

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 billionnaires, whether it is one bill or two bills—to help not fund the billionnaires, to help give greater tax cuts to the billionnaires?

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

despite the unanimous assessment of the Trump administration's DOD, State Department, and IC, she rejected the conclusion that Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad used chemical weapons against his own people.

Now, I don't know if her intent in making those statements was to defend those dictators or if she was simply unaware of the intelligence and how her statements would be perceived. In either case, it calls into question her judgment and if she has what it takes to build and develop the trust relationships necessary to give not only our IC workforce but, equally important, give our allies confidence that they can share their most sensitive intelligence with us.

Make no mistake about it, if our allies stop sharing that intelligence, we will be less safe. To offer just one example, last summer, intelligence sharing between the United States and Austria saved countless lives by disrupting a terrorist attack at a Taylor Swift concert, underscoring the importance of these relationships.

Ms. Gabbard has also been publicly outspoken in her praise and defense of Edward Snowden—someone who betrayed the trust and jeopardized the security of our Nation. The vast majority of the information he stole and leaked—before, I would remind you, he ran off and hightailed it to both China and Russia—most of this information, I can assure you, had nothing to do with America's privacy but did compromise our Nation's most sensitive collection sources and methods. In many ways, we are still paying a price for Snowden's betrayal, and it is beyond dispute that his actions put our men and women in uniform in places like Iraq and Afghanistan at risk. Yet Ms. Gabbard has celebrated Snowden as a "brave whistleblower" and advocated for his pardon. This is someone that my friend TOM COTTON, who is the chairman of the Intelligence Committee, called a "traitor" who should "rot in jail for the rest of his life."

A week ago, at the hearing, member after member—particularly my Republican friends—gave her chance after chance to just be willing to call out Snowden as a traitor. She repeatedly declined. Instead, she said:

The DNI has no role in determining whether or not Edward Snowden is a lawful whistleblower.

Not only does she seem to believe that someone who divulged sensitive national secrets to Russia and China should be celebrated as "brave" and not denounced as a "traitor," she also does not seem to understand the DNI's role in whistleblower determinations, because, in fact, the DNI has a significant role in transmitting lawful whistleblower complaints to the Intelligence Committees. It would be irresponsible to confirm someone who cannot distinguish between complaints that are made lawfully and those that are not.

Further, it is the statutory responsibility of the DNI to "protect intel-

ligence sources and methods from unauthorized disclosure." What message would it send to an intelligence workforce to have a DNI who would celebrate staff and contractors deciding to leak our Nation's most sensitive secrets as they see fit?

Now, let me move to another issue of pressing relevance to this nomination, and that is section 702 of FISA. This bill, this tool—it is really hard to overstate the importance. The information we derive from this tool is responsible for about 60 percent of the intelligence in the President's Daily Brief, and it has been instrumental in disrupting everything from terrorists attacks, to fentanyl trafficking, to foreign cyber attacks.

Many in Congress have at various points supported reforms to 702 to better balance security and civil liberties, but, again, Ms. Gabbard has gone so much further. Not only did she vote against reauthorizing 702, she introduced legislation to repeal the whole thing and called its very existence a "blatant disregard for our Fourth Amendment constitutional rights."

I do understand that after she was nominated to be DNI, she had a conversion—a confirmation conversion—and expressed a change of heart. Now, that is welcome, but it is just not credible. Just last May, she criticized the reforms put into 702. Just last May, she criticized those very reforms she now credits with changing her mind. Again, the reforms, she claimed, "made the law many, many times worse."

The DNI is responsible for making annual certifications under section 702, without which all collection under the law will cease, and the law itself is up for reauthorization in just over a year—a process typically led by the DNI. I have no confidence in Ms. Gabbard's commitment to either task.

Nor is it the only issue where she has demonstrated poor judgment that should be disqualifying for the role. During an ill-advised trip to Syria and Lebanon in 2017, Ms. Gabbard exercised terrible judgment and elected to meet with Bashar al-Assad amid a conflict in which Assad was using gas and other chemical weapons against his own people. On that same trip, she also met with Ahmad Badreddin Hassoun. Many Americans may not be familiar with Mr. Hassoun, but in 2011, he threatened to commit suicide bomb attacks against the United States.

At her confirmation hearing, Ms. Gabbard claimed not to know about Hassoun's past, but reporting following the hearing makes it clear that her staff made her aware of that at the time of her trip in 2017, to say nothing of the fact that if she had simply googled this guy, that would have revealed his past.

What does it say about her judgment and experience that she would willingly meet with someone who has very publicly issued threats against the United States of America?

Nor is this an isolated lapse. Just last summer, she accepted a trip to

Italy that was paid for by the foundation of Pierre Louvri r—a man with deep connections to sanctioned Russian oligarchs.

At her confirmation hearing, she seemed unable to recognize why the national security interests of the United States might be better protected if TikTok—a social media app that reaches into the homes of millions of Americans—was actually under American ownership rather than being subject to the controls of the PRC and ultimately the Communist Party of China.

The world today is more complex and more dangerous than ever before, and we need serious people with the experience, expertise, and judgment to navigate that complexity. Unfortunately, Ms. Gabbard is not such a nominee.

A vote in favor of her confirmation is an endorsement of President Trump's lawless efforts to hollow out our national security workforce, and her confirmation will further strain the alliances that have kept our country safe for decades; therefore, I urge my colleagues to oppose Ms. Gabbard's nomination.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. MORENO. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call with respect to the Gabbard nomination be waived.

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

CLOTURE MOTION

Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The assistant bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 18, Tulsi Gabbard, of Hawaii, to be Director of National Intelligence.

John Thune, John R. Curtis, Tommy Tuberville, Kevin Cramer, Ashley Moody, Mike Crapo, Markwayne Mullin, David McCormick, Mike Lee, Ron Johnson, John Barrasso, Pete Ricketts, James C. Justice, Jon Husted, Bernie Moreno, Josh Hawley, Tom Cotton.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Tulsi Gabbard, of Hawaii, to be Director of National Intelligence, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS).