

We had a good discussion about Israel's security and about the imperative of the return of the rest of the hostages, who have been held in Hamas captivity for well over a year. I enjoyed a candid, personal discussion with the Prime Minister and was pleased that both Republican and Democrat colleagues were later able to join for a bipartisan conversation.

After a number of my Democrat colleagues boycotted Prime Minister Netanyahu's address to Congress last year, it is good that Democrat leaders chose to attend this meeting. It would have been even better if Democrats had chosen to support the Illegitimate Court Counteraction Act, and we had been able to tell Prime Minister Netanyahu that the Senate had passed this legislation in response to the International Criminal Court's illegitimate targeting of Israeli leaders.

But, unfortunately, 2 weeks ago now, all of my Democrat colleagues—all of them save one—voted to block this legislation. The Democrat leader actually celebrated the fact that Democrats had blocked this legislation, even though allowing the ICC's rogue action to go unchecked could put not only Israelis but Americans in the ICC's crosshairs. That is right. Responding to the ICC's illegitimate targeting of Israeli leaders is not just about protecting our ally Israel; it is also about protecting our own citizens, our own servicemembers in particular.

Just a few years ago, the ICC opened an investigation into American servicemembers, despite the fact that, like Israel, the United States is not a party to the ICC and, thus, is not under its jurisdiction. It was good to hear this morning that President Trump will impose sanctions in response to the ICC's targeting of Israeli leaders and to protect American servicemembers.

I am grateful that we have a President who will stand up for our citizens and for our ally Israel, as he has made clear already, including with his decision to prohibit funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency. This agency not only has a history of anti-Israel sentiment but has a number of workers with ties to terrorist groups and actually, if you can believe this, had workers participate in the October 7, 2023, attack.

I was also pleased by President Trump's decision to withdraw the United States from the so-called Human Rights Council at the United Nations, which unfairly targets Israel.

And I am grateful that President Trump is taking a strong stand against one of the greatest enemies of peace in the Middle East—Iran. Iran has spent decades fomenting unrest and terror, including providing funding and training to Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis; and the President's recent national security memorandum was a welcomed statement that Iranian aggression will no longer be tolerated.

The President has restored the maximum economic pressure campaign to

bankrupt Iran's nuclear ambitions and its terrorist proxies. It is good to see this kind of leadership.

I want to thank Prime Minister Netanyahu for meeting with us and assure him of the United States' continued support for Israel, and I look forward to working with President Trump to defend our allies and to protect our Nation.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### NOMINATION OF RUSSELL VOUGHT

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I rise today with grave concerns about the nomination of Russell Vought to be the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, or as it is more popularly known, OMB.

If confirmed, this would be Mr. Vought's second time in this role, and based on his past performance and his radical views, I believe it would be reckless to confirm his nomination.

Most Americans will be unfamiliar with OMB and the work that it does, but OMB touches every major government policy and every cent of Federal spending. OMB sits at the center of the budget process, overseeing everything from the initial development of Agency budget requests all the way through executing funding appropriated by Congress.

OMB also plays a critical role in the regulatory review process. It ensures that Agencies' reports, rules, and testimony are consistent with administrative policies.

All of that is to say that every regulation and every investment in the American people—our infrastructure, domestic manufacturing, small businesses, healthcare systems—you name it—goes through OMB. That role as a central clearinghouse of all executive branch spending and regulation comes with significant authority and requires a high level of trust, as well as fidelity to the Constitution and to the law.

Unfortunately, the Trump administration's OMB has already broken that trust with Congress and the American people and the Constitution.

While not yet confirmed as OMB Director, Mr. Vought's influence over the Agency can be felt even now because, in part, he played a central role in developing the Trump administration's policy agenda in Project 2025 and also because of the way he ran the Agency as Director and Deputy Director during the first Trump administration.

As Senator PETERS, the ranking member of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, pointed out during Mr. Vought's confirmation hearing, there are numerous examples of OMB flout-

ing the law during Mr. Vought's previous tenure.

The nonpartisan Government Accountability Office found that OMB broke the law eight times under Mr. Vought's leadership by directing certain Federal Agencies to continue to operate during the 2018-2019 shutdown.

GAO also found that under his leadership, OMB violated the law by withholding vital security assistance to Ukraine that Congress explicitly provided, putting our national security at risk.

The Trump-appointed inspector general for the Department of Housing and Urban Development found that OMB, under Mr. Vought's leadership, inappropriately delayed disaster relief funding for Puerto Rico following the devastation of Hurricane Maria.

With the level of natural disasters that are unfolding, no Senator—Republican or Democrat—should empower someone who delays and denies disaster relief.

This record is troubling, and it has set the stage for the actions taken by the Trump administration in its first few days in office.

Last week, the Acting OMB Director issued a memorandum instructing Federal Agencies to freeze funding that had been authorized and appropriated by Congress until it could be determined that the programs aligned with Donald Trump's ideological views—views espoused in Project 2025—again, a manifesto that Mr. Vought helped write.

That means that President Trump's OMB, just days into a new administration, has wasted no time in usurping Congress's congressional authority over government spending by withholding funding previously approved by Congress on a bipartisan basis. This illegal action, initiated through OMB, demonstrates just how important and powerful the OMB Director position is.

With Mr. Vought at the helm, everyone should fear that OMB will zealously pursue a radical agenda that includes withholding funding from Americans based on their religion, their thoughts, their appearance, or political affiliation.

In evaluating Federal spending for ideological purity under the Federal funding freeze, the Trump administration cast a wide net, scrutinizing funds for grants for law enforcement, veterans care, disaster relief and mitigation, and even the 988 suicide prevention lifeline that has proven to be extremely effective in dealing with the epidemic of suicide we have seen in the nation over the last few years.

Even for a time, Medicaid funding was held up. And that funding is not just for low-income Americans. It is one of the major sources of funding for nursing homes throughout the country that are taking care of the parents of working men and women all over this country. To shut those funds off means literally to push those people out of those homes.

Even now, the administration appears to be holding funds, for example, to fix an interstate bridge in Rhode Island that closed due to a catastrophic engineering fault that was detected. It seems as if the administration is now concerned about woke bridges, as well as other woke issues.

Even now that a Federal court issued a temporary restraining order to block the funding freeze, I continue to hear from Rhode Island agencies and organizations that are struggling to access Federal funds that have already been awarded, with no answers from the administration on what the problem is and how they plan to fix it.

I fear that this funding freeze is emblematic of this administration more broadly, putting out directives with little to no thought or coordination, without anticipating, and more importantly, without caring about the negative impacts that reckless orders like this could have for the American people and American businesses.

It is important to emphasize that the Trump OMB does not have the authority to freeze funding.

Back in 1974, Congress passed the Impoundment Control Act, which effectively makes it illegal for the President to ignore the law and not spend funds which Congress has appropriated.

The Constitution gives Congress the power of the purse, and the Impoundment Control Act is an important tool in retaining that authority by clarifying that the President has no inherent power to reject Congress's will when it comes to lawfully appropriated spending.

The Impoundment Control Act has never been found unconstitutional by any court of law. It is the law of the land.

Yet both the President and Mr. Vought have said that they believe the Impoundment Control Act to be unconstitutional. And Mr. Vought has not only repeatedly refused to commit to following the law but has publicly pushed the President to break the law and "impound."

Neither the President nor his unelected OMB Director can pick and choose which laws they like and which ones they are going to follow. And neither the President nor his unelected OMB Director can pick and choose which components of congressionally passed funding laws they want to implement.

To be clear, this isn't just a matter of policy disagreements over funding priorities. Democrats and Republicans have and will continue to have disagreements over where we should prioritize Federal funding. But we resolve those disagreements in Congress, in a bipartisan manner, working together to pass appropriations laws that benefit the country. It is this or any other administration's obligation to follow these laws.

This is Congress's constitutional role, and I would remind my Republican colleagues that we should not—

we must not—cede our obligations under the Constitution to any other branch of government.

I have been astounded, quite frankly, that so many of my Republican colleagues seem willing to let this administration walk all over this Congress on this issue.

I have no doubt that these funding freezes are a test—a test of our obligation to defend the Constitution of the United States, to play our role in the constitutional scheme.

Trump and his acolytes are counting on a cowed congressional majority and a compliant Supreme Court, stacked with Justices who are willing to ignore decades of precedents to sanction this lawbreaking.

As Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy wrote in the Wall Street Journal last year:

Mr. Trump has previously suggested this statute—

The Impoundment Control Act—

is unconstitutional, and we believe the current Supreme Court would likely side with him on this question.

I want to be very clear. I don't believe for a moment that Donald Trump has any idea what the Impoundment Control Act is or does. But rightwing activists like Mr. Vought do. They are fanning the flames in hopes of overturning the law so they can radically reshape the Federal Government to their worldview.

And what is that worldview? Rather than serving the American people, they seem to want to punish Americans—punish them for holding different political views; punish them for being low-income; punish them for being sick or homeless.

In particular, they want to further erode trust and belief in government, so they will make the government less efficient by pushing out the people who answer the call to serve the country and their fellow citizens as Federal employees.

In a recent speech, Mr. Vought put it this way:

We want the bureaucrats 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.

There is a common adage here in Washington: "Show me your budget, and I'll tell you what you value."

We haven't seen Trump's budget yet, but back in 2023, Mr. Vought produced a budget plan entitled "A Commitment to End Woke and Weaponized Government," which was designed to assist House Republicans in their new majority. In it, Mr. Vought called for extending the Trump tax cuts for the richest Americans, and paying for them by cutting domestic funding by \$3.5 trillion. For example, Medicaid would be cut by \$2.1 trillion; food stamps by \$400 billion; and eliminating the Affordable Care Act tax credits would also be included in this.

I think it gives a pretty good indication of where the Trump administra-

tion's priorities lie, and it is certainly not with the average American.

There is another reason I am troubled by Mr. Vought's nomination, and that is his disdain for Congress as an institution. Despite having drawn a number of paychecks as a congressional staffer, he has shown contempt for the Congress.

As I noted earlier, when Mr. Vought served as the Acting Director of OMB, during the first Trump administration, he was integral to the 2019 effort to withhold almost \$400 million in military aid for Ukraine—an event, as my colleagues will recall, that led to Trump's first impeachment.

Mr. Vought's contempt for Congress was on full display when he defied a congressional subpoena to produce documents and to testify in the impeachment inquiry. He even went as far as to turn to Twitter to publicly call the House of Representatives' inquiry a "sham process" and to say that he had no intent to comply with the subpoena.

Mr. Vought has also refused to cooperate with inspector generals and has advocated that the President exercise emergency powers to circumvent congressional decisions.

This is not an individual this Congress, or any Congress, should put its faith in. He has shown us who he is and how he views this institution and our Constitution, and as such, we should not confirm his nomination.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HUSTED). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, starting yesterday afternoon, through the night, and now on into the afternoon here, my colleagues continue to make an extremely strong and powerful case against Mr. Vought becoming the head of OMB.

As I have said before, you couldn't have a person with a worse ideology in the most powerful position in the government, and the damage he will do to the American people is enormous. We will see it week to week and month to month if, God forbid, he gets confirmed.

I would make a plea to my Republican colleagues: You know that this man's views are so hard-right that even most of you don't agree with him. Yet to go along and vote for him because of pressure from the White House or somewhere else would just be mis-serving your constituency, whether they be liberal, conservative, rural, urban, suburban, red, or blue.

This man is a slasher. He has shown no respect for people and their needs. His goal is simply to cut everything—almost without regard to how important these programs are—so that he can cut taxes on very wealthy people.

To put him in such a powerful position as OMB, to put the man who was the architect of Project 2025 as head of OMB, to put the man who has one of the worst ideologies in the worst position is just a real dereliction to what America needs and America believes in.

I strongly urge my colleagues to reconsider and vote no.

I am proud that every Democrat will vote against this awful, awful choice.

Mr. President, now, I yield 5 minutes of my postcloture debate time to Senator WARNER.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has that right.

The Senator from Delaware.

#### TRUMP EXECUTIVE ORDERS

Ms. BLUNT ROCHESTER. Mr. President, I would hope I would be standing here today talking about lowering costs for Americans or tackling the housing crisis. Or, as the former secretary of labor in Delaware, I thought I would be standing here talking about jobs and the economy.

Unfortunately, the actions over the last 2 weeks have cast a long shadow over our work and our discourse in this body, and instead of speaking about lowering the cost of goods or the housing crisis or jobs, I stand before you armed with the voices of Delawareans. Instead, today, I am speaking about the actions of the Trump administration that are sowing fear, confusion, and chaos in homes and workplaces across America and around the world.

But know this: I stand before you filled with a spirit of love for my constituents and my great State and also for my country. Like many of my colleagues here today, my goal is to highlight how these things that are occurring are impacting my State but also to instill some hope.

In the tradition of my faith, there is sort of like a prescription. There are some things that you should not forget. The first is that trouble don't last always. The second is it won't last always if we walk together and don't get weary. And then the third is that joy comes in the morning.

So I am speaking to you, America, as we face these precarious times, at a moment when instead of having a President to bring us all together, many feel divided. But if we hold on together, the morning will come.

I was first elected to the House of Representatives in 2016 and began serving in 2017. It was after finding and marrying and then losing the love of my life to blood clots. My husband Charles went on a business trip, played a game of basketball, ruptured his Achilles tendon, and blood clots went to his heart and lungs. And at the age of 52, this vegetarian who worked out every day left my life. I remember that pain, that heartache, like it was yesterday. I understood viscerally what the word "heartbreak" really means.

But almost a year after Charles's passing—it was the fall of 2015—I was sort of just on autopilot in the grocery

store, and I saw a dad with three kids in front of me put back grapes because they were \$9. It snapped me out of my own pain, and it made me realize how blessed I am—I am going to be OK—but a lot of other people were hurting, a lot of other people were struggling.

And I decided at that time, having never run for anything in my life, to run for the House of Representatives. And I won.

Today, I stand before you, and I see that dad and those kids, and I think about all that we have been through over the past couple of weeks and ask: Have these actions made his or his children's lives better, more prosperous, safer, or at peace? I would venture to say no.

Let's recap just a small portion of the past few weeks in the Trump administration 2.0. Last week, the administration sent a memo—here is the memo—from the Office of Management and Budget directing critical Agencies to freeze Federal tax dollars, the taxpayers' dollars, from being spent on critical services and programs approved by Congress.

This blatantly unconstitutional directive had and has the potential to cause massive harm to Delawareans and has sown nothing but confusion and chaos for all Americans. Police and fire departments up and down the State of Delaware could go unfunded. Military families stationed at Dover Air Force Base could lose access to critical programs. Construction projects with shovels in the ground could go unfinished as workers are laid off. Community health centers may be unable to provide critical primary care.

As a matter of fact, just yesterday, as I gave a speech before the National Association of Community Health Centers, the health centers in the State of Florida were closed.

Opioid overdoses could rise as prevention programs end. Children of working families could go hungry when free lunch programs stop.

These are not partisan programs. In fact, many of these are popular bipartisan initiatives. They are exactly what the vast majority of Americans want our government to be funding. But with the stroke of a pen, President Trump tried to defund programs already signed into law, making Delaware and every other State across the country less safe, less healthy, and less stable.

And to make matters worse, when the pressure mounted from the people, Members of this Chamber, the attorneys general around the country who fought in the courts, Federal judges stepped in and halted the freeze, and then the administration doubled down on their decision.

Here is what the White House Press Secretary, Karoline Leavitt, posted on X:

This is NOT a rescission of the federal funding freeze. It is simply a rescission of the OMB memo. Why? To end any confusion

created by the court's injunction. The President's EOs on federal funding remain in full force and effect, and will be rigorously implemented.

Let me be clear. If the President wants to have his Federal budget reflected in his priorities, he is able to. He should submit a budget proposal to Congress like every other President has done.

Beyond this unlawful budget freeze, this administration and an unelected and unchecked billionaire have threatened and, in some cases, delivered on massive civil servant layoffs and unconstitutional firings. Because of this, almost 1,500 calls alone have come into my office about "Elon Musk taking over the government."

In Delaware, there are thousands of civil servants who have dedicated their lives to public service, people who care deeply about ensuring we have meals for seniors, services for our veterans, and educational opportunities for our children.

This past year's budget was debated, negotiated, and agreed upon on a bipartisan basis. I remember it clearly, as negotiations lasted right up until almost Christmas Day. While I was still a Member of the House, we worked to avoid a harmful government shutdown.

That brings us to this moment. Tonight, this Chamber will vote on the leading architect of Project 2025. The actions we are seeing are part of the blueprint. The funds are critical taxpayer dollars used to conduct vital services that our communities rely on.

Yet this administration is disregarding the law and the Constitution. Why? Some say to give tax breaks not to all, but to billionaires—or, as I call it, reverse Robin Hood. From USAID to the Department of Labor to Treasury to the thought of abolishing the Department of Education, everyone will be impacted.

Let's take a look at what could be on the chopping block if those things that we already approved don't go into effect.

Public safety: Grants for law enforcement and homeland security activities will cease.

Disaster relief: As many communities are struggling after severe natural disasters, most recently in Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, and California.

Infrastructure projects: Our roads, our bridges, our ports, and more. Public transit could be halted, including projects already under construction.

Combating fentanyl: The crisis that we see right now in our communities of substance use disorders, this could be impacted.

Biomedical research: There will be immediate pauses on all funding for critical health research, including research on such important diseases like cancer, Alzheimer's, and diabetes.

Head Start and childcare could be affected: Funding for Head Start Programs that provide comprehensive early childhood education for more