

They would say: We see what you have been saying and doing in protests about so much of what has been happening. But you, Senator MERKLEY, need to do more.

And, quite frankly, to my colleagues, that is the reason I am on the floor tonight, trying to think of one more way I can ring the alarm bells, one more way I can use this office and this opportunity afforded to be a Member of the U.S. Senate to say: We cannot let this happen.

I received another question at those townhalls—at one townhall after another: And what can we do to do more?

And I said the following: You have asked what everyone can do to do more to save our Republic. First, get off the couch. You can't change the future with a pillow over your head.

Second, fiercely hold your electeds accountable. Call their phones. Write letters. Protest outside their offices. Fiercely hold them accountable. And me too—hold me accountable—as they were in the townhall and as they have when they have been protesting.

And join an affinity group, because to be angry and alone is to be depressed. But to be angry and organized with others, that is to be energized and effective. When it comes to stopping an authoritarian takeover, we need our citizens to be organized, energized, and effective.

We need that energy from our citizens as they communicate with us and challenge us. We need that energy in the streets. We need that energy in the halls of power. We need to defend the Constitution. We need to restore our democracy. We need to reinvigorate government of, by, and for the people of the United States of America.

That is why I have come to the floor tonight to ring the alarm bells.

Here in the Senate, we have attempted to use a number of tools, using every hour required under the Senate rules to review the qualifications of unqualified individuals nominated for Trump's Cabinet, like Pete Hegseth for Defense and Kristi Noem and Tulsi Gabbard and Kash Patel.

And so often, my colleagues have said: Oh my goodness, I can't even believe the President nominated this individual, but you know, the President nominated them. He is our leader. So I will vote. I will vote for this person. I will put them in office.

To hear my colleagues say they know someone is unqualified but they are going to vote for them anyway is to hear the failure to understand our responsibility under the Constitution. Reviewing and voting down individuals who are unqualified by character or talent or experience for a position, that is our responsibility. It is to not let them take positions of power where they can do bad things to the American people, where they can undermine the efforts to build a better country.

It is our responsibility to exercise our judgment, not to defer to the President. A "check and balance" means

nothing if you say I am abandoning my role to evaluate the qualifications, and I will simply vote because the person in the office is of my same party.

I voted—I remember one in particular—against one of President Biden's nominees. I was one of only a few folks on my side of the aisle to vote against him. Why? I didn't feel the person was suited to the office, and that is my responsibility under the Constitution.

One of the people that I felt was vastly unsuited was Russell Vought. As the lead Democrat on the Budget Committee, I therefore had the opportunity to interview Russell Vought before he came to the hearing before the Budget Committee. And he basically told me that his belief was in strong-man government—unitary Executive: The President should decide what programs are funded and how much they should get—and that he fully expected to use the powers that the President could use to achieve that, involving impoundments, slow-walking, frozen funds, and so forth.

And I said: But the Supreme Court has weighed in twice, and our Constitution is clear: The power of the purse is here.

And he said, you know, I like the unitary Executive. That is my philosophy, and that is what I am going to fight for.

I found, therefore, him to be profoundly unsuitable for office because he did not intend to honor the basic premise of the Constitution—that Congress decides by law what is funded and how much.

So we had a 30-hour debate. We went through the night here in this Chamber, debating the merits of this individual, and many of my colleagues had reservations. But in the end, they voted for him. So we have a man controlling the Office of Management and Budget who said: I think the power of the purse should be with the President, and I am going to do everything possible to make that happen.

By voting for that nominee, we facilitated a crime against the Constitution in which the power of the purse is being taken by the President. We facilitated the authoritarian takeover that is underway right now.

My constituents have asked me in those townhalls to do everything I can, everything in my power, to stop this authoritarian takeover of our Nation. So tonight, I have come to the floor to do one thing I have not done before, and that is give a more extended speech to ring the alarm bells—the speech I am engaging in right now.

We are in the most perilous moment for our Constitution, the biggest threat to our Republic since the Civil War. Authoritarianism is not down the street or around the corner. It is clear and present right now.

There are a couple of books that I have brought with me to explain what is happening. One of them is "How Democracies Die." And this book is writ-

ten by two scholars, Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt. They have studied republics around the world that have slid into authoritarian states, and they wrote this book to say: Pay attention, America. We are in danger of the same thing happening.

And I thought, well, I will just come and read this book for the benefit of my colleagues who haven't read it and the benefit of the American people who might be listening in, as one way to ring the alarm bells about the authoritarian takeover of the United States of America and how we are going down the same path that has happened in country after country after country, where you get a rubberstamp Congress; you get a Supreme Court that hands more power to the Executive; you get an ambitious, power-hungry, strong-man-style President; and with the combination of those three, you have lost your Republic.

"How Democracies Die"—that is what I am going to share with you tonight.

And, also, another book: "On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century," by Timothy Snyder.

"How Democracies Die"—ours is dying right now with this authoritarian takeover. Tyranny is what you get when you lose your democracy.

So if by going on at some length about this I can add a little bit of attention, ring the bells a little louder and a little longer—the alarm bells—about this authoritarian crushing of our liberties, authoritarian crushing of our freedom, then that is what I am doing tonight.

At the midnight hour, should I make it that long—still 4 hours from now—I am going to pause to read some stanzas from Longfellow's poem "Paul Revere's Ride."

(Ms. LUMMIS assumed the Chair.)

NOMINATIONS

Executive nominations received by the Senate:

THE JUDICIARY

WILLIAM J. CRAIN, OF LOUISIANA, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF LOUISIANA, VICE ELDON E. FALLON, RETIRED.
ALEXANDER C. VAN HOOK, OF LOUISIANA, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF LOUISIANA, VICE ELIZABETH ERNY FOOTE, RETIRED.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

BRIAN BARBER, OF LOUISIANA, TO BE UNITED STATES MARSHAL FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF LOUISIANA FOR THE TERM OF FOUR YEARS, VICE HENRY LEE WHITEHORN, SR., TERM EXPIRED.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

BRIAN BIRDWELL, OF TEXAS, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, VICE CHRISTOPHER JOSEPH LOWMAN.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

JOHN BRESLOW, OF ARIZONA, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS.
WESLEY BROOKS, OF FLORIDA, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR OCEANS AND INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL AND SCIENTIFIC AFFAIRS, VICE MONICA P. MEDINA, RESIGNED.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

EDWARD EPLER, OF CONNECTICUT, TO BE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, VICE VICTORIA MARIE BAECHER WASSMER, RESIGNED.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

GREGORY GILMORE, OF ILLINOIS, TO BE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY FOR THE CENTRAL DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS FOR THE TERM OF FOUR YEARS, VICE GREGORY K. HARRIS.

BRIAN GOOTKIN, OF MONTANA, TO BE UNITED STATES MARSHAL FOR THE DISTRICT OF MONTANA FOR THE TERM OF FOUR YEARS, VICE CRAIG J. ANDERSON.

THOMAS GOVAN, JR., OF ALABAMA, TO BE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF ALABAMA FOR THE TERM OF FOUR YEARS, VICE LOUIS V. FRANKLIN, SR., TERM EXPIRED.

KEVIN HOLMES, OF ARKANSAS, TO BE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF ARKANSAS FOR THE TERM OF FOUR YEARS, VICE DUANE A. KEES, TERM EXPIRED.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

GREGORY LOGERFO, OF MASSACHUSETTS, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, TO BE COORDINATOR FOR COUNTERTERRORISM, WITH THE RANK AND STATUS OF AMBASSADOR AT LARGE, VICE ELIZABETH H. RICHARD.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

RYAN RAYBOULD, OF TEXAS, TO BE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS FOR THE TERM OF FOUR YEARS, VICE LEIGHA SIMONTON.

JAMES STUART, OF MINNESOTA, TO BE UNITED STATES MARSHAL FOR THE DISTRICT OF MINNESOTA FOR THE TERM OF FOUR YEARS, VICE EDDIE M. FRIZELL.

PHILLIP WILLIAMS, JR., OF ALABAMA, TO BE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF

ALABAMA FOR THE TERM OF FOUR YEARS, VICE JOHN E. TOWN, TERM EXPIRED.

IN THE ARMY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY TO THE GRADE INDICATED WHILE ASSIGNED TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 601:

To be lieutenant general

MAJ. GEN. LAWRENCE G. FERGUSON

IN THE AIR FORCE

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE TO THE GRADE INDICATED WHILE ASSIGNED TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 601:

To be lieutenant general

LT. GEN. MICHAEL J. LUTTON

IN THE NAVY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY TO THE GRADE INDICATED WHILE ASSIGNED TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 601:

To be vice admiral

REAR ADM. STEPHEN R. TEDFORD

CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate October 21, 2025:

THE JUDICIARY

ANNE-LEIGH GAYLORD MOE, OF FLORIDA, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF FLORIDA.

HAROLD D. MOOTY III, OF ALABAMA, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ALABAMA.

WITHDRAWALS

Executive Message transmitted by the President to the Senate on October 21, 2025 withdrawing from further Senate consideration the following nominations:

KEVIN O'FARRELL, OF FLORIDA, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR CAREER, TECHNICAL, AND ADULT EDUCATION, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, VICE SCOTT STUMP, WHICH WAS SENT TO THE SENATE ON FEBRUARY 11, 2025.

JEFFREY BORNSTEIN, OF FLORIDA, TO BE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE (COMPTROLLER), VICE MICHAEL J. MCCORD, RESIGNED, WHICH WAS SENT TO THE SENATE ON MAY 6, 2025.

NOTICE

Incomplete record of Senate proceedings. Today's Senate proceedings will be continued in the next issue of the Record.