

So I am going to continue to work closely with the Secretary of the Interior on a path forward that allows the people of Wyoming to make decisions for Wyoming.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

#### GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I listened to my colleague and friend from Wyoming, and I am struggling to understand his point of view. He announced at one point that the Republicans were in the majority in the House and Senate. Well, that is a fact. I know it. The Presiding Officer does as well. So to say that you are in the majority suggests that you are in charge, and it also suggests that if there is going to be a budget for the U.S. Government, which we need next month, the majority party in both the House and the Senate has that responsibility to come forward with a budget. That is a simple fact of life. It is a fact of political life.

To blame the minority for no budget is to ignore the obvious: The majority of votes in the House and the Senate belong to the Republican Party. If there is going to be a budget, it is fair to assume that they would have to lead in that effort. I look forward to seeing that leadership. We have seen precious little of it so far.

#### JANUARY 6 PARDONS

Mr. President, on a completely separate note, I realize that the President made these statements during the course of his campaign, but it still came as something of a shock when, on the first day of his Presidency, Donald Trump decided to issue a blanket pardon for those who had been convicted of the January 6 riot that took place in this building.

For those of us who were physically present, it is a moment we will never forget. The Vice President of the United States was sitting in the Presiding Officer's chair, presiding over the U.S. Senate as we addressed the constitutional responsibility of counting the electoral votes.

It was roughly 10 minutes after 2 in the afternoon when someone came along in a suit, walked up to the Vice President of the United States, grabbed him by the arm, and pulled him off of the chair. Those of us who were here wondered what was going on. While we could hear the demonstrators outside, we didn't understand why the Vice President was being removed from this Chamber.

A member of the Capitol Police then walked up to where the Presiding Officer is sitting and announced that this was going to be a safe room; yes, there were demonstrators outside, even some in the building, but stay here; the Senate Chamber will be a safe room; and be prepared for others to come into this safe room to avoid any conflict with the demonstrators.

That instruction lasted for about 10 minutes, and then the same officer

came up and stood before us and said: Change of plans. Everybody evacuate this room as quickly as possible.

We all headed out that door, going to another building on Capitol Hill that we thought might be safer, away from the demonstrators.

Think about that—the Capitol of the United States of America, taken over by demonstrators; the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives stopped in the progress of doing their constitutional responsibility of counting the electoral votes.

We have seen the videotapes—oh, there are plenty of them—that show these mob demonstrators breaking the windows to get into the Capitol Building, knocking down the doors, and then beating up on the police officers.

When the Presiding Officer and I came to work this morning, there were men and women—some in uniform, others in plainclothes—standing in the corridors of this building. Their responsibility is to keep us safe and to keep those who visit this Capitol safe. They are prepared—many of them have to be prepared—to risk their lives to do it.

To think what they went through on January 6 is outrageous. They were beaten up by these mobsters, these thugs, these demonstrators, who were egged on by the President of the United States to come up and go wild in the U.S. Capitol. Oh, they went wild, spraying bear spray into the faces of individual policemen, beating up on them with poles and pieces of furniture.

Yes, it was a pretty wild occasion, and it was a criminal occasion. It led to the most extensive criminal prosecution in the history of our country. Some 1,600 people were prosecuted for their conduct on January 6. And I will tell you, as someone who witnessed that and went through that experience, they deserved it. It just strikes me as outrageous.

If you heard on the news this afternoon that the Houses of Parliament in London had been invaded by a mob that had beaten down the doors of the House of Commons and took control of it, you would have said: That is impossible. That doesn't happen in a civilized country like England.

Well, it certainly shouldn't happen in the United States, and it did. I witnessed it.

Then came the President of the United States on his first day in office, and what did he do? He decided that every single person arrested for a crime related to January 6 should be released with a full and unconditional pardon. And that is what he did.

I asked my staff: Let's keep track of these people, see what happened to them. In the 3 weeks that have passed since the President made that decision, there are some interesting stories, sad stories.

Emily Hernandez pleaded guilty to entering and remaining in a restricted building or grounds in relation to her actions in the Capitol on January 6.

Ms. Hernandez was seen holding a stolen, broken nameplate of House Speaker NANCY PELOSI. She served 30 days in Federal prison and was released. Days after being pardoned by President Trump—days after being pardoned by President Trump—she was sentenced to 10 years in prison for a 2022 deadly drunk-driving crash in Missouri during which she collided with a couple—Victoria and Ryan Wilson—who had just left dinner, celebrating their 15th wedding anniversary. Victoria died in the crash, and Ryan sustained serious injuries.

Then there is Daniel Ball. Daniel Ball was arrested for throwing “an explosive device” that detonated on at least 25 officers and forcefully shoving police at the Capitol on January 6. Daniel Ball was in possession of a gun and ammunition as he came into the Capitol, which was illegal considering his criminal background. The Department of Justice dismissed Ball's charges following President Trump's pardon.

I have a long list here, and I am not going to read them all, but there is one in particular, released with a full pardon by President Trump for the January 6 crimes he committed. Guy Reffitt, the first defendant to stand trial on charges related to the January 6 Capitol insurrection, was sentenced to 87 months in prison for bringing a firearm into the Capitol on January 6, 2021.

Reffitt's 19-year-old son Jackson turned him into law enforcement after the attack. Jackson also indicated that Reffitt had threatened to shoot him and his sister Peyton if they reported him to authorities.

After receiving a pardon from President Trump, Guy Reffitt attended Kash Patel's Senate Judiciary Committee nomination hearing. Kash Patel is President Trump's nominee to be the Director and head of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Reffitt attended that committee nomination, and here is what he posted on social media afterward.

Remember: a man who is released after he was granted a full pardon, after he was convicted of bringing a firearm into the Capitol on January 6, 2021—certainly not a casual tourist by any means.

Here is what he said on social media:

Present and in support of Kash Patel as the leftist commies continue to spew lies, misinformation, and disinformation. My man, clean house Kash.

So it certainly seems like he learned his lesson, right? He served time in jail and was released with pardon by the President. He is at it again, defying the authorities, defying anyone who disagrees with him politically—full, unconditional pardon from Donald Trump.

The reason I wanted to make a note of Mr. Reffitt's history is that it is apropos of what I want to speak to this morning.

## NOMINATION OF KASHYAP PATEL

Mr. President, this Thursday, the Senate Judiciary Committee is scheduled to consider whether to recommend Kash Patel's nomination to be Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation to the full Senate for consideration. So far, my Republican committee colleagues have chosen to ignore the myriad redflags about Mr. Patel, especially his recurring instinct to threaten retribution—political retribution—against his and President Trump's perceived enemies. This is a dangerous characteristic for a person who wants to lead the Nation's most powerful domestic, investigative Agency, the FBI. I hope that what I reveal today from credible whistleblowers at the highest levels will give my Republican colleagues some pause before it is too late.

Multiple whistleblowers have disclosed to my staff highly credible information indicating that Mr. Kash Patel has been personally directing the ongoing purge of senior law enforcement officials at the FBI.

Let me remind the Presiding Officer, Mr. Patel, at this moment in time, is not on any public payroll, nor does he have any authority by our government.

Listen. On the morning of January 29, the day before Kash Patel's confirmation hearing, there was a meeting between the acting leadership of the Department of Justice and the FBI. Notes from that morning meeting read:

KP wants movement at FBI, reciprocal actions for DOJ.

Let me say that again. Notes from the meeting:

KP wants movement at FBI, reciprocal actions for DOJ.

Acting Deputy Attorney General Emil Bove told the participants in this meeting that he had received multiple calls from the White House Deputy Chief of Staff Stephen Miller the night before. Miller had pressured him because Kash Patel—"KP"—wanted the FBI to remove targeted officials faster, as DOJ had already done with prosecutors.

The list of officials identified for termination was in the possession of a group of individuals who, according to our sources, were personally interviewed by Mr. Patel to be on what was known as the Director's Advisory Team.

This advisory team at the FBI is a group of political appointees who were brought in to prepare for Mr. Patel's arrival. The FBI's leadership understanding of the Advisory Team's list was that "a lot of names were people in the crosshairs."

According to my whistleblower sources, Mr. Patel is receiving information from within the FBI from the Director's Advisory Team. Mr. Patel then provides direction to Stephen Miller, who relays it to Acting Deputy Attorney General Bove.

It is unacceptable for a nominee with no legal or current role in government to personally direct the unjustified and

potentially illegal firings of dedicated, nonpartisan professionals at the FBI.

If these allegations are true, then Mr. Patel may have committed perjury before the Senate Judiciary Committee. A day after the meeting I described, where Mr. Patel's desire for FBI officials to be fired more quickly was discussed, was Mr. Patel's confirmation hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee. So the morning after he is putting the heat on the leadership at the FBI to dismiss more people more quickly, he testifies before the Judiciary Committee under oath.

During the hearing, Senator CORY BOOKER of New Jersey asked Mr. Patel:

Are you aware of any plans or discussions to punish in any way, including termination, FBI agents or personnel associated with Trump investigations? Yes or no.

Mr. Patel answered that he was "not aware of that," and continued:

I don't know what is going on right now over there, but I'm committed to you, Senator, and your colleagues that I will honor the internal review process of the FBI.

Yet, if these whistleblower allegations are true, just 2 days before, Stephen Miller, at Mr. Patel's direction, had ordered DOJ leadership not just to terminate a specific list of officials but to speed up those terminations.

Mr. Patel seems to be unable to wait for Senate confirmation to carry out retribution against his perceived political enemies.

Patel is a private citizen today, and he was when he testified, with no current role in government, directing baseless firings of career public servants. This speaks directly to the fact that Mr. Patel is not fit to be entrusted with government authority, which is evident to anyone who has seriously reviewed his record.

And let me remind you: He is not seeking a term of 2 years or 4 years but 10 years as Director of the FBI.

The ramifications of these terminations at the FBI are dangerous. They go way beyond Mr. Patel's fitness for office, because these terminations have greatly weakened the FBI's ability to protect the country from national security threats and have made America less safe.

This hollowing out of one of the major law enforcement Agencies of the Federal Government by the new Trump administration is at the risk of making America more dangerous and people in America more vulnerable to criminal and terrorist elements.

Among those who were removed so far—so far—by the Trump administration are the top officials who oversee the FBI's work combatting international and domestic terrorism.

Think about that. The Trump administration starts off by going to the Department of Justice, the Federal Bureau of Investigations, and comes up with a political list, and among those people who were eliminated are the people in charge of combatting international and domestic terrorism, cyber security threats, human and drug traf-

ficking, and violent crime. Does that make us any safer?

Mr. Patel's need to punish his perceived enemies is apparently greater than his interest in protecting the American people. Given the serious nature of these allegations and the need to protect the identities of my sources, I have asked the Department of Justice inspector general today, in a letter, to investigate these specific claims. I believe they are true, but the inspector general can make his own conclusion.

I will urge my Republican colleagues to, please, take these allegations seriously and, at least, pause for a moment and consider whether Kash Patel is the person you want to put in charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation for 10 years—10 years.

If this man is so fast and loose with the truth before our committee now, imagine what he will do if given the protection of office.

We need to pause in this consideration and consider what we already know about Mr. Patel. He has pledged to "shut down FBI headquarters," in writing, and, "come after" the President's enemies.

He has even published the enemies' list that he will target. I know I have read it, and anybody can in the book that he has published.

He falsely claimed that the FBI "was planning January 6 for a year," and has even sold musical recordings of a song performed by January 6 rioters who violently assaulted police officers on January 6.

He has left behind a trail of grievances throughout his life, lashing out at anyone who dares to disagree with him or fails to respect him sufficiently.

You want to give power to this man, the power of the investigation of the Federal Bureau of Investigation? I think not.

Now there are these credible allegations that he has personally orchestrated a purge of senior FBI law enforcement officials.

The FBI is an Agency that plays a critical role in keeping us safe from terrorism, violent crime, narcotics, and other threats. Our Nation needs an FBI Director who understands the gravity of the mission, not someone who is focused on settling a political score.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SHEEHY). The Senator from Iowa.

## NOMINATION OF ROBERT F. KENNEDY, JR.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, after the Gabbard nomination, the next issue up for consideration by the Senate is cloture on the Robert F. Kennedy nomination to be Secretary of Health and Human Services. This Cabinet position is responsible for implementing the administration's health agenda.

As Secretary, Mr. Kennedy must spend his time focused on improving the health of all Americans, ensuring HHS is transparent and accountable to congressional oversight, and respecting whistleblowers.

I think Kennedy has made it very clear, in life as a citizen, talking about improving the health of all Americans.