

We are praying for your strength. We are praying for God's comfort and peace to cover you all as we, again, mourn together.

Again, like my senior Senator expressed, I want to express my deepest gratitude for all the emergency responders and especially the divers, who I really believe risked their own lives by jumping into a dark, vast, cold river in search of survivors. Thank you so much for doing that, for doing your job so well. Your courage will not be forgotten.

I will close with this, and I said this the night of the tragedy: When one life is lost, it is a tragedy. When many are lost at once, it is an unbearable sorrow. It is a heartbreak beyond measure.

Again, to the families, we are with you, and so is our Father in Heaven.

I yield the floor.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I yield to the Senator from Virginia, Senator WARNER.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. I recognize the Senator from Virginia.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, let me first of all thank my colleagues from Kansas. I know you were there that night. I want to thank as well, obviously, my dear friend of 40-plus years from Virginia. We were at the airport, along with friends from Maryland and DC, by 7 o'clock the next morning.

The remarkable thing was, this is a route I take home every night. I have the luxury, frankly—my home is actually closer to the Capitol than all 535 other Members, even local Congressman DON BEYER by a couple of blocks. I drive along the parkway each night. I think I missed the actual collision by no less than 7 or 8 minutes.

Yet we then saw a number of red lights rushing into National across the river in Maryland, and we all know that the souls on American Flight 5342 and those pilots in the Army helicopter—awful, awful collision.

My friends have said it. We can't give you words that would get rid of that terror of that awful event, but we have seen over the last week how many young lives—so many folks from the skating world. They were Kansans, they were Virginians, and they were literally people from, frankly, around the globe. The contributions to their friends and families that they will never be able to fulfill are going to leave an ache in the hearts of those families that I can't nearly articulate as well as some of my colleagues.

But I also want to acknowledge that even in these moments of tragedy, there are moments of grace and heroic actions.

Folks that don't live in the Capital region don't know the kind of messy, bureaucratic, multiple jurisdictions between Maryland, the District, and Virginia. Senator KAINE and I were both Governors of Virginia. We used to say the Potomac was the great divide. But at a moment like this, with this tragedy, it stops being Maryland, Virginia, the District, Federal. People dropped

everything, and literally there were first responders from 40 different jurisdictions. That is remarkable.

Everybody else has mentioned, whether it was the divers, the folks that went into that bitterly cold river and, frankly, what they have had to do in terms of recovery of remains in the days afterwards—the emotional toll it is going to take on those men and women literally probably for the rest of their lives, but they did what was right.

I also want to say we have the safest skies in the world. We have the pilots. We have valuable air traffic controllers. Clearly, something went wrong here. I think we owe it to the restoration of that confidence that the sky is safe in our country. I want to applaud the brandnew Secretary of Transportation, who was with us—Mr. DUFFY, from Donald Trump's administration—he was with us that morning, at 7 o'clock in the morning.

Those families and those first responders deserve the answers of what went wrong here. I have great faith in the NTSB. Senator KAINE and I worked with them in other tragedies in the past. They are going to do their job. They are going to find out what went wrong and make sure that kind of mistake is not made again.

I will simply close by saying, again, condolences for the loss of the families. Thank you to the first responders and all who responded. I think it is totally appropriate.

I want to thank on a personal basis the fact that Senator MORAN decided to put this resolution together, to bring us to the floor to kind of get that affirmation that here we are literally 8 days after this tragedy.

Thank you, JERRY, for what you have done.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. I recognize the Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MORAN. I very much value the remarks of my colleagues from Virginia and my home State colleague from Kansas.

I would use this moment to thank all the folks in this Chamber. Colleagues and staff, people I work with and know, people I work with and sometimes don't know have been so gracious and kind in their care and concern for people, in most instances, they don't know.

It is this reminder that tragedy brings us together. It is a reminder that the Senate could use on a daily, frequent basis that there is more that brings us together than pulls us apart.

But the expression of care and concern for the people who were on this flight once again demonstrates that in the human heart, there is something that still exists about how we value and appreciate the lives of others.

Mr. President, as if in legislative session and notwithstanding rule XXII, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 64, which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 64) honoring the memory of the victims of the tragic mid-air collision between American Airlines Flight 5342 and United States Army Aviation Brigade Priority Air Transport 25 on January 29, 2025.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 64) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

NOMINATION OF RUSSELL VOUGHT

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I rise today to oppose Russell Vought's nomination to be the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

As the ranking member of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, I have worked hard and across the aisle to strengthen our Federal Government's effectiveness in providing services that Americans rely on every day, to improve transparency in the way government operates, and to make sure taxpayer dollars are always used efficiently.

These are some of the most fundamental roles the Federal Government plays in the daily lives of Americans, and we are duty-bound to ensure that they continue. But if Russell Vought is confirmed to lead the Office of Management and Budget, I am concerned that he will throw these principles out the window and wreak havoc on the services that Americans count on from the Federal Government every day.

Although it may not be the most well-known Agency, the Office of Management and Budget, or OMB, is a critical office in the Executive Office of the President, with significant responsibilities ranging from developing and executing the budget approved by Congress to improving Agency performance and reviewing regulations.

The actions carried out at OMB affect the daily lives of millions of Americans, and this little-known Agency controls nearly every action that other Federal Agencies take, directing Agency policies as well as controlling their budgets.

OMB is charged with allocating Federal resources that Congress appropriates to Agencies that protect our national security, help communities

recover from natural disasters, and provide vital services like Social Security, Medicare, and veterans services. This funding helps hire police officers and firefighters. It helps provide families with heating assistance in the cold winter months. It helps towns and cities upgrade their roads and bridges.

OMB's work matters to every American, and we cannot confirm someone to lead this Office who will not act in the best interest of every American.

As the great American poet Dr. Maya Angelou once said, when people show you who they are, you should believe them the first time.

Russell Vought has repeatedly shown us and told us who he is. He is someone who has and will continue to willfully break the laws passed by Congress, at the direction of the President, to fundamentally alter how the Federal Government works for the American people. Vought's abject disregard for the Constitution and the rule of law and his willingness to pick which Americans are winners and losers under the Trump administration completely disqualify him from serving in this important role.

I want to start by revisiting the illegal and dangerous actions that Russell Vought took when he served as OMB Director during the first Trump administration.

During his previous tenure in leading the Office of Management and Budget, Vought brazenly and willfully flouted the laws passed by Congress that direct how Federal resources should be spent. On multiple occasions, Vought refused to disburse funds that Congress passed on a bipartisan basis to address serious national security concerns and to protect the safety of our country. For example, Vought directed the OMB to withhold vital security assistance to Ukraine—assistance that Congress directed to be spent with bipartisan backing. This action put our country's security at risk by extorting Ukraine—a very valuable ally fighting to stop Putin's illegal actions.

This extortion wasn't to help advance some official U.S. foreign policy or perhaps support our Nation's standing and security around the world, no. It was an action intended to help President Trump politically as he tried to discredit Joe Biden during the 2020 Presidential election. And you don't have to take my word for it; the Government Accountability Office investigated and confirmed that this was a violation of the law.

On top of that, Vought willfully delayed sending vital disaster relief to Puerto Rico as communities were struggling to recover from the devastations of Hurricanes Maria and Irma. Again, Congress passed a law to provide this funding—funding that was desperately needed to help recover from these destructive hurricanes. Then again, Congress passed a law specifically requiring the funds to be disbursed on time to people in desperate need. Mr. Vought delayed it. He de-

layed those funds. He broke the law, and he prolonged the suffering and the recovery of the communities that needed immediate help.

In 2021, the inspector general for the Department of Housing and Urban Development confirmed that Vought's refusal to send hurricane relief assistance was an inappropriate action and that it caused real harms for the people of Puerto Rico.

The inspector general's report stated:

Brian Montgomery, the former Deputy Secretary and Acting Secretary of HUD, recalled telling former OMB Director Vought that OMB's actions were tantamount to holding disaster relief funds hostage.

When asked what he meant by the "hostage" statement, Montgomery told the OIG that these demands slowed down the fund of aid that was desperately needed by people in a very desperate situation.

The report also concluded that this violation of the law caused serious delays in getting assistance to victims.

In addition to this devastating delay, the Office of Inspector General also detailed how Vought and OMB, under his leadership, stonewalled and failed to cooperate with their independent oversight investigation.

Again and again, when Russell Vought ran OMB, he ignored laws passed by Congress that directed how taxpayer money should be spent and failed—failed—to cooperate with the independent oversight investigation of his illegal actions.

A 2020 investigation by the Government Accountability Office found that under Mr. Vought's leadership, OMB broke the law eight more times by directing certain Federal Agencies to continue to operate during the 2018 shutdown—eight more times breaking the law. Mr. Vought is on the record.

When he pressed him about these actions during the confirmation hearing, Vought said:

We had a different view of the law. In the shutdown, there was a lot of precedent. We found that these aren't legal decisions. Every time you have a different play call, GAO will look at that. There will be different views between the executive branch and the legislative branch.

A different view of the law?

While Mr. Vought casts this as just a difference of opinion, what he is really saying—let's be clear—is that he does not need to follow the law. He thinks that he is above the law. Each of these violations underscores his consistent obstruction of oversight and a troubling tendency to prioritize political agendas over following the law, which endangers the safety and the welfare of our citizens.

I have said it multiple times today, but I will repeat it: Russell Vought has shown us who he is. We have a duty and an obligation to take him at his word and believe him.

His repeated violations of the law have far-reaching implications. We are a nation that was built on the rule of law. When leaders and officials break

the law with absolute impunity, then the guardrails have fallen off, and our democracy is deeply broken. Mr. Vought's actions have undercut transparent oversight and have caused the most foundational, fundamental tenet of democratic governance—the rule of law—to crumble.

He didn't stop after his time at OMB was up. In the years since, Russell Vought has been hard at work memorializing his playbook to break the law and give the President unilateral power as part of Project 2025. He literally wrote the Project 2025 chapter on the executive Office of the President and how to use the OMB to consolidate even more power with the executive branch.

In his Project 2025 chapter, where he spells out as plain as day how he plans to violate the law again if he is confirmed, he wrote that he will recruit staff who are "creative and fearless in his or her ability to challenge legal precedent." Mr. Vought is saying loud and he is saying it clear: If we confirm him as the Director of OMB, he will use every tool that he has to say what the law is. He—he—gets to decide, not Congress, not the Constitution, and not the courts. That is wrong, and it goes against everything our Founders believed when they wrote our Constitution and created a unique system of checks and balances.

Every Member of the Senate and every Federal employee swears an oath to uphold the Constitution of the United States as they execute their duties. I swore that oath when I joined the U.S. Navy Reserve and again as a Member of the U.S. House of Representatives and finally here in the U.S. Senate. The Constitution gives Congress the power to determine how Federal resources are to be spent.

Article I of the Constitution specifically gives Congress the power of the purse. This is not some gray area. This is not unsettled law. This is written in our Nation's most critical founding document.

The Constitution also requires that the President faithfully execute the laws that Congress passes—again, faithfully execute, not that the laws should be executed to the President's or Russell Vought's liking or be aligned with the President's policy priorities or campaign promises, but as Congress wrote them.

I would hope that any official confirmed and who swears an oath to uphold the Constitution will do so, but unfortunately, as I laid out previously, Russell Vought has a long history of breaking these very laws the Constitution instructs him to actually uphold.

We already ran through several key examples of how Mr. Vought routinely broke the law, but I would like to do a little deeper dive into the history of these laws and why Congress thought it was necessary to pass them in the first place.

During the Nixon administration—an administration that routinely

stretched the law to strengthen Presidential powers—the President also attempted to use impoundment. In 1970, President Nixon began making deep cuts to programs that communities all across America depended upon to keep families healthy, to keep them fed, educated, and safe.

In moments throughout our history, Congress gave the President the specific and limited ability to not spend the full amount of that appropriation. President Nixon, however, took the idea of refusing to spend appropriations to a whole new and disastrous level. Nixon sought to reshape domestic spending and undermine lawful congressional appropriations by broadly withholding Federal funding for a wide variety of programs that communities all across America depended upon—programs like food assistance, safe drinking water, childcare funding, and programs to promote economic opportunity.

President Nixon just didn't curtail select projects or limit additional funds to larger programs; his administration tried to use impoundment to terminate whole programs that he opposed—programs that thousands of communities depended upon and that Congress legally funded.

In 1970 and 1971, Nixon made deep cuts to the education, housing, and social services programs. In 1973, Nixon withheld more than \$400 million from the Federal food stamp program that prevented millions of children and families from living in hunger. Then Nixon tried to withhold \$8 billion appropriated for water reclamation, which is used to recycle water for safe drinking, farm irrigation, and restoring local environments.

President Nixon tried to paint his efforts to withhold Federal funding as a way to check inflation when, in fact, this was an attempt to unilaterally reshape government without taking into consideration the priorities and the needs of American communities that are represented by their Members of Congress. That is why—that is why—Congress came together to take up and pass the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974.

I think this is an interesting point: As President Nixon was doing this, these laws passed unanimously in the U.S. Congress. All Republicans and all Democrats in the Senate passed them unanimously. Apparently, that was at a time when Republican Members of the Senate had a backbone to stand up to a President who was acting illegally. And even in the House, it was almost unanimous. Apparently, Republican Members of the House had a backbone then to stand up to a President who acted illegally.

The law says that, as a general principle, the President may not refuse to spend funds that Congress has appropriated. The Impoundment Control Act also specifies that the President may request that Congress rescind appropriated funds, but the law makes it

clear that if both the House and Senate do not approve a rescission request, Agencies must disburse those funds within 45 days. The President cannot unilaterally decide to withhold funds that Congress has appropriated.

Congress has clearly spoken on how and when the President can propose lawful rescissions. The Impoundment Control Act is the law of the land, and it provides a transparent and democratic process to rescind funds—procedures that reinforce core constitutional principles of the congressional power of the purse.

In case after case, Federal courts, including the Supreme Court of this country, have found that the President has no unilateral power to cancel appropriations—again because Congress, not the President, holds the power of the purse.

Even conservative judicial figures who you might expect would support broader Executive powers, especially at this trying moment in our Nation's history, have rejected the concept of inherit Presidential impoundment.

In the 1998 Supreme Court case of *Clinton v. City of New York*, Justice Scalia wrote:

President Nixon, the Mahatma Gandhi of all impounders, asserted at a press conference in 1973 that his “constitutional right” to impound appropriated funds was “absolutely clear.” Our decision two years later in *Train v. City of New York*, proved him wrong.

In a 2013 case before the DC Circuit Court of Appeals, Justice Kavanaugh recognized that “a President sometimes has policy reasons (as distinct from constitutional reasons) for wanting to spend less than the full amount appropriated by Congress for a particular project or program. But in those circumstances”—

You have got to hear this from Justice Kavanaugh—

“But in those circumstances, even the President does not have unilateral authority to refuse to spend the funds.”

These rulings and opinions further solidify the argument that such a power does not exist within our constitutional framework. Over and over, courts and legal scholars have been clear: The President has no constitutional impoundment power.

Again, in 1998, in *Clinton v. New York*, the Supreme Court struck down a law that allowed the President to unilaterally cancel appropriations, further reinforcing the principle that the President does not have that power.

In 1973 and 1974, in the cases of *National Council of Community Mental Health Centers v. Weinberger* and *Louisiana v. Weinberger*, Federal district courts, again, explicitly rejected arguments that the President has the constitutional power to refuse to release grant funding.

The fact is that these decisions emphasize that the President of the United States has a duty and an obligation to execute the laws as passed by Congress, which includes spending appropriated funds.

This well-established legal precedent highlights that Vought's persistent push for impoundment undermines the democratic process by disregarding the will of Congress, the representative body of the American people.

And despite all of this settled law, throughout Vought's confirmation hearing, he doubled down on these plans, professing his decision to continue down the path of his first term by continuing to disregard the rule of law.

I asked Mr. Vought during the confirmation process if he was familiar with these decisions that prohibit impoundment. His response was wholly inadequate when he stated the following:

I won't get into Supreme Court decisions regarding impoundment. We think the law on the books is unconstitutional.

By advocating for the President's refusal to spend appropriated funds and refusing to tell the committee whether there are any limits to this supposed power, Vought seeks to concentrate power within the executive branch at the expense of Congress and the American people.

Confirming Mr. Vought will erode our Nation's checks and balances and undermines the Constitution we all swore an oath to protect and to defend.

His actions disregard both the letter and the spirit of the law, which is why he is wholly unqualified to serve in a position requiring enormous public trust—a position that will literally be in position to make life-and-death decisions for millions of Americans.

Given his record of undermining democratic processes, eroding the system of checks and balances, and time spent violating the Constitution of the United States, we simply cannot trust him in this role.

And now, even before he is confirmed by the Senate, the Trump administration has begun to implement Russell Vought's playbook—the playbook he has openly talked about and wrote about in *Project 2025*.

Last week, OMB implemented his playbook by withholding money to communities, families, businesses, and organizations when it froze all new and existing Federal grants and loans.

These actions have resulted in chaos and confusion. And every Member of this Chamber—every Member of this Chamber—has heard from thousands of their constituents who are afraid the resources they are counting on will not be delivered.

These actions not only break the law and wreak chaos and anxiety amongst our constituents, but they also inflict very, very real harm on families in Michigan and all across our country.

In my home State of Michigan, communities and organizations received \$31 billion in Federal grants and loans last year, and the freeze has had immediate—immediate—negative impacts.

I heard from a mayor who needs the grant funding they were awarded to pay for police, for firefighters, and public safety personnel; who is worried he

won't be able to pay first responders because of the freeze.

I heard from small businesses who are afraid they won't be able to make payroll because of the freeze.

I have heard from dozens of communities who fear they will have to put their shovels down on construction projects to improve our roads and our bridges, improve street safety, and address chronic flooding issues because of the freeze.

I have heard from Michiganders who are counting on heating assistance during these cold winter months, who are unsure if they are going to be able to pay their energy bills.

I have heard educators who have raised concerns that the freeze would disrupt funding at nearly 17 Head Start centers across Michigan that serve our youngest children.

I heard from veterans who faced disruptions, confusion, and anxiety over critical services.

I have heard from colleges and universities that count on funding to make advances in research, ranging from preventing Alzheimer's disease and dementia, to protecting our Great Lakes.

I have heard from communities who are concerned about how the freeze will affect funding for Homeland Security missions and law enforcement.

Almost immediately, two different judges—one in Rhode Island and one in Washington, DC—put in place temporary restraining orders to start to undo the freeze and deliver needed funding to these organizations and people. But despite this, some funds continue to be held up, and OMB and the Department of Justice continue to insist that they can block funding going to these communities.

This is not what hard-working families across our Nation want and certainly not what they need. Our constituents need to know that the Federal Government can keep its word and stand by its promises.

Americans should feel confident that the services government provides are efficient and they are reliable and that they can count on them to be delivered.

If we confirm Russell Vought to be just another one of President Trump's cronies, the American people will pay the price. Once he is back at OMB, he will only supercharge the Trump administration's effort to unlawfully cancel programs that Congress has authorized on a bipartisan basis and that Americans are counting on.

It is not a stretch to say that Russell Vought would do everything he could to give President Trump even more power, especially when it comes to controlling the Federal budget. If the President wants to block funding to blue States, Russ Vought will do it. If the President wants to defund firefighters, Russ Vought will do it. If the President wants to cancel Medicaid benefits, Russ Vought will do it. If the President wants to deny victims of a

disaster assistance that they desperately need, Russ Vought—we have already seen—will do it.

Russ Vought's record on breaking the law and sowing chaos across government is, quite frankly, frightening. If he is confirmed, he will quite literally be in a position to alter the future of our Nation—and not in a good way.

But he will also be charged with managing the Federal workforce. And his record on that front—well, it is just as abysmal.

When he was at OMB before, Mr. Vought pushed to replace nearly 50,000 nonpartisan career professional civil servants with appointees—political appointees—whose only qualification was that they had political loyalty to the President—no other qualifications, just political. The old spoil system of the last two centuries back again.

He attempted to remove qualified employees who have years of knowledge and experience. And if he had succeeded, he would have posed a grave threat to our national security.

More than 70 percent of the Federal workforce serves at Agencies that are critical to our national defense and to our national security.

Other Federal employees work day in and day out to respond to emergencies and to ensure that Americans can get key services, like Social Security checks and veterans' healthcare.

Mr. Vought called these hard-working, dedicated public servants "villains." He called them "villains." There is no question Mr. Vought has no respect for the professional, hard-working civil servants who work tirelessly each and every day to support the American people.

President Trump took action on day one of his administration to remove qualified, nonpartisan Federal workers and replace them with his cronies by issuing an Executive order.

Under this directive, the President's political appointees can reclassify traditional nonpartisan career civil servants into schedule policy/career positions that are functionally at-will.

All hiring, retention, and firing decisions for schedule policy/career positions would be at the pleasure of the President's political leadership rather than the individual's qualifications or job performance.

Under Vought's authority as OMB Director during Trump's first term, OMB recommended that anywhere from 68 to 88 percent of its own workforce would be reclassified into this schedule F. And while describing this conversion with OMB staff that he had just reclassified into schedule F positions, he recalls saying of those employees:

We don't believe in these laws that give these protections that we think made you less good at your job of serving a particular president.

All that mattered was "serving a particular President."

Vought doesn't believe in civil service law. I believe in those laws, and they are the laws of the land. Congress

passed those laws so civil servants are better at their job of serving the American people, rather than their job of serving at the political pleasure of a President.

Civil servants, not the President or his political cronies, are the ones who issue Social Security checks, provide care for our veterans, facilitate loans for small businesses, and safeguard our homeland from security threats.

President Trump took another step last week to remove qualified civil servants when he offered more than 2 million Federal employees deferred resignation offers through a "Fork in the Road" email. He may have pitched it to Federal workers as a buyout, but it is likely another illegal plan to scare expert employees into leaving voluntarily out of fear that they would otherwise be fired or retaliated against by the President so he can make way to install his cronies at all levels of the Federal Government.

If this continues to happen, Agencies will lose vast institutional knowledge, and civil servants will lose trust in their colleagues. Whistleblowers will be afraid to come forward to report waste, fraud, and abuse. Taxpayers will foot the bill for government mistakes or corruption among political leaders. Foreign adversaries will take advantage of our unstable government workforce.

In all of these roles, we want to trust the employees who have the right skills, experience, and are informed with accurate, reliable, and complete information. Russell Vought is at the forefront of this effort to politicize our civil workforce.

As I bring my remarks to a close, I just want to underscore that Russ Vought's previous tenure as OMB Director and his contributions to proposals like Project 2025 have demonstrated clearly that he is not merely someone with differing policies views but someone who fundamentally disregards the rules of the game, as outlined in the laws of Congress, those that we have enacted under the Constitution.

Mr. Vought's expansive views of the President's spending authority seek to destroy Congress's constitutional authority. Mr. Vought's disdain for our hard-working civil servants who keep Americans safe—he wants to attempt to turn all of them into political hacks, loyal only to the President. It completely, completely disqualifies him from holding the position of the Director of Office of Management and Budget.

Ultimately, Russ Vought's defiant attitude toward the rule of law is dangerous, and it is deeply, deeply un-American. His lawless actions threaten our national security. They threaten our economy and the well-being of the American people, and they threaten the future of our democracy.

I urge my colleagues to take him at his word. Russ Vought has told us loud and clear who he is and what he will

do. He has told us he will break the law. He has told us he will politicize the Federal workforce. He has told us he will destroy our government from the inside.

We cannot give them another chance to inflict further harm on the American people. We must—we must—oppose his nomination, and if we fail to stop his confirmation, there is no question in my mind the American people will end up paying the price.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. HEINRICH. Mr. President, every single day, millions of hard-working Americans report to work to serve their communities and their country. They are known to our government as civil servants, but I want to be clear about who they really are.

These civil servants are the more than 300 air traffic controllers at the Albuquerque Sunport and airports across New Mexico who keep us safe in the air. They are the wildland firefighters battling catastrophic forest fires each year. They are the FBI agents who are working to get drug cartels out of our communities. They are the rangers taking care of our national parks and the civil engineers who manage and restore our watersheds. They are the Federal customs officers and border agents who enable trade at our southern border and stop fentanyl before it enters our country. They are the inspectors and scientists who ensure the safety of our food and our medicine, and they are the countless workers who ensure our elders receive their Social Security checks on time.

These are the unsung heroes in our Federal civil service. The impact of their work touches every single person in our State and our country. They deserve our respect and our gratitude, not an all-out attack against them. But while these civil servants have done the quiet work of keeping our government working, Donald Trump is singlehandedly forcing a partial government shutdown and throwing the lives of hard-working civil servants into chaos.

We are barely 3 weeks into this new Trump administration, and it is abundantly clear that Donald Trump and his team have taken his narrow victory as a license to run roughshod over all laws, norms, and even the Constitution. Trump and Elon Musk are attempting an unlawful, hostile takeover of the most basic Federal Government operations, functions that so many Americans depend on.

Over the course of the last 2 weeks, Trump has threatened mass layoffs of civil servants and closures of entire Federal Agencies. Trump and Elon Musk's DOGE minions have forced access to the Federal payments system. This system contains Americans' private data as well as classified information and processes government payments that make up more than one-fifth of the U.S. economy.

And I wish I were making this up, but it is true. According to a report in WIRED, a 25-year-old engineer from Musk's DOGE group has gained direct access to the Treasury Department systems responsible for nearly all payments made by the Federal Government. This is someone whose only other experience is working for Musk at other places—at SpaceX and Twitter. This unelected, unvetted member of Musk's DOGE team reportedly has administrator-level privileges. Normally, access privileges to this highly secure system are reserved for high-level professionals with years and years of experience at the Treasury Department.

This breach by Elon Musk's DOGE minions may expose the system to irreversible damage, undermining our individual privacy rights and our country's economic and national security. And many of us will simply not stand for it.

On top of this, Trump triggered a vast and ongoing blockade of congressionally appropriated Federal funds, the impacts of which are still reverberating across the Nation.

The "masterminds" behind this whole mess: Trump, Elon Musk, and—yes—Russell Vought, Trump's nominee to lead the White House Office of Management and Budget.

Let's talk about Mr. Vought and his plans. Mr. Vought was the lead architect at the Heritage Foundation's Project 2025, the blueprint for Trump's dismantling of the Federal Government. He has spent years crafting plans to circumvent Congress, our Constitution, and, of course, the law.

Let me read to you directly from Mr. Vought's statements in his own words. In a private speech last year, at his far-right Center for Renewing America think tank, Mr. Vought stated that he would like to put career civil servants "in trauma."

Mr. Vought said:

We want the bureaucrats to be traumatically affected. When they wake up in the morning, we want them not to want to go to work because they are increasingly viewed as villains. We want their funding to be shut down so that the EPA can't do all of the rules against our energy industry because they have no bandwidth financially to do so.

He laid out how he would do this in his chapter of the Heritage Foundation Project 2025 playbook for the incoming Trump administration White House. He wrote there:

The great challenge confronting a conservative President is the existential need for aggressive use of the vast powers of the executive branch.

He went on to say:

Success in meeting that challenge will require a . . . boldness to bend or break the bureaucracy.

Meaning bending and breaking our career civil servants who carry out laws passed here by Congress.

As the OMB Director at the end of the last Trump administration, Mr. Vought was the lead architect of the President's fiscal year 2021 budget pro-

posal that called for \$500 billion cut from Medicare, \$900 billion cut from Medicaid, \$71 billion cut from Social Security—yes, Social Security—\$76 billion cut from disability programs, zeroing out entire Federal programs, including the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the Legal Services Corporation, community development block grants, and community services block grants—all to pave the way for Trump to double down on his tax breaks for billionaires.

At his Center for Renewing America think tank, Mr. Vought drafted a 2023 budget plan entitled "A Commitment to End Woke and Weaponized Government." This is the playbook that Trump and Musk are already running to freeze Federal funding, dismantle and dismember Federal Agencies, and seize the power of the purse from Congress, where the Constitution put it.

That plan called for extending Trump's tax cuts for the wealthy by slashing Medicaid by \$2.1 trillion, SNAP by \$400 billion, and eliminating the Affordable Care tax credits that help folks afford healthcare coverage. Mr. Vought has also openly admitted his intentions to challenge the Impoundment Control Act of 1974, which enforces Congress's constitutional power of the purse.

During his confirmation hearing last month, Mr. Vought said he believes the President can just overrule Congress in deciding how to spend taxpayer dollars, despite constitutional authority and the law to the contrary. Mr. Vought said the President ran on the notion that the Impoundment Control Act is unconstitutional. I agree with that. Last time I checked, that was up to the Supreme Court and our court systems.

Mr. Vought has already made clear how he would use his role—or I should say abuse his role—as OMB Director to politicize the Agency and bend it to the whims of the President. In Project 2025, Vought wrongly stated that OMB has the only statutory tools in the White House that are powerful enough to override implementing the Agency's bureaucracies. What this really means is overriding the law, duly enacted here in Congress and signed by the President.

Mr. Vought has also questioned the very ideas of independent Federal Agencies. In fact, in an interview last November with Tucker Carlson, Mr. Vought said:

Number one is going after the whole notion of independence. There are no independent agencies. Congress may have viewed them as such—the SEC or the FCC, the CFPB, the whole alphabet soup. But the whole notion of an independent agency should be thrown out. You can apply the concept of destroying independence at every agency.

Mr. Vought has called OMB a President's air traffic control system with the ability and charge to ensure that all policy initiatives are flying in sync and with the authority to let planes take off and at times ground planes that are flying off course.

Do we really trust a man hell-bent on slashing Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security, defying Congress, and destroying independent Federal Agencies to be an air traffic controller?

Let me be clear. My constituents in New Mexico did not vote for this. And my office has been fielding thousands of phone calls, letters, and emails from New Mexicans who are upset, angry, and frustrated that President Trump, Elon Musk, and Russell Vought are breaking laws and shredding the Constitution in a bid to upend the basic functions of our government.

Here is a little bit of a taste of what New Mexicans are telling me. Arthur from Rio Rancho called my office to tell me he is concerned about how Trump and Vought's plans to dismantle the Department of Education will impact his son and millions of other students with disabilities.

Arthur said:

I have a son who is autistic and nonverbal with an individual education plan. Dismantling the Department of Education will not only impact him, but it will devastate all public schools and hurt students like my son who have disabilities. This will strip away any rights and protections for millions of students. Trump and Elon need to be sent a clear message: Education is a fundamental right, not a privilege for the wealthy.

A constituent from Albuquerque who requested anonymity is worried about his job as a Federal civil servant because of Vought's agenda. He wrote to me:

I am a U.S. Forest Service employee. Most of us are now afraid of losing our jobs and of, among other things, the demand for loyalty. This makes it difficult to work in the manner that we wish to—efficiently, effectively, and to do well for the land and all citizens.

Marissa from Santa Fe is hesitant to start a family because of the uncertainty caused by Musk, Trump, and Vought. Marissa wrote to me:

I am really terrified at the idea that so much of the Federal Government is being dismantled by someone who was never nominated to a position of power. I want to be able to start a family, but how can I do that without fear of knowing that this man and the GOP are destroying any chance of that happening?

Holly from Albuquerque, a public school teacher, is also deeply worried about Trump and Vought's intentions to dismantle the Department of Education and what this could mean for her students, fellow teachers, and her financial security. She wrote:

As an educator for 22 years here in New Mexico, I know firsthand the struggles that our families and students and educators are facing in the classroom, and we really need access to the Federal support that we get. Whether it is title I, special education money, or grants, I don't know how we're going to operate our schools effectively without that.

I am also worried about my pension as a public school educator. I am supposed to be eligible for retirement in 3½ years, and I have dedicated my life to the students of New Mexico.

Today, I say to the thousands of New Mexicans who have asked me to oppose

Mr. Vought's nomination: I agree with you. Mr. Vought is unfit to lead the OMB. We should reject this dangerously unfit nominee before he dismantles the services that New Mexicans rely on. We should reject him before he unilaterally overrides the laws that Americans' elected representatives have passed.

We cannot stand by and allow Mr. Vought, Elon Musk, or even this President to disregard the safety and security of the American people, and the law is on our side.

In the last week, two Federal courts have issued restraining orders on Trump's directives. I want to read a few short words from what the judges have said:

The Executive's action unilaterally suspends the payment of federal funds to the States and others simply by choosing to do so, no matter the authorizing or appropriating statute, the regulatory regime, or the terms of the grant itself. The Executive cites no legal authority allowing it to do so; indeed, no federal law would authorize the Executive's unilateral action here.

The court continued by dismissing Trump's arguments justifying the funding freeze, declaring:

The Executive Branch has a duty to align federal spending and action with the will of the people as expressed through congressional appropriations, not . . . "Presidential priorities."

These court rulings represent battles won, but this war to defend the Constitution and stability in this Nation is far from over.

We won't stop until Trump, Musk, and Vought follow the law and abide by the Constitution. That means respecting Federal workers. It means ending the unilateral and unlawful freeze of appropriated funds for projects from the Eastern New Mexico Rural Water Project to the Red Top Water Development Project.

I have said it before and I will say it again: This is not a game. This is a nation of laws, and just like you, every one of us here in this body swore to defend the Constitution. Mass layoffs of Federal workers, working to disband the Department of Education or the EPA or the National Science Foundation, abusing the FBI, handing over access to more than one-fifth of our economy and the private data of every single American taxpayer without any regard for the risk that you are creating for our national security—that is not defending this Nation of laws; it is not following the Constitution; it is not putting public service or even America first. It looks a lot like tyranny. It needs to stop.

"We the People" is the first phrase of the U.S. Constitution, and that is exactly who Republicans in charge of the Senate, the House, and the White House—the people who can stop this need to hear from you.

So to all Americans wondering what can be done right now, rise up your voice, call your Member of Congress, call your Senators, call the White House, call the Treasury Department,

comment on your Republican representatives' social media channels, write op-eds in your local newspaper telling how you are impacted. Make sure that Republicans know that we the people are paying attention, that we will hold them accountable for following the law, upholding the Constitution. Make sure to let your lawmakers know when you support the work that they are doing so that they continue to do it. And let Federal civil servants know that you support them and that you want them to keep doing their jobs and doing them well.

I will continue to stand up to this chaos, to this lawlessness, and as part of that work, I will vote no on Russell Vought.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I rise tonight in opposition to the nomination of Russell Vought to be Director of the Office of Management and Budget, also known as OMB. My colleagues and I have been holding the Senate floor since yesterday to sound the alarm on this dangerous nomination.

Russell Vought is the architect of Project 2025, the hateful, racist, sexist policy roadmap at the center of Trump's campaign.

Mr. Vought has been working behind the scenes for years on policies to consolidate power, undermine the critical services that the Federal Government provides to the American people, and undermine Congress's power of the purse.

When Vought was at the Office of Management and Budget during the last Trump administration, he demonstrated a complete lack of regard for our branch of government—the Congress. He was responsible for illegally withholding and delaying billions of dollars in congressionally appropriated funding and now is planning to ratchet up this whole destructive power to a new level in 2025.

While Vought was withholding the funding that he and Trump don't like, he revealed a 2021 budget plan that showed us all the terrible things that he did like. That plan, authored by Russell Vought, proposed—listen to this—\$500 billion in cuts to Medicare, \$900 billion in cuts to Medicaid, \$71 billion cuts to Social Security. In those budgets, Vought was able to find \$1.4 trillion to continue the tax that Trump gave—that big tax break to the millionaires and billionaires in our country, all paid for out of Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security.

Right now, Russell Vought is working behind the scenes and not even waiting to propose a budget. He is directing the Agency to illegally cut billions of dollars in spending from programs that American families rely upon.

Someone else's name may have been on the January 27 memo that came from OMB that froze all government spending, but—make no mistake—it was authored by Russell Vought. Everything we are seeing right now—the

illegal and unconstitutional actions being taken to dismantle Federal Agencies, freeze funding, steal the data of American citizens—is a push to further the Project 2025 playbook.

Vought may be the one to have written the blueprint, but now he and everyone else, including the President himself, are taking orders from one man—Elon Musk. All of this chaos is because the richest man in the world spent more than \$280 million on buying this election, and he wants to reap the benefits from his investment.

For Donald Trump, DEI seems to only stand for “defending Elon’s interests.” Now, he and Vought are planning to make OMB stand for “only Musk’s business.”

Elon Musk and his unqualified, unelected government arsonists wants to be able to carry out their attacks on your privacy, your rights, and your friends and neighbors under the cover of darkness. Because with every new day, we are seeing Donald Trump’s deep-pocketed puppeteer, Elon Musk, attempt to dismantle the government services that keep our communities clean, healthy, and safe. And they are acting with impunity.

I just came from the Environmental Protection Agency—an Agency created by Congress, authorized by Congress, signed into law by Richard Nixon, and one which the Environmental and Public Works Committee, on which I sit, oversees. I was denied access to the EPA to talk to Musk’s DOGE henchmen.

No, you can’t come in Senator. You can’t talk to these young people rumbling around, interviewing people who majored in physics and biology and chemistry who are protecting the clean air and clean water and clean lands in our country. No, you can’t come in.

Musk doesn’t just believe he is above the law; he doesn’t believe in the law at all. He believes that the U.S. Constitution does not apply to him. Elon Musk is not bound by the Constitution.

Everyone knows that we have three branches of government created in the Constitution as separate articles defining the powers of each. Article I of the Constitution is the Congress, article II of the Constitution is the Presidency, and article III of the Constitution is the judiciary. But Elon Musk doesn’t need to answer to any of those branches—not to Congress, not to the courts, and certainly not to his newly bought Presidency.

It makes sense for Trump to make Elon Musk a buddy. The guy who declared bankruptcy six times really needs a rich guy around to bail him out. But it is almost as if Musk believes that he has his own special place in the Constitution separate from the first three articles.

In Musk world, our Constitution contains an article III.V right after article III of the judiciary, and that new article that he believes exists and applies to him is a never-before-used provision in the Constitution with unlimited au-

thority to remake our constitutional order with Musk as the unelected and unaccountable leader.

Now, in Musk world, articles I, II, and III of the Constitution are toothless compared to the power reserved for him and him alone in article III.V, right before article IV. He just slipped it in now. Article III.V.

In Musk world, article III.V goes something like this: Article III.V, the Muskocracy—his own separate provision in the Constitution.

Section 1 of the Muskocracy, establishment of the Elon Musk branch:

The executive, legislative, and judicial branches shall hereby recognize a new and supreme branch of government known as Elon Musk. This branch shall operate independently of the other three branches, unburdened by traditional constraints such as laws, ethics, or the need for congressional approval.

That is section 1.

Section 2, powers and responsibilities for the Muskocracy:

The Elon Musk branch shall wield absolute authority over but not limited to, No. 1, Federal Agency reorganization. “Abolish the at will clause” is in that section—whatever he decides.

The Musk branch may at any time eliminate, restructure, or replace any Federal Agency by way of a single tweet.

A lot of power that section 1 is.

Section 2, workforce optimization:

All Federal employees shall be subject to an immediate performance review determined by way of an AI-powered metric called the HyperProductivity Index, trademarked. Any Agency deemed “inefficient” shall be replaced by a new office staffed entirely by a mix of X Premium subscribers, Tesla interns, and SpaceX engineers working 120-hour weeks.

This is the Muskocracy, and it just continues.

Data access, part 3:

The Musk branch shall have unrestricted access to all government personnel records, including security clearances, tax filings, and even embarrassing Slack messages.

All goes to Elon Musk under article III.V of the new U.S. Constitution enacted on Inauguration Day in 2024.

Then we have legislative override:

All bills must be reviewed and meme’d upon by the Musk branch before passing. A simple “haha no” tweet from the Musk branch shall serve as an automatic veto.

He didn’t like it, just tweet it out. Everyone will jump. Make sure that doesn’t happen. This is the new Muskocracy in which we are now living—article III.V of the new Constitution of the United States of America.

Judicial review:

The Supreme Court shall be replaced with a single X post where Elon asks “Should this be legal?”

The most liked reply becomes binding precedent.

This is the only way to govern. You can just see how it is all playing on X.

It is the new Constitution of the United States, binding on the U.S. Senate for sure. We can see that in the votes that are being cast out there by the majority.

Then we move on to section 3, Administration and Oversight.

The Musk branch shall be staffed exclusively by engineers, AI-powered bots, and a small staff of interns selected through an online gladiator-style coding competition.

How else would you run America in 2025 but have those superior beings making all decisions for all of us?

Then, section 4, checks and balances—all of them. Checks and balances has always been the key going back to Madison and Jefferson. They thought through the checks and balances, and so did Elon Musk in his article III.V, the Muskocracy, the provision that is now operative in our country in the Donald Trump Presidency.

So checks and balances says: Although the existing three branches may express opinions, all official government actions require verification from the Musk branch, except those initiated by Musk himself, which are self-verifying because he is infallible. No one can question him.

And any opposition to the Musk branch shall be met with immediate ridicule. Come on. You can’t question Elon Musk. It is the new Constitution. That is how it is. Everyone should just understand.

And then section 5, succession and perpetuity. How does our country then operate into the future? Well, in the event that the physical Elon Musk ceases to exist, the Musk branch shall be transferred to an AI-trained on/off system for all of his tweets that are gathered together and then Neura-link data and past Rogan podcast appearances and that AI shall rule indefinitely unless overthrown by a more innovative billionaire.

Isn’t that really how we want our country to be running under this Muskocracy, article III.V? That is where we are right now. That is the country that we are living in.

And does he have power? Oh, he has power. Because let’s not kid ourselves; right now Elon wants us to live in the Muskocracy.

The Trump administration is operating as if article III.V is real, as if Elon Musk has supreme authority to override the will of Congress, seize government property, hire and fire at will, and otherwise bend government to his benefit regardless of the consequences.

So let’s not fool ourselves. We can see article III.V in action right now. Musk is obsessed with shutting down USAID, slandering its public service, spreading baseless conspiracy theories about the Agency’s work and mission.

If we don’t stop him now through legislation and lawsuits, he will not only destroy our ability to address global crises that will eventually impact us at home; he will go after the Agencies that keep our food and water safe, our

infrastructure repaired, and our communities secured.

Gutting USAID will cause immediate harm to our national security, place our citizens at risk, and disrupt life-saving work. USAID helps protect children from starvation. It prevents the spread of infectious diseases. It is critical in our global fight against AIDS and HIV.

If we don't hold the line on Elon Musk's abolition of USAID and the Trump administration's illegal actions, nothing will prevent him or Trump from doing the same thing to the CDC, to the Environmental Protection Agency, to the Small Business Administration.

He is bragging that he put USAID in the wood chipper. We want to do the same thing for every other Agency.

And that is why I am voting no on every Trump nominee while this illegal and unconstitutional power grab continues, while this chaos continues, and this corruption continues.

The fights before us will not be easy, and there will be many. The American people are relying on us to protect their rights, their pocketbooks, and their families. And that starts with protecting them from nominees whose only goal is to dismantle the programs that help feed them, employ them, and keep them warm in the winter, educate them, and help them meet the ends that their families seek to achieve.

We need to say no to the nomination of Russell Vought tonight; no to the illegal, unconstitutional Muskocracy; and no to the costly, sick, or unhealthy future that Donald Trump is creating.

I urge all Members to vote no on Russell Vought as the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. LUJÁN. Mr. President, chaos, corruption, confusion—that is what Russell Vought offers.

For the past 2 weeks, my office has received thousands of calls. Worried New Mexicans are taking time out of their busy days to share their stories and plead for help.

Last Monday, when President Trump and Russell Vought illegally froze Federal programs and grant money allocated by Congress, chaos erupted in New Mexico and across the country.

A single mother of four in Bernalillo wrote to me:

I will literally have to choose between feeding my children or paying for them to have private health insurance. I barely make it paycheck to paycheck as it is, this freeze would definitely put us over. . . . Please help our state.

A senior from Albuquerque told me:

My savings have been wiped out by home care costs after one hospitalization. I am unable to work, and am living solely on Social Security income, most of which is eaten up by insurance premiums. I am dependent on Medicare health treatments.

Another constituent of mine wrote:

Now, we are scared to lose medical and food. We rely on Medicaid care for proce-

dures and prescriptions that keep me and my husband alive. Without SNAP, we can't afford to eat.

A family doctor shared that if the Federal freeze on grants and programs were to be implemented, it would put a family clinic that serves 50,000 New Mexicans in immediate danger of closing. This would leave thousands of patients without access to primary healthcare.

Another constituent said:

I am working at the Senior Community Service Employment Program to make enough money to live on and pay our bills. This program allows me to make some money to pay bills otherwise I cannot make it through the month. I am so afraid. President Trump's plan is to take away this program. Help please!

Another young woman in southwest Albuquerque wrote to me saying:

As a type 1 diabetic, I am afraid to lose Medicaid because of the decision of the President. I will not survive without it. I am beyond blessed to have Medicaid because I have made it 12 years of being diabetic and being able to have an insulin pump. Unfortunately, if I go without Medicaid, I don't think I would even be able to afford an insulin pen that only lasts up to 2 weeks.

One New Mexican, who works at a school lunch program, called asking:

Will the students have food tomorrow? We have no way to make up the difference.

A farmer in Silver City said he was concerned about the devastation a funding freeze would have on the farmers and ranchers across New Mexico.

A nonprofit that helps people with disabilities find housing and employment said they "would not be able to function."

A mother and nurse wrote in to say that stopping his two disabled children's healthcare will destroy their lives.

This is just a handful of the countless stories shared with my office in the past 11 days. New Mexicans were scared and didn't know what to do.

The Trump administration offered a two-page memo that effectively took away assistance for millions of Americans, Republicans and Democrats, who would not be able to put food on the table, afford their prescriptions, or put gas in their cars because of Russell Vought and the Trump Administration.

When asked by reporters in the briefing room if this freeze was going to affect programs that help feed young children, provide veterans with healthcare, or keep the heat on for seniors during cold winters—the White House Press Secretary answered over and over again that this freeze would not affect individual assistance programs. She left it at that, no specific details or plans to share with the American people regarding whether the Trump administration planned to freeze the funding they depend on.

What happened was these programs were frozen. Contrary to the lie the White House told the American people, these programs were frozen. Medicaid and Head Start payment portals were frozen with no explanation. After

Democrats and the public demanded answers, the portals began to open up again. No explanation was given to the American people, no accountability.

Let me be clear, Vought's fingerprints are all over Trump's funding freeze despite not being confirmed. What Russell Vought is doing is bad for our country. I don't need to stand here and wonder or make guesses about what his policies will do if he is confirmed to be the Director of the Office of Management and Budget. He has already done this job before, and when he did, he broke the law.

Let me repeat that. Russell Vought broke the law. He decided that he and President Trump get to determine what programs are funded. Not Congress, as the Constitution requires, not the people of this country, just them.

The rule of law still needs to matter in this country, and it needs to matter in this body.

Let me also tell you why I don't need to guess what Mr. Vought is going to do. A chief architect of Project 2025, Russell Vought wants nothing more than to have a chance at cutting funding for Medicaid, healthcare and mental health services for veterans, early childhood education for kids, and so much more.

I am proud to serve New Mexico. I know that I do not just represent the people who voted to put me in this job. And because I serve them, all New Mexicans, I went into the confirmation process with an open mind.

The decisions and the leadership of the person who will take the seat of Director of the Office of Management and Budget will affect all New Mexicans.

Under this Presidency, I know this Cabinet will not agree with me on every issue, but I want these positions to be filled by people who will not just serve the Americans who voted for their boss, but serve everyone. I do not have a problem with a Republican running the Office of Management and Budget. I take issue with a nominee who promises to violate the law and strip funding from the American people.

I take issue with slashing funding for children's health insurance, moms and dads trying to put food on the table, seniors being able to afford their medicine. I take issue with this nominee who has a record of disdain for Federal employees and "wants federal employees to be traumatized." I take issue with a nominee who, when it comes to our Federal workers, wants to clean house and replace them with political loyalists.

Let me end with something personal. Russell Vought believes that kids who attend Head Start "have worse behavior and academic outcomes than children who do not enroll in the program." He signed his name on a document saying exactly this. I am a Head Start graduate standing right now in the well of the U.S. Senate. Early education opens up doors for millions of

kids and Russell Vought will try to take it away, take away the opportunity for young children to attain the tools they need to succeed in this world.

My grandparents often told me as a kid to leave things better than you found them. Let me tell you what Vought is going to do. He is going to slash programs that people depend on every day to pay for the Trump tax scam. And Russell Vought is going to leave kids, veterans, and seniors footing the bill. He is going to tell parents they have to make an impossible choice: feed their kids or be able to afford medicine for mom.

Russell Vought has no interest in the advice of my grandparents. He is not going to leave things better than he found them. The best thing for New Mexico right now is to not support a nominee who has already plunged our country into chaos and confusion. Our country and New Mexicans deserve better than this.

I want to thank each and every one of my Democratic colleagues who came to the floor this week to stand up for our constituents and who shared many stories and concerns from across the country over the nomination of Russell Vought.

I urge my Republican colleagues to speak with their constituents who will suffer at the hands of Russell Vought as Director of the Office of Management and Budget, a decision and confirmation that would be damaging to our country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, now we know this, and this is a conversation I have quite often with individuals to talk about what is happening in my State when they ask me: What is going on in Washington? What is happening with the Executive orders and the change of the administration?

And one thing that we talk about, and I think it is important because sometimes it gets lost in this conversation is that when our system of government was created, about 250 years ago, it was created because the American people at the time decided they wanted a democracy. They didn't want a king.

You know, the United States of America is born out of a revolution against a monarch, a king who sat on a throne and had really no checks on his power.

And our Founding Fathers built this Nation on a foundation of democratic principles, supporting the idea that government is for the people. That is what the American people wanted.

And as part of that creation, they established three coequal branches of government. We all know the executive, the legislative, the judicial. And along with that, they created a system of checks and balances to ensure that no branch had too much control over the other.

Now, as we all know—we work here in Congress—that legislative branch is

important. It is the first branch of government, coequal to all the others. But it writes and passes laws, approves Presidential nominations, but also, importantly, the branch of government that we all work in is about passing a budget and controlling the purse.

What does that mean? The money. We are the ones that decide how we spend this money, the budget for the Federal Government; where it is going to go, the appropriations for it. And that really is the power of Congress that our Founding Fathers gave to us.

Now, the executive branch, we all know, the Founders gave the President the authority to veto, to implement, to enforce laws, along with the power to manage and direct government Agencies.

That is what the Founding Fathers envision to ensure that our government puts the American people first and that no branch of government could become too powerful. Those are checks and balances that have been tested throughout our Nation's history.

Let me just give you an example. In 1974, President Richard Nixon refused to release funds approved by Congress for certain programs that he opposed. In response to his unconstitutional abuse of power, Congress passed bipartisan legislation called the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Act of 1974. This legislation reaffirms that, once Congress passes bills that deliver funding to the American people, the President can't delay or cancel those funds.

Unfortunately today, we have a nominee for the Office of Management and Budget—we call it OMB—who thinks this critical check on the President's power shouldn't exist.

Now, you have heard this. My Democratic colleagues have been on the Senate floor since 2 p.m. yesterday to oppose Russ Vought.

Why? Because Russ Vought is a co-author of President Trump's Project 2025 manifesto, and he is the chief architect of Trump's strategy to seize the power of the legislative branch. How? How are they doing that? Well, let's just talk about that.

On January 27, the OMB issued a memo to effectively suspend Congress's power of the purse by announcing a pause on all Federal grants and loans. He shut down funding for practically every State and local program that receives money from the Federal government.

Now, like all of my colleagues, I have heard from Nevadans worried about accessing Medicaid or their VA benefits or funding for law enforcement or housing and energy payments that keep the lights on for low-income Nevadans. I have heard concerns about childcare initiatives like Head Start that have no longer any funding, and programs to support seniors like Meals on Wheels are concerned.

I have heard from Tribes in Nevada. I just got out of my office meeting with one of our Tribes who are still having

trouble accessing housing funds and similar funds.

Groups that support Nevada's domestic violence survivors don't know if they will have the money to get critical resources to people in need.

Nevada literacy programs that are helping children learn to read have been threatened with a loss of funding.

Rural communities in Nevada receiving Federal grants, ranging from community development grants to wastewater treatment—several of those grants and that funding have been delayed or cut.

Trump's funding freeze shut down support for safety and security for kids and families in the historic Westside of Las Vegas.

President Trump shut down \$156 million in funding for solar energy in Nevada. We were going to install solar power on hundreds of buildings, helping to bring down energy costs for 20,000 hard-working Nevada families. But President Trump illegally stopped these solar grants to Nevada. That has jeopardized thousands of good-paying jobs for laborers and construction crews in my State.

And while the Trump administration claims that Medicaid wasn't affected by the Federal funding freeze, the fact is the Medicaid payment system did go offline in all 50 States.

Now, intentional or not, the OMB order was reckless, causing confusion and chaos for many across the country, including doctors and healthcare staff who didn't know if they were going to get paid for the work they do.

Like my colleagues, my office is being flooded with these calls, including from Nevadans concerned about their future benefits from Medicaid, Medicare, and Social Security.

These are real Americans who are being squeezed by this unconstitutional funding freeze, even though Donald Trump promised to make their lives better.

Americans right now are being hung out to dry by Donald Trump and Russ Vought, whose Project 2025 was clearly—clearly—the inspiration for this dangerous funding freeze.

Russ Vought is unfit to serve at the head of the Agency that oversees our Federal budget.

During his confirmation hearing, he said the Impoundment Control Act of 1974 is unconstitutional. One man decides the laws in this State. Wow, that is a lot of power. He is basically saying he thinks the President should be able to withhold any funding that they don't like, even though that goes against the separation of powers our Founding Fathers wrote into the Constitution.

Think about this: Under the last administration, we passed the Inflation Reduction Act that created incredible jobs—union jobs—and grew our economy in Nevada and across this country. Now President Trump and Russ Vought are saying the President doesn't have to deliver all that funding to communities in Nevada and across the country. Many of those communities have

already broken ground on projects that they were promised funding for.

Instead of focusing on the working families that Donald Trump said he was fighting for, he is clearly only interested in becoming as powerful as possible, no matter how many laws he breaks.

Listen, you know something is wrong when firefighters who went to Los Angeles to help contain the devastating wildfires received emails from the Trump administration encouraging them to resign. It wasn't an email to say: Thank you. You risked your lives. We couldn't do this without you.

They actually sent a letter to these firefighters saying: Well, it is time to resign.

What kind of President thanks our firefighters by telling them to leave their jobs and leave our communities defenseless? He doesn't care about our safety and security. He only cares about his own.

My question for my colleagues on the other side of the aisle is, What is next? What will be the next congressional power we cede to Donald Trump and his billionaire friends? What will be the next crisis we have to clean up when we could be focusing on delivering for Americans?

We are supposed to be representing the people of our States and fighting for them. When I speak to Nevadans every single day, they expect me to get them the Federal support they need. That means working across the aisle. I will work with anyone to get things done on behalf of my State and across the country.

But it also means standing up to anyone who would prefer to sow chaos and ignore the Constitution, violate our laws, usurp our power; anyone who would rather do that and not tackle the real issues that Americans are dealing with right now.

Let me say, I don't know anybody, any one of my colleagues or anyone else, who doesn't support streamlining our Federal Government. I am here because I was so frustrated with the bureaucracy of the Federal Government and support streamlining it and think we should do that, absolutely, every day, work towards how we make it work for Americans. I support it.

But what we need is a thoughtful business strategy to do just that. That is welcome. But burning the Federal Government to the ground, that is not a business strategy; that is just total destruction. And that is not what the American people deserve.

I yield the floor.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I join my colleagues—I thank the Senator from Nevada for her great comments in articulating why we want to have a budget process here that recognizes the U.S. Senate, the House of Representatives, and to say that a budget process that tries to exclude us is not what our Forefathers had in mind.

That is one of the reasons I strongly oppose this nomination to be the Direc-

tor of the Office of Management and Budget for Russell Vought. The administration, like every one before it, has had the opportunity to propose a budget, set overall policy principles, and propose spending and policies. This administration does not have the power to wave a wand and erase legally authorized and appropriated funds.

The Constitution is very clear here: Congress and the administration, together, agree on appropriations. They agree together when we pass laws and what we want to do to govern. And people should be able to rely on current laws until those laws are changed.

That is how governing works, and we are here to represent the people who want to see the certainty and predictability of laws that we have passed. Regular review of programs and congressional oversight, as my colleague from Nevada just mentioned, those are valuable things, and we can continue to make reforms in thoughtful and transparent ways.

We should not allow unaccountable political actors, though, to have unfettered access to our constituents' most sensitive data without safeguards on how that data is protected, their rights, and conflicts of interest, or how that data might even be used against them.

I am for a very strong national privacy law to protect our consumers, and one person I don't want a spying on us is the U.S. Government. So I don't take lightly somebody getting access to accounts and information, storing it, moving it around, sharing it with other people. I don't care if they are 22 or 42, I am not for the government doing this kind of thing without oversight.

Taxpayers—I am not even for the government spying on U.S. citizens, just to be clear, I am not for that. But this is just data collection. Data collection. Who is it going to? What are they doing with it? How much are they going to use it?

So taxpayers, they rely on us for service, and they don't want to believe that somebody is looking around in these accounts. Even our own personnel management system got hacked by the Chinese. How do we know that there are safeguards for what these individuals are doing with our most personal information?

But the havoc that has been caused by this nominee's strategy is just absurd. Today, I met with a group of farmers who were talking about how they grow and process export products.

They told me, because USAID operations were shut down, their products were stuck on a dock in Houston, they don't think they are ever going to get delivered, and they sure as heck don't think they are going to get paid.

Is that what we want to do? Tell our farmers that they have a contract to grow a product, to have them delivered, and the shipment is on its way, and now, you are going to leave it on a dock because you think you have a bright idea of way to shortcut Congress?

Over 1.8 million Washingtonians rely on Medicare, and they shouldn't have to be worried at any moment of the day that somehow that that is not going to be paid for. But that is what happened when Washington State Health Care Authority was frozen out of the Medicaid portal and the healthcare payments were not being made.

My colleague also just addressed that. The portal eventually got turned on after the huge volume and outrage. Really, outrage by the public forced the administration to say, "Stop this silly attitude that you can stop payment yourself." They forced them to turn the portal back on and pay the Medicaid bills.

But Washington State is also home to community health centers. They are nonprofit entities that serve the medically underserved population. Part of me is thinking, this is really an attempt to steal money from our constituents, just to pay for a tax bill.

Literally, somebody thought they were going to come in here and make a very fast move and basically turn off payments to people who are really poor and in very challenging situations and turn off payments so they could take the money and put it into a tax break for the rich later on.

That is absurd. It is absurd. It is not even legal. We were told by some of these healthcare centers that they were blocked from transferring Federal funds to those needed in their hospitals. In other words, cutting off funding that would be helpful to saving lives. These health centers provide care to more than 1 million people in our State, over 360,000 of them. And there are children, agriculture workers, and veterans, and the fact that these medical systems work to help all of us provide primary care is exactly why we shouldn't turn off a system.

I got a call from someone in Pierce County to tell me about her son Tobias, who is 36 years old. He was recently diagnosed with multiple myeloma and is one of the youngest people who has gotten the diagnosis. They are absolutely terrified about the risk of losing cancer research dollars. She said she couldn't wrap her mind around it:

This insane and cruel road that we are all on now with this new administration.

These are the stories from my constituents, they want to know what is going on in their lives. It is not a parlor game, it is not a think tank exercise. It is their lives.

For one of the hospitals in my State, Island Health in Anacortes, the funding freeze means they couldn't fill a contractual agreement to pay for surgical technology. They were under contract to pay no later than 30 days after the receipt of the equipment, which is currently being shipped to them. So the first time this community was going to realize the benefit of some technology that was going to help them provide better outcomes through less invasive

procedures, lower the infection rate, and shorten their recovery time. But they don't know—the funds are frozen, the people of Anacortes could have to wait, and they may not even get the delivery of that care—because OMB created uncertainty. They created it about the funding, without thinking through the consequences. Multiple hospitals are worried about caring for their patients. Olympic Medical Center on the peninsula serves about 80,000 patients. They said to me, even small changes in the Federal grant spending will have detrimental impacts to their facility and to their community.

A Federal funding freeze just exacerbates their ability to deliver care that has been authorized, appropriated and promised—promised to the operation of our healthcare system. How could people be so heartless to try to turn that off?

Andrea Downs, the executive director for Citizens Against Domestic and Sexual Abuse, which is the only domestic violence and sexual assault agency for Whidbey Island, said they operate a center and a shelter. She said the funding freeze impacts about half of their funding. Portals, not getting paid, no processing, no time. She said “not being able to access our grants for the remainder of this fiscal year would have a crippling impact on our organization.”

One, Walla Walla/Tri Cities based nonprofit, Blue Mountain Heart to Heart, is also concerned about Federal grants that they receive that support housing needs of people who live within the region. And they are also worried about the accountability of care that comes with the Medicaid funds.

But probably nothing said it more clear to me than when I heard that Elon Musk and DOGE wanted to get their hands on the FAA. What should a man who is regulated by the FAA—his launch facilities are under the FAA's authority to keep us safe. They need to know and coordinate launch rocket times and to not have people just launch a rocket whenever they want.

We already know the painful experience of these accidents on the Potomac, of not having a system overseen with enough input by air traffic controllers. But Mr. Musk was fined, and he didn't like the fine. He basically went after the FAA Administrator, who decided to step down instead of serving with this administration. Now, Mr. Musk wants his hands on the FAA to tell them what to do, probably in retribution for the fact that they said it wasn't safe to launch at that moment. This is a clear conflict of interest.

We can do better than this. We are here to work together. We are here to work across the aisle. We are here to pass a budget. We are here to appropriate and, as an authorizer, to set those authorizations and work with our appropriators.

It is not for a nominee to set a game plan of how to take money out of the

lives of individual families that are counting on that payment or structural organizations that are charged with serving our communities on something as important as health or law enforcement, and it sure isn't turning the keys over to somebody who has already been fined by the Agency to try to then undo the Agency's oversight of his own personal business. There couldn't be a clearer answer here. Turn down this nomination. Let's get back to working together, working collaboratively.

There are lots of ideas that we have to work on government efficiency, lots of ideas that could produce billions of dollars in savings, produce better care for our constituents, and move our country forward. And, oh, by the way, let's not also continue to cut funding for all the authorized programs that these nominees basically said that they supported. That is why we voted for some of them because they said they supported current funding, whether that is the Department of Transportation or other places. But now, the mastermind of how to short circuit, pull the plug out, pull out the safety blanket, give it to the rich is on the way for a vote here.

Please vote no.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, since yesterday afternoon, Democrats have held this floor to ring the alarm bells across the United States of America about the nomination of Russell Vought to lead the Office of Management and Budget.

Russ Vought may not be as famous as Donald Trump's other nominees, but as you have heard from so many Democrats, “Radical Russ” is Donald Trump's most dangerous nominee. He is the mastermind behind Project 2025. In following that script, he proudly breaks the law, he proudly violates the Constitution, and he proudly seeks to gut programs for ordinary American families to deliver trillions in tax giveaways to the richest Americans.

Russell Vought's dead-of-night directives to freeze government payments have already sown massive damage across our Nation—programs for healthcare and housing and education and children.

Then, just today, I learned that the Bureau of Land Management is ordering small businesses to cease and desist all work for forest management—that of thinning the forests and doing prescribed burns to prevent massive forest fires from burning down our cities. That is literally Trump and Russ Vought playing with fire.

The American people are angry about this sweeping authoritarian coup. They are calling our offices. Two thousand Oregonians called my office yesterday. Thousands of people showed up to my nine townhalls over the last two weekends.

They are asking tough questions:

How is it possible that Donald Trump could order dead-of-night directives

and cut off funding for all of the programs that help families get on their feet and thrive and get to the middle class—those addressing child nutrition and affordable housing and healthcare?

How is it possible that Trump can break the law to fire 17 inspectors general who protect the American people from executive branch corruption?

How is it possible Trump can break the law to fire a member of the National Labor Relations Board, who protects workers' rights?

How is it possible Trump can dismantle USAID, which provides food and medicine and humanitarian aid around the world?

How is it possible Russ Vought and President Trump can send Elon Musk's groupies to access sensitive programs and access our data regarding Social Security payments and Medicare payments and veterans' benefits and the tax records of every single American?

This breach of privacy by Big Brother government is an extraordinary threat to the security of every single citizen.

“Radical Russ” has a three-part plan for America: Gut programs for working families, borrow trillions from the Treasury, and give massive tax giveaways to the very richest Americans. This is the robber baron script: Take from ordinary families to give more to the best off.

This is the opposite of what Trump campaigned on. He campaigned on helping families, and now that he is in office, the campaign is giving way to, instead, Project 2025, which is about government of the billionaires, by the billionaires, for the billionaires.

That is why the Democratic members of the Budget Committee asked to delay the vote on sending his nomination here to the floor—because we wanted to find out. We asked questions about what he was doing already over at the Office of Management and Budget when he hadn't been confirmed yet, holding meetings and sending out directives. He wouldn't answer those questions, so his file is incomplete. So we said to hold off for 2 weeks, but the Budget Committee chair refused to hold off and make sure that the file was complete.

Then we said: Well, at least hold the meeting in public so we can share our thoughts back and forth, and the public can come in and witness it and see our arguments about why he should or shouldn't be voted to send to the floor. Instead, the meeting was held in private.

So that was why we were so concerned then and, as you have heard from 41 Democrats over the last 30 hours, why we are so concerned now with the philosophy and actions of “Radical Russ” Vought. We are working day and night, fighting for working families, fighting for the Constitution, and fighting to stop this sweeping authoritarian takeover.

To my friends across the aisle: “Radical Russ” wants to steal the power of

the purse given to Congress in this Constitution—our Constitution—and give it to Donald Trump to decide what is and isn't funded.

"Radical Russ" wants to steal the power to write laws given to Congress and the Constitution and give it to Donald Trump to rule by Executive order and Presidential fiat.

"Radical Russ" has attacked the Constitution before. Remember, he is the force that said "Let's stop payments to Ukraine" that got President Trump into trouble in his first administration.

We here have taken an oath to defend the Constitution for working Americans—for all Americans. Join us in voting no because "Radical Russ" is dangerously unfit for public office.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, Democrats have spent virtually every minute of the last 30 hours sounding the alarm about the dangers of Russell Vought. We feel it a mission to let America know that Russell Vought is a threat to Social Security, to Medicare, to childcare, to veterans' benefits, and so much more.

He is the wrong man—he seems to care little about the needs of American families; at the wrong place—at powerful OMB, where his decisions will be felt in every corner of the country; with the wrong agenda—the horrible Project 2025.

There are three strikes against Russell Vought, and he should be out. He is the wrong man at the wrong place with the wrong agenda.

Mr. Vought's policies will hurt children and seniors, hurt veterans, hurt homeowners, and so many of our other friends and neighbors. The only people who should celebrate Russell Vought are Donald Trump's billionaire friends when they get another tax break.

I caution my Republican colleagues: Voting to place the chief architect of Project 2025 in charge of White House policy will come back to haunt them. If the chaos of the last 2 weeks is any indication of what is to come, Russell Vought will be a massive liability for Donald Trump, for Republicans, and worst of all, for the country.

Tonight, I will vote no fervently, strongly, with complete conviction, and urge my colleagues to do the same. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, we are getting now close to the time to vote on the Vought nomination, and it has been a 30-hour discussion, conversation, some of which I think is perhaps instructive.

I mean, I would make an argument, honestly, that through multiple administrations, Congress has bequeathed and given up way too much power to the executive branch. But I think, with the all-night vigil—and a lot of speeches were made over here—there was a lot of high rhetoric, I would argue,

about attacks on democracy, attacks on the Constitution.

I think it is important when you make those arguments that there be at least some amount of self-reflection because, over the last 4 years, there have been a lot of times when the executive branch went around the Congress or tried to rewrite the laws Congress had passed in ways that increased spending, and I can use a good example.

Under the committee of jurisdiction, the Commerce Committee, which is where I spent a lot of my time over the past few years, there was a program called the BEAD Program, which was designed to extend broadband access to people in rural areas of the country, unserved areas of the country, and it passed almost—well, about 3 years ago. I didn't vote for it at the time. But that provision in the bill was designed to deliver broadband services to unserved areas, rural areas of the country. We are now 3 years into that program, and there hasn't been a single dollar spent or a single household connected through that program, and it was a \$42 billion funding program—\$42 billion and not a single dollar spent.

Why? Because the administration decided to add conditions to it, conditions that made it unusable to a lot of the telecoms—at least certainly to the telecoms in my area, and I think I represent probably as rural of an area as you will ever find.

What were some of those conditions?

Well, they said you had to use union labor. In South Dakota, we are a right-to-work State, so we don't have a lot of that.

You had to meet climate conditions for your subcontractors, your suppliers, and everything else. You had to comply with certain climate requirements.

Then there was an issue about rate regulation. Now, rate regulation, interestingly enough, was specifically banned by the statute. The statute said: no rate regulation. So what the administration did is they added to the law—in all of these ways—in a way that made it virtually impossible for anybody to use.

So here we are, 3 years later, 3 years after that law passed this Congress, and not a single dollar has been spent, and not a single household has been connected. Why? Because the executive branch decided they wanted to do some things with this law that Congress never intended. I didn't hear the complaints about that or all-night vigils.

Another thing I will point out is the student loan program. Now, as we all know, the student loan program, of course, is authorized again, funded by Congress, and that is a subject of ongoing litigation—I think we all know that—but it is hundreds of billions of dollars. It is actually increasing spending. It is not cutting spending but increasing spending—and, again, totally outside the parameters of what Congress intended for the program.

The law is pretty clear, we believe. And I think when you sign agree-

ments—there are a lot of financial agreements that students enter into on the student loan program. Essentially, what has been said by the previous administration, the executive branch, the attack on democracy, was that that is not going to apply and we are just going to forgive them all. We will wipe out all of the agreements. We will go around the law, circumvent the law. And folks on this side of the aisle applauded when that happened—again, action taken by the executive branch outside the parameters of what Congress intended when that law was passed.

I will use one other example, and that is the Thrifty Food Program. I serve on the Senate Agriculture Committee, as does Senator GRASSLEY and a lot of other of our colleagues. In the 2018 farm bill, there was a provision in there that allows the Department of Agriculture to use this program for sort of inflationary increases. The Thrifty Food Program is based on current food prices, food composition data, consumption patterns, and dietary guidance. But, interestingly enough, what the Department of Agriculture decided to do was go around 45 years of precedent and do something that had never been done before and dramatically increase the program by \$250 billion—\$250 billion.

It wasn't an inflationary increase that was based on the cost of this program over time. It was something that had never been done before, and the Government Accountability Office busted the administration for doing it.

But they used, very cynically, the 2018 farm bill as the basis for USDA's action. But Congress never agreed to permit a quarter-of-a-trillion-dollar increase in spending.

So, again, I mean, these are decisions made by the previous executive branch, which happened to be the executive branch of a different party. And everybody had sort of a different reaction at that time.

So I am certainly somebody who is not deaf to what I am hearing out there about some of the decisions that are being made by this new administration and their willingness to look at and evaluate programs, perhaps reprioritize them based upon their priorities. I think that is something a lot of administrations do.

And I think there is probably a lot of the program spending decisions that you all are concerned about that I would probably agree with. But I just don't think that coming down here and launching what are "attacks on democracy" or, you know, trying to seize power from the Congress really matches with the facts of what happened the last 4 years.

And I will just use those three examples, but I think they are three pretty glaring examples of what happened the last 4 years.

Then the final thing I will say, because I think everybody here knows. We have had this conversation a number of times. But it wasn't that long

ago that there was a letter—2017—from a lot of U.S. Senators on both sides—Democrats and Republicans; and many on the Democratic side of the aisle who are still here today—that basically said:

We are mindful of the unique role the Senate plays in the legislative process, and we are steadfastly committed to ensuring that this great American institution continues to serve as the world's deliberative body. Therefore, we are asking you to join us in opposing any effort to curtail the existing rights and prerogatives of Senators to engage in full, robust, and extended debate as we consider legislation before this body in the future.

The legislative filibuster—part of the Senate's heritage as an institution—the way the Founders intended for it to operate. And in 2017, there were 32 Democrat Senators who signed that letter, a number of them who are here today. And I think you probably know who you are.

Well, it didn't take very long when you had a little change in the power, where you had the Democrats, everyone who was here at the time—some of you weren't; some of you are new—voted to get rid of the filibuster. You voted to change the rules. You know where it was going, and some of you have been very public about it, and you have been very public about what you would do if that happened.

The issue at that time was whether or not to federalize elections, which, again, has constitutional issues, given the prerogatives of the State legislatures to set the conditions under which elections are held.

So if you have got a history of arguing here there are all these attacks on democracy, all I am pointing out is that that was a very different standard in the last 4 years in the last administration, and particularly as it pertains to the legislative filibuster.

That is an issue—I don't think anybody here can argue—that is more connected to this institution than probably anything else. It gives voice to the minority. It requires collaboration and bipartisanship to do anything consequential. And at the time, everybody thought it was a good idea to preserve it.

A couple of years changed, the political winds in Washington changed, and all of a sudden it was time to get rid of it.

So we are going to vote on this nomination, but I think it is important to point out in the debate how many times an argument was made here on the floor by Members on this side about attacks on democracy. And going around and circumventing the authority and the power of the article I branch of the government—the Congress, the Senate of the United States—by an executive branch, and yet here are three pretty, I would say, glaring examples of something done by the previous administration.

Former Mayor Marion Barry once described his political philosophy as situationist. And I think when it comes to politics, we all have our views in-

formed and changed, perhaps, overtime. But these are some pretty striking, I think, and glaring examples of the inconsistency that is being applied to the current administration when, in fact, the previous administration—the administration of a different political party—came to some very aggressive conclusions with respect to how they wanted to modify and change and alter laws passed by this institution, the U.S. Senate.

Madam President, I think it is time to vote. Let's proceed with the vote.

VOTE ON VUGHT NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. MOODY). All time has expired.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Vought nomination?

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Ms. ALSOBROOKS. I vote no—

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XII, no debate is permitted during a vote. The Senator will suspend.

The clerk will continue to call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Ms. BALDWIN. I vote no on behalf of Waukesha Head Start and the 300 children that they—

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XII, no debate is permitted during a vote. The Senator will suspend.

The clerk will continue to call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. For our veterans, I vote no.

Ms. BLUNT ROCHESTER. For children with disabilities, I vote no.

Mr. BOOKER. For New Jersey first responders, I vote no.

Ms. CANTWELL. On behalf of farmers who deserve to be paid, I vote no.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XII, no debate is permitted during a vote. The Senator will suspend.

The clerk will continue to call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. COONS. On behalf of foreign aid, which keeps us safe and saves lives, I vote no.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XII, no debate is permitted during a vote. The Senator will suspend.

The clerk will continue to call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. In support of firefighters fighting wildfires, I vote no.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XII, no debate is permitted during a vote. The Senator will suspend.

The clerk will continue to call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. For medical researchers at NIH, I vote no.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XII, no debate is permitted during a vote. The Senator will suspend.

The clerk will continue to call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. For older New Yorkers, I vote no.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XII, no debate is permitted during a vote. The Senator will suspend.

The clerk will continue to call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Ms. HASSAN. On behalf of first responders from New Hampshire, I vote no.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XII, no debate is permitted during a vote. The Senator will suspend.

The clerk will continue to call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. HEINRICH. For our air traffic controllers, I vote no.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XII, no debate is permitted during a vote. The Senator will suspend.

The clerk will continue to call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. HICKENLOOPER. On behalf of Colorado hospitals and clinics, rural areas, I vote no on this vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XII, no debate is permitted during a vote. The Senator will suspend.

The clerk will continue to call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Ms. HIRONO. On behalf of 24,000 hardworking employees, I vote no.

Mr. KAINE. I vote no to the man who wants to traumatize the Federal workforce.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XII, no debate is permitted during a vote. The Senator will suspend.

The clerk will continue to call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. KELLY. On behalf of Head Start and Arizona, I vote no.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XII, no debate is permitted during a vote. The Senator will suspend.

The clerk will continue to call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. KIM. For our working families struggling to pay the bills, I vote no.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XII, no debate is permitted during a vote. The Senator will suspend.

The clerk will continue to call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. KING. Under the Constitution, I vote no.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XII, no debate is permitted during a vote. The Senator will suspend.

The clerk will continue to call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. For kids in cancer trials of Minnesota, I vote no.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XII, no debate is permitted during a vote. The Senator will suspend.