to President Trump, we finally have the opportunity to get started assessing what we are spending money on, and what we are finding in some instances is, it is not very pretty.

This week, we learned just how much USAID has been weaponized by the far left. They are pouring millions of taxpayer dollars into liberal programs and causes, and I will bet some of these,

even my colleagues on the left have no idea about.

This is wildly out of keeping with stated American interests for how we will spend taxpayer dollars abroad.

Here are some of the ways the last administration has wasted your money: more than \$4.5 million to "combat disinformation" in Kazakhstan—and just whose disinformation is it; I think that is probably in the eye of the beholder—\$20 million for a new Sesame Street show in Iraq; \$25 million for Deloitte to promote "green transportation" in the country of Georgia; nearly \$8 million to teach Sri Lankan journalists how to avoid "binary-gendered language"—binary-gendered language in Sri Lanka; you have got to be kidding me—\$5 million to EcoHealth Alliance, one of the key NGOs, nongovernment organizations, funding bat virus research at the Wuhan lab; \$20 million for a group related, by the way, to a key player in the Russiagate impeachment hoax; \$1.5 million to "rebuild" the Cuban media ecosystem; \$1.5 million on DEI programs in Serbia—diversity, equity, and inclusion programs in Serbia.

Mr. President, I could probably go on for another hour.

President Trump isn't just talking about cleaning up the waste and abuse of your taxpayer dollars; his administration is doing something about it. These bureaucrats are accountable. They must be accountable. They have to be accountable to us, to Congress, to the American people, and President Trump is holding them accountable.

Because of DOGE, which is led by Elon Musk, the Trump administration is taking action where we wouldn't. Congress wouldn't uncover the waste, fraud, and abuse that are going on in our foreign aid programs.

Thanks to DOGE, the Trump administration has already terminated some 36 contracts, saving taxpayers more than \$165 million. The administration has canceled underutilized leases, saving taxpayers close to \$50 million. That is after 2 weeks in office. This is just the first step toward reclaiming control of our government and our budget.

I would think my colleagues from all over the country—both parties—would be pleased that we are uncovering waste, fraud, and abuse. That is why the American people elected Donald Trump. President Trump and Elon Musk are threatening to turn off the DC spigot that has flowed taxpayer money into far-left organizations and causes.

Now, I want to respond to some of the claims from my friends across the aisle calling this a constitutional crisis.

I am grateful that Democrats realize that we are the article I branch and we control the power of the purse. I am also happy to hear that most of us want to get rid of waste, fraud, and abuse. That is why I ask my colleagues to join us now. Regardless of party, regardless of State, join us now. We have

a funding bill coming up and reconciliation. Let's work together and do our job: rooting out government waste and making real cuts during our appropriations process.

I am serious about this because the fiscal crisis before us could not be more serious. No nation has lasted very long when their debt exceeded 100 percent of GDP, but that is where we are. That is where we are today. It is time to act. We must clean up this debt-and-spending crisis. Our fiscal future is on an unsustainable path and a scary path, and everybody says that, including the Chairman of the Federal Reserve. He says it is unsustainable.

With higher interest costs on our record debt, we are in trouble. In 2024, the interest on the national debt was over \$880 billion. That is more than we spend on defense or Medicaid. That number will only increase. Projections put interest payments on the national debt at more than \$13 trillion over the next decade. That is \$13 trillion that isn't going to further our interests to help with foreign aid. It is not going to help our children. It is a debt burden on this entire Nation.

Rooting out wasteful spending should not be controversial. Every taxpayer should want their tax dollars to be spent wisely and on things that make our country stronger, our goals more closely held to heart around the world. But that hasn't been the case.

What has been the response of some in the minority party regarding the disclosure of this wasteful spending? Instead of joining in a bipartisan effort to get our fiscal house in order, we are seeing protests. We are seeing Elon Musk demonized. It is starting to look like blaming Elon Musk is trying to change the subject, trying to blame Elon Musk for shining a light on Congress's wasteful spending. I am sorry to see it because it is beyond time to get serious about our national finances.

The people of Wyoming are grateful. I hear it when I go home. I see it in their eyes. People will come up to me in the feed store, in the grocery store, and say they are grateful to President Trump for creating DOGE; they are grateful to the patriots working hard at DOGE to identify waste, fraud, and abuse in these programs and to start the process of cutting reckless spending.

So speaking on behalf of the people of Wyoming, I want to say thank you. Thank you, President Trump. Thank you for bringing in a group of people to help us shine a light on how we can make America better in just the way that the American people yearned for, wanted, expect, and celebrate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Ms. ROSEN. Mr. President, earlier today, I stood before this Chamber to voice my concerns about Russell Vought, President Trump's nominee to lead the Office of Management and Budget.

Russell Vought is an extremist, and allowing him to hold this position, a position that oversees the entire Federal budget, would be nothing short of disaster.

As one of the authors of Project 2025, Mr. Vought has made his extreme policy agenda very clear, and one of the key pieces of the Project 2025 agenda is illegally dismantling USAID.

As we all know, the U.S. Agency for International Development, or USAID, has long been a cornerstone of America's foreign policy and national security. This Agency has long enjoyed bipartisan support and works tirelessly to promote peace, security, and development around the world, all for less than 1 percent of our budget. By preventing conflicts that could threaten the United States, responding to the spread of deadly pandemics, strengthening democracies, and improving economies so we have new trade partners, USAID plays a critical role in advancing America's interests abroad.

Through its programs, USAID has fostered strong partnerships with nations around the globe, and these partnerships have proven time and time again to be essential in maintaining our national security and, frankly, ensuring a safer, more prosperous world.

Unfortunately, President Trump's recent illegal attempt to eliminate USAID without the approval of Congress while simultaneously freezing almost all foreign assistance—well, to say it is deeply concerning is an understatement. These moves undermine key components of our Nation's foreign policy, and we can't afford to allow the reckless shuttering of USAID to take place. The consequences of such actions would be grave.

Our national security depends on our support of diplomacy, our support of defense, and our support of development around the world, and abandoning these priorities would have dangerous and long-term implications.

At this moment, when America needs to demonstrate strength on the global stage, we are opening the doors for our adversaries like Vladimir Putin, the Chinese Communist Party, and even violent extremists to step in and seize the opportunity to advance their own interests—well, at whose expense? At our expense. At your expense. And as Russia and China have shown time and time and again, they are ready and waiting to fill the vacuum left by strong American leadership.

So let me be clear. Donald Trump's attempt to eliminate USAID doesn't make us stronger, doesn't make us safer, doesn't put America first. In fact, it puts America last by forcing us to retreat from the world stage. It puts America last, and we simply can't allow this to happen.

That is why I am committed, alongside my colleagues, to stopping this reckless and illegal attempt to get rid of USAID. Our global leadership is not just a matter of pride; it is a matter of our own security. As we face the chal-

lenges of a changing world, it is more important than ever before that the United States remain at the forefront of international development and humanitarian assistance, and this isn't possible without USAID.

I can't say this strongly enough. We cannot afford to retreat into isolation. We cannot afford to let adversaries fill the void that we will leave behind. So we must fight to protect the work of USAID and make sure that U.S. influence remains strong, that the U.S. commitment to global peace and security endures, and that America's leadership continues to shine brightly on the world stage. Our Nation will be stronger and more secure by doing so.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Mr. KING. Mr. President, we all began our careers here with the following words:

I do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic.

When each of us arrived here in the Senate, we took this oath to support and defend the Constitution, as it says, against all enemies, foreign and domestic.

I think it is interesting that the Framers could see that there might be domestic enemies to the Constitution. Our oath was not to the Republican Party, not to the Democratic Party, not to Joe Biden, not to Donald Trump, but our oath was to defend the Constitution, and right now—right now, literally at this moment—that Constitution is under the most direct and consequential assault in our Nation's history—an assault not on a particular provision but on the essential structure of the document itself.

It is hard to grasp what is happening because of all the events that are swirling around us over the last several weeks. It is happening so fast, coming from so many different quarters and so many different actors, it is hard to get a picture of what is really happening fundamentally.

But this is an assault, and how we respond to it will define our life's work, our place in history, and the future of our country. None of us will ever face a greater challenge.

Before we get to the challenge, however, I think it is important to ask why we have a Constitution in the first place, and why ours has, so far, stood the test of time.

The answer to the first question, why have a Constitution in the first place, is contained in the preamble:

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union—

There is No. 1—
establish Justice—

No. 2—
insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

These are the basic purposes. If you want to know what the Constitution is for, there it is. There is the list. “Insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence.” Insure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.

But there is a paradox at the heart of the creation of any government, whether it is here or anywhere else on earth and anywhere else in history. There is a paradox built in, because the essence of creating government is to give it power, give it our power in order to look after us, in order to provide for the common defense, to insure domestic tranquility, to provide justice to our people. In other words, we are giving our power to this separate entity.

But we have to do so with the realization that the power that is being given has the potential to be abused. In other words, how do we give power to this entity, this government, and ensure that the government itself doesn't use that power to abuse us as citizens?

This is a question at the heart of all political discussions throughout history. The Romans even had a question that captured it.

The question was “Quis Custodiet, ipsos custodes?”

It means “Who will guard the guardians? Who will guard those who we have given power to guard us?” It is a fundamental question that has confronted every society and every government throughout history.

Madison put it this way—and, by the way, he used a gender-specific term; I suspect if he were writing it today, it would be more broadly phrased. But here is what Madison said:

If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed.

That is the function.

And in the next place oblige it to control itself.

Our Framers understood this; they were deep students of history and also human nature. And they had just won a lengthy and brutal war against the abuses inherent in concentrated governmental power—George III.

The universal principle of human nature they understood was this:

Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

That is a universal principle all over the world throughout history.

Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

So how did they answer the question? How did they answer the question: Who will guard the guardians?

They answered it by building into the basic structure of our government two essential safeguards. One was regular elections; in other words, returning the control of the government to the people on regular, scheduled elections. By

the way, this is what we learned in sixth grade, checks and balances.

But the other piece that is built into our system that is the other essential safeguard is the deliberate division of power between the branches and levels of government.

This is important. The clumsiness, the slowness, the clumsiness is built into our system. The Framers were so fearful of concentrated power that they designed a system that would be hard to operate, and the heart of it was the separation of power between various parts of the government.

The whole idea, the whole idea was that no part of the government, no one person, no one institution had or could ever have a monopoly on power. Why? Because it is dangerous. History and human nature tells us that.

This division of power, as annoying and inefficient as it can be, particularly to the Executive—I know because I used to be a Governor—is an essential feature of the system, not a bug. It is an essential, basic feature of the system designed to protect our freedoms.

Now, this contrasts with the normal structure of a private business, where authority is purposely concentrated, allowing swift and sometimes arbitrary action. But a private business does not have the Army, and the President of the United States is not the CEO of America. Power is shared, principally between the President and this body, this Congress, both Houses.

In fact, this herky-jerky structure of checks and balances, vetoes, two Houses, jurisdiction left to the States, the war power divided between the President and the Congress—this unwieldy structure is the whole idea. No one has or should ever have all the power.

So the concern I am raising today isn't some academic exercise or manifestation of political jealousy or abstract institutional loyalty, it is the guts of the system designed to protect us from the inevitable—and I mean inevitable—abuse of an authoritarian state. The inevitable abuse of an authoritarian state. It is the guts of our protection. In fact, this clumsy system is the mainspring of our freedom.

And, by the way, it has worked so far—so far—and distinguishes us from the historical norm. We have to understand, we are an anomaly in history. The historical norm is pharaohs, kings, dictators, emperors, presidents for life. But the fact that we are such an anomaly, and we have seen in our lifetimes other governments, other systems based upon ours slip into authoritarianism and dictatorship, tells us how fragile what we have is.

What we have in this country is an anomaly in history and it is fragile and it needs to be—must be—protected from generation to generation. This makes this moment all the more urgent and portentous.

Now, the nominee before us today is one of the ringleaders of this assault, one of the ringleaders of the assault on

our Constitution. He believes in a Presidency of virtually unlimited powers—he has written extensively about this—and explicitly rejects, for example, the exclusive power of Congress to authorize and appropriate funds for the operation of the government.

He espouses the discredited and illegal theory that the President has the power to selectively impound funds appropriated by Congress, thereby rendering the famous power of the purse a nullity.

This is what I am talking about. I am not talking about the specifics, and I will touch on AID and other issues, but what I am really worried about are the implications—the structural implications for our freedom and our government of what is happening here.

We have to keep our eye on the big picture, not all the confusion and smoke that is going on over the last couple of weeks.

Mr. Vought is one of the principle authors of the infamous Project 2025, which the President strangely hadn't heard of during the campaign but now seems to be the essential guideline for his Presidency. Project 2025 is nothing less than a blueprint for shredding the Constitution and the transition of our country to authoritarian rule. He is the last person who should be put in a job at the heart of the operation of our government.

Again, this isn't about politics; this isn't about policy; this isn't about Republican versus Democrat. This is about tampering with the structure of our government, which will, ultimately, undermine its ability to protect the freedom of our citizens. If our defense of the Constitution is gone, there is nothing left to us.

Sir Thomas More said: I expected you to betray me, Richard, but for Wales?

We should not betray the Constitution for a temporary expedient because we don't like this or that Agency.

Now, I want to speak to my Republican colleagues. It is your constitutional prerogative to confirm this nominee and any others. I do not question that right, only its wisdom. And this nominee is a place to say no to the undermining and destruction of our constitutional system.

But don't stand aside in the midst of these confirmations, ill-considered foreign policy pronouncements, flood of Executive orders—none of which, by the way, will do anything about the price of eggs, the cost of housing, or the availability of childcare. Don't get caught up in all of that and ignore the steady and not-so-slow usurpation of congressional authority and fundamental alteration of the Framers' scheme.

My colleague who preceded me, speaking from the Republican side of the aisle, bemoaned Congress's lack of oversight and praised Elon Musk for doing what Congress should have done. Maybe she is right and Congress should have done it, and we should do it, but not give away that power, which will

never come back. Once this door is open, it is going to be very difficult to close it again—no matter who the President is. No matter who is in charge.

To my colleagues, are there no redlines? Are there no limits?

Just in the past 10 days, we have seen the literal destruction of a statutorily—I emphasize that word—statutorily established and funded Federal Agency by people ostensibly working for the President under vague authority, no transparency, and, certainly, no guidance from the Congress.

Did they come to the Foreign Relations Committee and say: What do you think about AID? Are there parts of it we should work with? Are there parts that can be reformed? No, there was zero.

This small group—and we don't know who they are. But this small group—apparently, it is reported, is in their twenties—have no experience with government, no experience with foreign aid, no experience with the operation of the U.S. Government, but they are making, basically, policy decisions and constitutional decisions.

The Constitution does not give to the President or his designee the power to extinguish a statutorily established Agency.

I can think of no greater violation of the strictures of the Constitution or the usurpation of the power of this body. None. I can think of none. Shouldn't this be a redline?

And by the way, I find it especially galling to read the sneering comment from the richest man in the world:

We spent the weekend feeding USAID into the chipper.

Describing an action that will literally take food from the mouths of starving children. Forget redlines, do we have no decency? And then there is an Executive order freezing funding, again selectively, for programs the administration doesn't like or understand.

I mentioned I was a former Governor. I would have loved to have had this power, but it is a fundamental violation of the whole idea of the Constitution, the separation of powers. To say to the Executive, you can pick and choose which laws you like, which funding programs you like, the level of funding, you can impound if you don't want to spend it. Richard Nixon tried to do that. He was rebuffed by the Congress, who passed a specific statute: no impoundments.

In addition to the chaos, the uncertainty, and the demonstrable damage which my colleagues have been outlining all day brilliantly, there is nothing theoretical about cutting off funding to a rural health clinic, for example, or support for small farmers, or grants to your fire department.

But getting away from those specifics—and it is easy to get pulled into those, and my office is hearing calls every day; we can hardly handle the volume.

This—again, to underline—is a frontal assault of our power, your power, the power to decide where public funds should be spent.

Isn't this an obvious redline? Isn't this an obvious limit?

Or, finally, and I have just sort of picked a few examples, but my final example is the power seemingly assumed by DOGE to burrow into the Treasury's payment system, the Office of Personnel Management, and now CMS for undefined purposes, zero oversight, and it raises questions up to and including threats to national security.

Do these people have clearance? Are the doors closed? Are they going to leave open doors into these? What are the opportunities for our adversaries to hack into the systems? We are already under unprecedented cyber attacks, and we are opening doors.

Although it is impossible to determine what they are taking—remember, there is no transparency or oversight—access to Social Security numbers seems to be in the mix, all the government's personnel files, personal financial data, potentially everyone's tax returns and medical records. That can't be good. That can't be good. That is data that should be protected with the highest level of security and consideration of Americans' privacy.

And we don't know who these people are. We don't know what they are taking out with them. We don't know whether they are walking out with laptops or thumb drives. We don't know whether they are leaving back doors into the system. There is literally no oversight.

The government of the United States is not a private company. It is fundamentally at odds with how this system is supposed to work.

Shouldn't this be an easy redline?

In short, we are experiencing in realtime exactly what the Framers most feared. When you clear away the smoke, clear away the DOGE, the Executive orders, foreign policy pronouncements, more fundamentally, what is happening is the shredding of the constitutional structure itself. And we have a profound responsibility, and it seems to be based on that pesky oath that we all took, to stop it—to stop it.

If the Republican Members want to appoint Mr. Vought, OK, that is fine—it is not fine. It is terrible, but that is their right. But stop what is going on in terms of altering how our government is supposed to fundamentally function to protect our people.

The power of the majority is with you, my Republican colleagues. Together—together—we have the power to right the balance, to reclaim the authority we thought was inherent in our jobs and, in the process, save our country.

In a prior time of crisis, Abraham Lincoln came here, December 2, 1862, when he defined the stakes for all of us.

Fellow-citizens, we cannot escape history. We of this Congress and this administration—

This could have been written yesterday.

We of this Congress and this administration, will be remembered in spite of ourselves. No personal significance, or insignificance, can spare one or another of us.

We will be written down through history. We will be lit through history “in honor or dishonor to the latest generation.”

And I would suggest that the redline should be the Constitution of the United States.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, this week has been interesting, as I have seen from some of my friends on the other side of the aisle, a lot of wailing and gnashing of teeth and all the horrible things that are going to come before us. And it reminded me of a book that I used as a basis for management consulting training back in 1998. It was called “Who Moved My Cheese.” It is a story about two mice and two small people in a maze. The mice are named Sniff and Scurry, and the two little people are Hem and Haw. And it is only about a hundred-page book. But the premise of the book is the cheese was moved in the maze, and the challenge was to figure out where the food source was.

Well, Sniff and Scurry, the mice, actually did a pretty good job, fairly quickly, to kind of move where the cheese was and deal with the status quo. But Hem and Haw really had more challenges.

And I think we have some hemming and hawing going on here in Washington right now because they just don't understand business practices that we are trying to apply to government that have never been applied at scale before.

And I decided that I would give you an idea because a lot of people think that Elon Musk is off the chain and causing all kinds of havoc. I haven't seen that yet. As a matter of fact, if time allows, I am going to talk a little bit about the narrative this week over the payment system and all the detailed payment data that supposedly got out—which is patently untrue, contrary to what press reports have said.

But I thought I would start with the story of SpaceX. When Elon Musk decided to invest in and create SpaceX, he did something that has never been done before in this industry. He decided that instead of doing what the old players do—which is to be perfect, never launch a rocket until you are absolutely certain that that mission can be accomplished—he decided that you can learn from failure.

This is actually a social media post of one of his first launches where the booster failed to come back to Earth. His immediate response—whether it was either his instincts or really good communications people—his immediate response was a social media post