

all of a sudden, this funding freeze drops on them like a ton of bricks.

And it wasn't just community health centers—veterans organizations, mental health, organizations that provide mental help for people, Head Start.

In Western New York, two of our Head Starts in rural America, in rural Western New York, closed, and 200 families—200 families—had to struggle to find what to do, because when you are a single mom or a single dad or even a mom and dad, a two-parent family, and there is nobody there watching the kids—there is no Head Start—what are you going to do? Should I stay home from work—maybe risk salary being docked, even losing my job?

It was horrible. This occurred across the country.

Now, thank God, people rebelled. Thank God, people made their voices heard, and the funding freeze was rescinded. But the damage still is there.

There is a healthcare center, where I visited in Syracuse—this one was in the Mohawk Valley—that funding of \$71,000 on a thing they were building stopped. Five centers in Virginia closed. And funding is still intermittent in healthcare centers throughout New York State and throughout the country.

Cruel, unfair, awful. These programs help people. No, they don't help the billionaires. I get it. But they help average folks and poorer people get the healthcare they need. They help them see a doctor so that preventive care can happen, which we all know saves us money. They are a shining example of public service that does enormous good for millions of families.

And to anyone who says that these are examples of inefficiency or waste, visit one. Visit some of the scores of them that are in New York. They are the most efficient, effective deliverers of healthcare in the country. They serve people who need it the most, and they are effective.

Let's say you have 3 kids. You are a single mom. And your kid has 104 fever, with probably strep, and you have to see a doctor before it gets worse. You go to a community health center, and you don't sit in a waiting room for 6 hours and have to file endless papers, like you do in a hospital. They take care of you right away. It makes it a lot easier for people to get healthcare, and it makes people want to get that healthcare that their kid might need.

And yet we are still hearing it: these great healthcare centers—funding delayed, funding not coming, funding late. And they depend on this funding. They don't have a 6-month plan. They get funds from the Federal Government every 2 weeks. That pays the rent. That pays the salaries. That buys these supplies they need. You shut it off for a week, and the whole thing could face a real problem.

And so I went to Syracuse and Albany and demanded that, No. 1, this administration say they are no longer fooling around with the money that

these community health centers need, that they get it right away; 2, that they give an explanation as to why it was cut off. What did they do wrong? Help people get healthcare that they need?

And, third, we Senate Democrats are demanding that the funding for these centers, overall, which runs out on March 14, because, as you know, Madam President, there was a bipartisan agreement to fund them fully for the year—Democrats and Republicans—and Donald Trump and Elon Musk said, even before they were in office—Musk is not in office; but before Trump was in office and Musk was working with him—they told the Republicans: Don't fund it. Don't fund this healthcare package.

And so now we are waiting until March 14, but that is a CHC, community healthcare center, cliff. If we don't renew that funding, many, many will close. Millions of people in America who are getting good healthcare—often preventive, often dealing with the immediate problems—will not get it at all.

So those are the three things: Stop fooling around with the funding; keep the flow going. No. 2, explain what anyone did. Why did they stop this funding? And, third, fund us so we don't go over the healthcare cliff.

This was bipartisan. My guess is you, Madam President, probably supported it. But when Donald Trump and Elon Musk said, "Get that funding out; kill the deal," that is what Republicans did.

I made it clear in Syracuse and in Albany that this cannot happen. It is infuriating, and it has nothing to do with inefficiency.

Our hospitals, by the way—our big hospitals—like CHCs because that means their emergency rooms are not overflowed with people who could be taken care of in a much more effective, efficient way.

So I want to make a final point here. We hear from Donald Trump, JD VANCE, Elon Musk, and DOGE that all they want to do is get rid of waste and inefficiency. When you look at community health centers, that is utter nonsense—utter, utter nonsense. There isn't very much inefficiency at them. No one ever said it was, that they were inefficient. In fact, most people who look at it say they are the most efficient providers at a lower cost, with less to do in healthcare, less paperwork, less all of this than other places.

So anyone who thinks that this DOGE experiment is simply getting rid of waste, baloney—baloney. We know what it is about: cut. DOGE is using a meat ax and cutting things that are vital to people.

Why? Why is all this happening? Because a careful look at inefficiency in government, even with a new administration that might want to look at it a little differently, would not just cut everything—not just cut everything.

And the bottom line is, it is all to cut \$2.5 trillion, \$2 trillion. We know what

they are doing. And, unfortunately, too many of our Republican colleagues are going along. They are making these cuts so they can give the very wealthiest people in America a bigger tax break—take a working-class family that is getting healthcare and say: You don't get it anymore so Mr. Ultrabillionaire can get more tax breaks.

Come on. That is what is going on here, and it is across the board.

We saw what they did with AID. Well, one program AID is working on, as I understand it, is dealing with Ebola in the middle of Africa. Cut out the program? What if Ebola spreads around Africa and even here? Most people think that is a very good program.

Most people thought PEPFAR did a lot of good, but they cut it all. They didn't point out and say: This is inefficient, and that is inefficient. And cut it, but let's keep the good stuff. Uh-uh, cut it all. And we know why, once again. It is because the billionaires want even a bigger tax break.

So my visits to CHCs—the two CHCs I visited, Hometown in Schenectady and Syracuse healthcare in Syracuse—were very moving to me. I saw dedicated people who want to help people. I saw patients come in and get decent healthcare.

And yet it is on the chopping block. That is not what America voted for, Madam President. That is not what America voted for.

So I hope we will have a bipartisan coalition to fund our health centers, and I also hope that this administration, whether it comes to community health centers or so many other good programs across the board, will not freeze their funding, will not just say, "We are cutting you," and will look at things carefully. There is inefficiency; use a scalpel. Get rid of it, but don't cut everything.

And, again, it seems the logic is very simple. They are really not interested in making the government more efficient. They just want to cut a certain huge amount of money. They don't care where it comes from—2.5 trillion, 2 trillion, 1 trillion—regardless of the consequences for working families. It is a shame. It is a shame.

#### WHISTLEBLOWER PORTAL

Now, on our whistleblower portal, so today, we Senate Democrats have a very simple message to the American people and that is: If Donald Trump won't stand up for the rule of law and Senate Republicans won't lift a finger to hold him accountable, Senate Democrats will. So today I joined with a number of my colleagues to announce a new Senate Democratic whistleblower portal to help fill the void that Donald Trump created by firing the government's independent watchdogs.

The whistleblower portal will give civil servants and people of good will the chance to report on potential wrongdoing in government, abuse of power, threats to public safety.

Donald Trump has tried to wipe the government clean of all transparency

and accountability. That is why they got rid of so many of the IGs, for instance.

But Senate Democrats won't let him. We believe in transparency. We believe in accountability.

Donald Trump has tried to reshape our entire democracy to fit his unlawful impulses and serve his personal political interests. Senate Democrats won't let him. And so we have the whistleblower portal.

We are urging Americans who see some real wrongdoing being created by this DOGE thing to report it. I think all Americans want government to be transparent. We all agree that ensuring accountability is vital. But thus far, this new administration has done the opposite.

Today, with the whistleblower portal, we Senate Democrats are taking one step to help keep accountability and transparency alive.

#### TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Madam President, one more thing, on the upcoming Republican tax cuts, when the Budget Committee meets in a couple of days, basically, there is a great debate between House and Senate Republicans: Should it be one bill or two bills?

Let me tell you. The real issue is: What are they going to cut that hurts working Americans to fund the billionaires, whether it is one bill or two bills—to help not fund the billionaires, to help give greater tax cuts to the billionaires?

Defunding the National Institutes of Health? Cutting that back where health researchers are telling us that it will impede cancer research and the great research that we have done that helped the American people live healthier and longer? Defunding things like CHCs, which I just mentioned? So much else. All for one reason.

I would say to my fellow Americans: Don't get caught up in this gobbledygook—one bill or two bills. We all know the goal is the same: cut, cut, cut—even vital programs that help working Americans—to give tax breaks to the wealthy.

And that is what we will see in this first step when the Budget Committee marks up its bill, supposedly on Wednesday.

One bill, two bills—no. It could be 50 bills. I don't care. It all comes down to the same thing: the end goal for Republicans to pass gargantuan tax cuts for Donald Trump and their billionaire friends.

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

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

#### NOMINATION OF TULSI GABBARD

Mr. WARNER. Madam President, I rise this afternoon in opposition to the nomination of Tulsi Gabbard to be Director of National Intelligence because nothing less than our national security is currently on the line.

I am going to start by saying that I have nothing but respect for Ms.

Gabbard's many years of service to our Nation, both in uniform and as a Representative for Hawaii. I don't question Ms. Gabbard's patriotism. I oppose her nomination because I question her judgment.

Now, many may not understand the important role that the Director of National Intelligence plays. If confirmed, Ms. Gabbard will lead the 18 Agencies of the intelligence community. She will also serve as the principal adviser to the President, the National Security Council, and the Homeland Security Council for all intelligence matters related to national security; and in this role as well, she will be responsible for over \$100 billion between the national intelligence program and the military intelligence program.

Now, the stakes here have become all the more critical in recent days. Just in the past couple of weeks, President Trump has issued several directives that could irreparably harm our intelligence efforts and our Nation's ability to defend itself against the many threats we face.

At the FBI, some of our most experienced agents who have protected us for decades from terrorists, drug traffickers, spies, and violent criminals have all been unceremoniously fired. Thousands more may have reason to fear they may be next based on the vindictive list apparently being assembled of every FBI official who was involved in the investigations into the Capitol riot on January 6.

It is not just the FBI. Across the IC, including the CIA, DIA, NSA, NRO, and NGA—an alphabet of Agencies that most folks don't fully appreciate or understand—in every one of these Agencies, I am hearing that intelligence officers and analysts with irreplaceable skills are unfortunately being indiscriminately pressured to resign or retire.

Reportedly, senior law enforcement and national security officials are being asked to take political litmus tests, such as whether the 2020 Presidential election was stolen and whether the January 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol was an inside job.

Across the government, whole Agencies are being eliminated and funding impounded in flagrant defiance of the Constitution and the law, while unvetted, unqualified DOGE bros—one who formally worked for a Russia hacker group and was fired for leaking sensitive company secrets to a competitor and yet another who proudly declared himself a "racist" and said he would not mind if "Gaza and Israel were both wiped off the face of the Earth"—that individual, I understand, has actually been rehired after he initially quit—these DOGE bros are illegally burrowing into classified and other sensitive information, jeopardizing our national security and violating Americans' privacy.

To take just one recent example of what is at stake here, just last week, the CIA sent an email, using an unclas-

sified system—an unclassified system—to the White House listing the names of all recently hired employees. This is, again, from the CIA.

It takes months to get a CIA employee security clearance and then a year to train. Suddenly, all of their names are out. This happened evidently in an attempt to comply with an Executive order to reduce the size of the workforce no matter how badly their skills might be needed.

These 200-plus individuals—and I can assure you, with a name or the last letter of a name and appropriate AI tools, based on where these folks are working, you can find out their identities, and these agents may be burned before they even start their careers.

I know that many of my Republican colleagues profess to take the issue of unclassified servers very seriously indeed. There was a whole litany of attack on this earlier. But the fact is, beyond the counterintelligence risk of foolishly exposing these officers' names using channels known to be targeted by foreign hackers, this careless effort to identify and potentially dismiss recently recruited and trained CIA officers also imperils the longstanding bipartisan efforts by the Senate Intelligence Committee to actually modernize and streamline the Agency's hiring process, because we need to make sure that we continue to recruit and retain talented young officers when it comes to confronting the growing national security threat posed by the PRC.

We need leaders in the intelligence community and throughout government who are prepared to stand up to those shortsighted attempts to attack our workforce at the expense of our national security. Unfortunately, I don't believe Ms. Gabbard is such a leader, nor is she well-suited by dint of experience or judgment to serve as Director of National Intelligence.

The DNI is a position of great importance and significance to our national security, created, candidly, after one of our worst security failures in our Nation's history—9/11. For that reason, when Congress established this position—in many ways due to the efforts of my good friend SUSAN COLLINS—it mandated in law that any individual nominated for the position must have "extensive national security expertise."

As I noted previously, the DNI was created to fill this gap after 9/11. Its mission is to share intelligence not only between the 18 entities that make up the American IC but also to work with our allies. This sharing of information, sharing of intelligence with our allies, is predicated on trust—there is no agreement—trust that we and our allies will protect each other's secrets. Yet, repeatedly, Ms. Gabbard has excused our adversaries' worst actions and instead often blamed the United States and our allies for them.

For example, she blamed NATO for Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine. And