

an example, because I don't like the idea of using executive orders like our president [does].

He was referring, of course, to President Obama at the time.

It is a disaster what he's doing. I would build consensus, but consensus means you have to work hard. You have to cajole. You have to get them into the Oval Office and get them all together, and you have to make deals.

There are also countless examples of other Republicans' hypocrisy when it comes to executive overreach. I just want to name one.

In 2014, then-House majority leader STEVE SCALISE had this to say of President Obama:

President Obama has this fantasy that he can just use his pen to write laws. We don't have a monarchy in this country—there's an executive branch and the legislative branch, and the president has to work with Congress to get things done.

Now, on to the topic of USAID and the Trump-Musk decision to gut the Agency—a decision as dangerous as it is heartless, as it is careless.

First, I just want to correct. STEVE SCALISE was not the majority leader when he said this; he was a Member of Congress at the time.

First, I would like to read several excerpts of speeches given by Secretary Rubio in which he expressed clear support for international aid before he was confirmed.

There is no denying that a globally engaged America comes at a steep price. But the history of our still young nation is full of warnings that a lack of American engagement comes with an even higher price of its own.

Many of our nation's adversaries and rivals have been emboldened by our uncertain foreign policy. So as instability spreads and tyrants flourish, our allies want to know whether America can still be counted on to confront these common challenges. Whether we will continue to be a beacon to the rest of the world.

Our legacy is that of a nation that for two centuries has planted its feet and pushed out against the walls of tyranny, oppression, and injustice that constantly threaten to close in on the world, and has sought to replace these forces of liberty, free enterprise, and respect for human rights.

These principles are also advanced by other elements of American influence—those that don't require any military might. For example, consider the countless lives we've saved from the scourge of AIDS in Africa through the PEPFAR program. Or consider the economic mobility created by American trade and investment. These accomplishments prove that while military might may be our most eye-catching method of involvement abroad, it is far from being our most often utilized. In most cases, the decisive use of diplomacy, foreign assistance, and economic power are the most effective ways to achieve our interests and stop problems before they spiral into crises.

Marco Rubio said that.

Marco Rubio, where have you gone?

I would like to also share a news article about Secretary Rubio's prior comments in support of USAID—from CNN—and the title is "Rubio's years of strong support for USAID stands in contrast to his sudden criticism of the

aid agency." And I am going to read from the article:

Secretary of State Marco Rubio, newly in charge of the besieged US Agency for International Development, was for years a staunch supporter of its mission while in the US Senate, reversing his views only recently as President Donald Trump and his allies have moved to dismantle the agency.

But a CNN KFile review of Rubio's past comments shows he has been for more than a decade a major supporter of foreign aid and USAID, which in fiscal year 2023 distributed more than \$40 billion in foreign aid to more than 160 different countries.

Rubio's most recent comments directly contradict years of support and praise he has directed toward USAID, including a tweet he posted in February 2017 that said, "Foreign Aid is not charity. We must make sure it is well spent, but it is less than 1% of budget & critical to our national security."

During his Fox News interview Monday, Rubio also dismissed concerns that scaling back USAID's presence could allow China to expand its influence in developing nations.

But just three years ago, Rubio argued the exact opposite, urging the Biden administration in a 2022 letter to prioritize USAID's funding as a key tool to "counter the Chinese Communist Party's expanding global influence."

"We don't have to give foreign aid. We do so because it furthers our national interest. That's why we give foreign aid. Now obviously there's a component to foreign aid that's humanitarian in scope, and that's important too," he said in February 2013.

"Foreign aid as a part of our overall budget is less than 1% of the total amount the US Government spends," Rubio said in one 2017 speech on the Senate floor. "I promise you it is going to be a lot harder to recruit someone to anti-Americanism and anti-American terrorism if the United States of America is the reason one is even alive today."

"Anybody who tells you that we can slash foreign aid and that will bring us to balance is lying to you. Foreign aid is less than one percent of our budget. It's just not true," he added in August 2019, while speaking to the Forum Club of the Palm Beaches.

"Foreign aid is a very cost-effective way, not only to export our values and our example, but to advance our security and our economic interests," he said in April 2012 to the Brookings Institute.

As a senator, Rubio also introduced legislation in 2013 and 2015 to make foreign assistance programs more transparent. A version of the bill was later passed in 2016.

"A lot of times people say, 'Well, cut foreign aid.' Foreign aid is less than 1% of our budget. But foreign aid can make a difference when properly used. And if you ever have a chance, travel to the African continent and you will meet people who are alive today because the American taxpayer funded antiviral HIV medications that kept them alive. It will not be easy to radicalize people who are alive because the American taxpayer saved their lives and the lives of their children," Rubio said while on the presidential campaign trail in late 2015.

Where is Secretary Rubio's enthusiasm for USAID now? Time and time again, we see Republicans reversing their stance. Even members of the Trump administration, just a week or so ago, said that they supported programs like USAID, like Marco Rubio, who now have reversed their position.

Mr. President, at this time I will end my remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

PFML TAX CREDIT EXTENSION AND ENHANCEMENT ACT

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, in America, our news cycle is often fraught with controversy and dispute. From watching the news or scrolling through social media, it might seem like there are very, very few issues that Americans can agree on. It may be true that we disagree on some big issues—important issues—but behind the headlines and the social media posts, there are many things that Americans agree on, and one of those is paid family and medical leave.

The Pew Research Center found that the vast majority of Americans support paid parental leave—up to 82 percent. That is really a broad consensus. And 85 percent of Americans say people should receive paid leave to deal with their own serious health conditions, and 67 percent say they should receive leave to care for a family member with a serious health condition.

We rarely see Americans nowadays so united on other issues, but it is for good reason that Republicans and Democrats come together on paid family leave. The reality is that Americans shouldn't have to choose between their paychecks and caring for their families. That is why I spearheaded our Nation's first-ever Federal family leave policy in 2017 with Senator ANGUS KING.

As part of the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, we passed a paid family and medical leave tax credit that encourages businesses to offer leave to their employees. Employers are able to receive the tax credit if they voluntarily offer up to 12 weeks of paid leave. Our credit increases access to paid leave without penalizing small businesses with limited resources, like a government entitlement program or a mandate from the government would.

Almost 8 years later, this tax credit is about to expire, and Congress is set to work on another tax package. So now is the perfect time to pass my bill with Senator KING to make our tax credit permanent and also to improve it.

Yesterday, we introduced the PFML Tax Credit Extension and Enhancement Act. Representative FEENSTRA is leading the introduction of companion legislation in the House. Our bipartisan, bicameral bill supports additional options for financing paid leave, such as paid family leave insurance. It also allows employers to begin offering paid leave to workers sooner after being hired.

The legislation includes a strategy for educating employers and employees about the option to receive this credit, and it requires the Small Business Administration and the IRS to provide targeted outreach and assistance to those who need it. That will raise awareness of the credit, and it will expand the number of Americans who have paid leave.

Passing this bill in our upcoming tax package will deliver on the promises

Republicans made to the American people this past November. We promised to make families' lives better, more prosperous, more affordable. More access to family leave will contribute to that goal.

Our tax credit is tried and true, one with a bipartisan track record of success. It is the paid family leave solution that will do the most good with the smallest pricetag.

So I urge my colleagues to join me in pushing for this legislation's inclusion in this year's tax package. This is how we expand paid family and medical leave for employees across this entire country. This is how we deliver for the American people. I am determined to get this done, and I hope my colleagues will join me.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

NOMINATION OF RUSSELL VOUGHT

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, you know, we are just 17 days into the Trump-Vance and, yes, Elon Musk administration, and we are already witnessing the great betrayal of what candidate Trump promised on the campaign trail.

For the last 17 days, the Trump-Musk administration has been engaged in a reckless abuse of power that is already harming people in communities throughout our country, and one of the principle architects of this chaos is the man who is nominated to be the head of the Office of Management and Budget, Russell Vought.

But before I get into that nomination, let's just start with day one, day one of the Trump administration; because on day one, President Trump pardoned individuals convicted in a court of law of beating up police officers here on Capitol Hill on January 6.

They bludgeoned them, they beat them, assaulted them. As the National Fraternal Order of Police said, that pardon sent a terrible message to law enforcement all over the country. It sent the message that political violence is OK as long as it is done in the name of Donald Trump.

And since then, we have seen the Trump administration carry out retribution against FBI agents and Department of Justice officials who were part of the investigations and prosecutions of the people who beat up police officers on January 6. So if you are part of the effort to hold people accountable for assaulting police officers, they went after you. It sends a terrible message.

And then, of course, President Trump unleashed Elon Musk on the American people. I have said it before and I will say it again: We are witnessing in real time the most corrupt bargain in American history.

(Mr. BUDD assumed the Chair.)

Elon Musk spent over \$280 million to elect Donald Trump, and Donald Trump has handed the keys to the U.S. Government over to Elon Musk. They seized access to the Treasury's pay-

ment system. This is a \$6 trillion payment system. Elon Musk's DOGE boys have gotten access to Social Security numbers of the American people, bank account numbers, and other very sensitive personal information.

Judges are trying to rein him in, but who knows what information they have already accessed and what kind of damage has already been done, not to mention what could still be done in the days ahead.

And Elon Musk has gotten into the Department of Education, the State Department, AID, Health and Human Services, NOAA, and the National Institutes of Health, just to name a few. No matter what name he gives it, Elon Musk's takeover of these Federal Agencies has nothing to do with government efficiency. If it was about government efficiency, Trump would not have illegally fired the inspectors general whose job it is to provide oversight at these Agencies and blow the whistle on corruption.

In fact, when you fire the inspectors general who are the watchdogs at these Agencies, whose job it is to look out for waste or fraud or abuse, when you fire them as one of your first acts, what you are doing is clearing the way for the kind of illegal actions we are seeing from Elon Musk and his team.

So what they are really doing here is seizing control of the government, taking over a lot of these Agencies, in the long run, to empower further the very powerful and the very wealthiest in this country. And we will be seeing more of that in the months ahead when we begin to see the Trump tax plan, the trickle-down tax plan that is being worked on, as we speak.

Because we know that although Candidate Trump campaigned on the idea that he was going to be on the lookout for working people, that he was going to shine a light on the forgotten Americans, everything he has done since then is a betrayal of that promise.

Just down the hall here, during the inauguration, the folks who were sitting behind President Trump as he gave his remarks were certainly not the forgotten Americans. They included Elon Musk, the richest person in the world, and all the billionaire tech titans.

So when President Trump in that inaugural address promised a new golden age for America, he was looking at the cameras, but he was talking to those tech titans sitting right behind him. And to provide that golden age for the billionaires and powerful in America, they are following a manual and an instruction book called Project 2025.

Now, people might remember that during the last Presidential campaign, Candidate Trump was asked repeatedly about Project 2025. People said: Is this your plan that is being put forward?

And his response was:

I have nothing to do with it.

You know why he said that on the campaign trail? Because he knew it was unpopular. If you look at the con-

tents of Project 2025, the American people would recoil at what is in there, and Candidate Trump knew that. And so when he was asked, he said: I see nothing; I have nothing to do with that.

So, surprise, surprise, surprise, when one of the key architects—key authors—of Project 2025 Russell Vought is nominated to be the head of the Office of Management and Budget at the White House.

So before I speak to why it will be so dangerous to put Russell Vought in that critical position, I want to say a few words about what OMB is all about because it is not a well-known Agency. People hear about the Department of Justice; they hear about other important Federal Agencies, Department of Health and Human Services. But what is OMB?

OMB is the office over at the White House. It is in the executive office of the President. And it is the command and control center for the budget of the U.S. Government. It oversees the budgets of every Federal Agency of the Federal Government. They feed their information, they feed their budget requests up to the Office of Management and Budget. And it is the Office of Management and Budget that makes the final decisions and sign-off on all of those Federal Agency budgets, across the government.

So as I say, Russell Vought will be in the cockpit of this decision-making, overseeing every Federal Agency in our government. So let's learn a little bit more about Russell Vought because we will be voting on that nomination later today.

So what does he think about the Federal employees in all of those Agencies that OMB will oversee with respect to their budgets? Here is what he said about government employees, and I am quoting him. He wants them to "be traumatically affected. When they wake up in the morning, we want them to not want to go to work because they are increasingly viewed as the villains. We want to put them in trauma."

Again, referring to hard-working Federal employees who do good work on behalf of the American people every day.

"We want to put them in trauma," he said.

And if anybody doubts this quote, you just have to go online because it is on videotape. It is on videotape for the whole world to see.

In fact, he didn't try and deny those words, and at the confirmation hearing we had at the Budget Committee that I serve on, we asked if he wanted to apologize for those statements, and his answer was no. He refused to apologize.

That is what the person who is nominated to be the head of OMB thinks about the Federal employees throughout the Federal Government that are going to be under that OMB budget process.

Now, at that budget hearing, the Senate Budget Committee hearing, there