

That is applying not just as an approach, not just to USAID, but to many other programs, like farm programs, where I am getting calls from farmers: What happened to the agreement I had with the Federal Government, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, about doing a new type of crop rotation in exchange for getting a contract price?

What has happened to folks running domestic violence shelters who can't get on the portal to get money paid to them that they are owed?

This is happening throughout our non-profit systems, including at our community health centers. We had a woman who had an appointment with a dentist at a community health center and got a notice that it was closed because of the order that went out from the administration.

So I believe in USAID. I believe it is wrong for the administration to essentially make the decision to feed it to the wood chipper. I believe in reform, but I do not believe that this is a serious effort at reform. It is a serious effort to destroy the program started by President Kennedy that has been embraced by Republican and Democratic Presidents since President Kennedy started it 64 years ago.

And while there is a perception that it is 25 to 30 percent of our budget, it is 1 percent. And it is at a time when the reputation of the United States as a country that is going to stand behind the commitment it has made is being jeopardized.

So my hope is that all of us, whether we agree or disagree about the ultimate value of USAID, will stand up for protecting what we have already committed ourselves to, and that to the extent there is reform to be made, we work together on that so that the American taxpayer and American national security interests can continue to be served by the men and women of the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Mr. President, I conclude my remarks on USAID.

NOMINATION OF TULSI GABBARD

Mr. President, as you know, the Director of National Intelligence is a very critical position. The Director is the primary intelligence officer serving the President. She or he is tasked with managing America's 18 intelligence community Agencies and more than \$100 billion—\$100 billion—in the national and military intelligence program budgets. It is an awesome responsibility.

The DNI also has access to information about literally the most sensitive programs within the U.S. Government. These programs are so sensitive that most Members of Congress and Senators are not briefed about them, including even rank-and-file members of the Intelligence Committees. That alone indicates the magnitude of this responsibility.

And my view, on the basis of everything I have seen, is that the nominee

will put loyalty to Donald Trump first. And my apprehension is that, if there is information that he does not want or wants it interpreted a certain way, there will be excessive deference to the pressures that the President has shown he has the capacity and the inclination to exert.

Also, in the hearings, Ms. Gabbard did not reflect independent thoughts about the security of issues like Taiwan, the territorial integrity of Ukraine, nor the endless ongoing theft of U.S. data by the Chinese Government. She was asked, quite rightly: Where are you on this? What should we be doing?

She indicated she would leave that up to Donald Trump.

Now, I get it that, as someone who is serving the President, it is ultimately his decision. But a person who is in the highest level of national security, I would expect, would have opinions from prior experience, and Ms. Gabbard did not disclose what those opinions were at all.

My concern, as well, is that Ms. Gabbard does not have the sober experience where it is needed most. We are a few weeks into the second term of President Trump, and there is an immense amount of disruption. And depending on the point of view, disruption is a good thing. I actually see the argument for it. But what I am seeing is that it is done in such a meat-cleaver way that it is much more about destruction.

And I want to make certain that whoever is the Director of National Intelligence has the experience and the credibility within the intelligence community to defend the legitimate role that that intelligence community plays in our national security.

Ms. Gabbard has maintained a security clearance for many years. However, this job is much more than about having had a security clearance. It is about judgment and character and integrity that must go along with that. You are required to form a clear-eyed policy position free of politics and not just give the seal of approval to absolete poor judgment. That is a very, very challenging task for a person who serves in the Trump administration.

I have also been concerned about some of the judgment calls that Ms. Gabbard has made, refusing to acknowledge what we all know: Edward Snowden broke his oath to protect classified information. He betrayed the trust given to him and every other American who holds a security clearance. By the way, Mr. Snowden had a whistleblower protocol he could have followed but chose not to. People's lives were put in jeopardy.

Mr. Snowden, as you know, intentionally gathered and deliberately walked out the door with more than 1.5 million classified files. He went to China and eventually found safe harbor in Russia.

Also, I have some concern about where Ms. Gabbard is getting her news.

I have grave concerns that giving access to our Nation's most tightly held secrets to an individual who has amplified Russian talking points—and that is the spread of misinformation; that is what Russia does—and who watches Russia state-owned TV, which is a propaganda organization—I have concerns about that, as well as the trip to Syria to see Bashar al-Assad who was in the process of murdering his own people.

Of course, Ms. Gabbard said she was skeptical that his government was responsible for the 2017 chemical weapons attack that killed dozens of Syrians. Our intelligence community was not skeptical about that. Both sides of the aisle hold our national security in high regard, as you do, Mr. President, and I do, as well.

On the basis of the lack of experience, the questionable judgment, lack of confidence that I think many of us have in the capacity of this person to be the Director of National Intelligence, I urge that we vote no on her nomination.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I come to the floor this afternoon to join a number of my colleagues because of my concern for the national security of the United States.

Whether it is a terror attack, a cyber attack from a nonstate actor, whether it is a threat from Russia or China or Iran, we in the United States are the targets of foreign adversaries every single day.

But thanks to our intelligence community and the thousands of Americans who dedicate their lives to our security, we are safe. These brave men and women are counting on us to have their backs, which is why the nomination of Tulsi Gabbard is so concerning. Our adversaries will be thrilled if we confirm Tulsi Gabbard as Director of National Intelligence—none more so than Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Ms. Gabbard has not hidden her positive views of Russia and President Putin. While Ukrainians fight valiantly to protect their homeland and defend freedom and democracy, Tulsi Gabbard cozies up to Putin and publicly defends Russia's brutal invasion. The former Congresswoman has parroted Russian propaganda, saying that the war could have been avoided if NATO and the Biden administration had "simply acknowledged Russia's legitimate security concerns."

We know that the nominee is problematic when the Kremlin has such nice things to say about her. On November 17, 2024, a major Russian state-controlled news agency called Tulsi Gabbard "superwoman" and noted her past appearances on Russian TV. I don't relish the idea of America's Director of National Intelligence, a role that includes such sensitive responsibilities as producing the President's

daily brief and setting U.S. policy for intelligence-sharing with foreign entities—I don't appreciate the fact that she is called "superwoman" by a mouthpiece for the Kremlin.

Not only does Putin have kind words for Ms. Gabbard, but they also share mutual friends, namely ousted Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad. Since her clandestine meeting with Mr. Assad in 2017, a visit that took place while she was serving in Congress, former Congresswoman Gabbard has faced numerous questions about why she went to Syria and arranged this meeting in the first place.

She has answered none of those questions, nor has she provided any substantive details on her conversation with Assad. In fact, Ms. Gabbard has repeatedly refused to call Assad what he is, and that is an enemy of the United States, a brutal dictator who is responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Syrians—Assad, who is Putin's best buddy in the Middle East, Assad who is backed by Iran, whose regime openly seeks to undermine and destroy American interests and values worldwide—this is the person who co-Presidents Musk and Trump want to lead our intelligence Agency, to spearhead our national security operations?

Well, that doesn't make me comfortable sleeping at night. To talk amiably about a brutal dictator who is openly opposed to American interests and human rights, a dictator like Assad—and like Putin, for that matter—shows, at best, a lack of judgment and, at worst, allegiance to our adversaries.

And even in cases of proven espionage against the American intelligence community, the very organization she seeks to lead, Tulsi Gabbard instead has sided with criminals. Of course, I am speaking about her support for Edward Snowden. In 2020, while she was a Member of the U.S. House of Representatives, she introduced a resolution suggesting that the Federal Government should drop all charges against Edward Snowden. There was only one other Member who cosponsored this resolution, and that was former Congressman Matt Gaetz.

In 2025, Ms. Gabbard still refuses to call Snowden what he is: a traitor to the United States. When she was asked about that at her hearing, she was given several opportunities to indicate that she understood that Edward Snowden is a traitor who put at risk the lives of thousands of Americans in the intelligence community. She refused to acknowledge that he is a traitor.

With such a track record, how are we supposed to expect that she will properly classify our enemies? How are we to expect that she would label Xi Jinping or Kim Jong Un enemies of the United States or simply as foreign leaders or as friends? Who knows what Ms. Gabbard will do?

I think there is a stark difference between our adversaries who want to un-

dermine the United States and those who are our allies. It doesn't appear that Tulsi Gabbard understands the difference.

How can the men and women of the intelligence community trust that Ms. Gabbard will protect their secrets; that she will protect our secrets, the secrets of the United States? How many Russians are going to risk their lives to pass along information to our intelligence officers if they are worried that Ms. Gabbard will sell them out? How much will our allies in NATO and the Indo-Pacific share with Ms. Gabbard in charge?

The work of American covert operations and intelligence-gathering is based on one central principle, and that is trust. I wouldn't trust Tulsi Gabbard any further than I can throw her.

I think this Chamber faces a choice. We can choose to defend America's national security and keep our promise to our constituents to protect their lives and safety and their interests, or we can choose to give a gift to Vladimir Putin and our adversaries, to usher them into the inner halls of the American intelligence system.

I know which choice I intend to make. I intend to vote no on Tulsi Gabbard, and I hope that my colleagues, particularly those across the aisle—at least some of them—will have the courage to do the same.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CURTIS). The Senator from Nevada.

Ms. ROSEN. Mr. President, every Member of this body is sworn to protect our national security and safety and the well-being of the American people. There is no more important responsibility for Congress to fulfill than this.

Senators take an oath to defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic. And when the American people go to sleep at night, they rest assured that our homeland will be kept safe.

As Senators, we play a key role in making sure that the men and women in charge of our Nation's security—well, that they are up to the task, that they are experienced, that they are qualified, that they are prepared. These are jobs with enormous responsibility. There is zero—zero—room for failure here. When unqualified or inexperienced candidates make mistakes in these jobs, often the result is that innocent people get hurt and in some cases die.

That is why the Senate's confirmation process is just so important—because the stakes are so high, because there is no room for error when it comes to those who are placed in national security roles.

I take this aspect of my job incredibly seriously. Our intelligence community is made up of courageous men and women who collect and analyze information on our threats from around the globe. They are an integral part of our Nation's defense.

The Director of National Intelligence oversees and compiles intelligence from domestic, from military, from foreign sources for the President, who then uses it to make life-or-death decisions. The Director is a direct line from our intelligence community to the President. That is why this position needs to be filled by an experienced and trustworthy candidate—key qualities that Tulsi Gabbard does not have.

At a time of rising global threats, having Tulsi Gabbard serving in this role would make America less safe. I want to say that again. It would make us less safe—full stop. Our allies are dumbfounded. And our adversaries? Well, in Moscow, Beijing, Tehran, and all over the world, they are laughing at us. They are laughing at the idea that the United States of America would weaken its national security by placing someone so deeply unqualified in such a critical role for our safety, for our security. Our adversaries? Well, they are overjoyed that they are going to have an ally leading the American intelligence community.

My concerns are not political. After all, Ms. Gabbard and I used to serve in Congress together, in the same caucus, when she represented a district from Hawaii as a Democrat. My concerns are that she not only lacks the qualifications needed but that she has also peddled talking points straight from the Kremlin.

Think about it. Tulsi Gabbard has never worked in intelligence before. As a Member of the House of Representatives, she didn't even serve on the House Select Committee on Intelligence. During her time in the House, Ms. Gabbard actually voted against—she voted against—critical national security-related legislation, like increased funding for preventing terrorism in high-density, high-threat level urban areas like my city of Las Vegas. She voted against all of that security for Nevada.

This funding was actually pursued by former Nevada Congressman Joe Heck, who is a Republican, and it is something I have continued working to secure here in the Senate. Yet Tulsi Gabbard voted against this bipartisan proposal to protect our cities from terrorism.

She was the only member of the House Armed Services Committee to vote against the National Defense Authorization Act every year during markup.

As concerning as her lack of experience and tendency to vote against our security are, Ms. Gabbard's history of cozying up to America's adversaries is far, far more troubling. Her actions and words suggest that she has been directly influenced by foreign propaganda, whether that comes from Russia, from Syria, or other brutal dictatorships.

This isn't just me saying this; it is the view of many of Ms. Gabbard's former staff members during her time

here on Capitol Hill. We have public reporting that states that “[f]ormer advisers to Gabbard suggested that her views on Russia and its polarizing leader, Vladimir Putin, have been shaped . . . by her unorthodox media consumption habits. . . . Three former aides said Gabbard . . . regularly read and shared articles from the Russian news site RT—formerly known as Russia Today—which the U.S. intelligence community characterized in 2017 as ‘Kremlin’s principal international propaganda outlet.’”

Is this who Donald Trump wants to lead America’s intelligence community? Is this who he wants in a prominent national security role—someone who is so easily swayed by foreign propaganda?

It is clear that she has taken this propaganda and disinformation to heart. Just look at her justification of Russia’s brutal invasion of Ukraine, for which she did not blame Vladimir Putin, who—let’s be clear—is entirely responsible for the invasion. Instead, Ms. Gabbard has parroted Putin’s talking points and placed blame on the United States and on NATO for Russia’s vile assault upon the Ukrainian people.

We can also look at her attempts to give cover to Syria’s former dictator, Bashar al-Assad, who used chemical weapons on his own people—killing kids, killing babies—killing babies in his own attempt to hold on to power. Ms. Gabbard even went to Syria to buddy up with Assad. She then came back to the United States to defend his killing of innocent men, women, and children—those babies he killed—to hang on to power. It is sickening, actually. It is a betrayal of our country’s values.

Time and time again, Ms. Gabbard has rejected the findings and conclusions of our own intelligence officials and has instead chosen to, well, cozy up to dictators and our adversaries. She did so again in her defense of Edward Snowden, a man who committed treason against the United States of America by leaking highly classified information that jeopardized our national security, the safety of our troops, our men and women in uniform, who take an oath to serve and protect us every day. She jeopardized the clandestine intelligence operatives who are out there, working behind the scenes, again, to keep us safe and secure every day.

After committing these serious crimes against the United States, Mr. Snowden fled to Russia in his continued attempt to escape justice. Those weren’t the actions of a whistleblower; they were the actions of a traitor to the United States of America—a traitor whom Tulsi Gabbard has repeatedly defended.

Because of these incidents and so many more, America’s allies are rightfully concerned about what Tulsi Gabbard would do if confirmed to lead our intelligence community. In fact,

there have been reports that if Ms. Gabbard is confirmed, our allies might stop sharing crucial information with us in order to protect themselves, to protect their own country, to protect the people they love.

So think about that. If our allies no longer share intelligence with us, think about the damage that does to our national security, to our safety, to our men and women in uniform, to our operatives around the world, and to each and every one of us here in the United States of America. It doesn’t make us safer, I can tell you that. Our allies do not trust her, and neither should we.

I urge my colleagues to review Ms. Gabbard’s recent hearing before the Select Committee on Intelligence. In response to almost every question, Tulsi Gabbard avoided providing any real answer, whether it came from a Democrat or a Republican. She simply dodged the questions over and over and over. That is not leadership. This is not an example of someone who is qualified, and this is not a candidate who will keep America safe.

I urge my Republican colleagues to join me in listening to common sense, in thinking about our men and women who serve, in thinking about folks around the globe, and in thinking about everyone here in America and to reject this clearly unqualified and dangerous nominee.

It doesn’t have to be this way. Let’s have President Trump nominate someone else we can agree is qualified for this critical and consequential role and who has our Nation’s best interests in their heart. Tulsi Gabbard is not that person. The safety and well-being of our country depend on having a qualified nominee.

Again, I urge Republicans to join us—to reject Tulsi Gabbard—and to put someone up who has the heart and experience to do this important job.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, with me this afternoon are three of my colleagues from my office: Ms. Jess Andrews, my communications director; Mr. Henson Webre; and Mr. John Lowery. As I said, they are three of my colleagues in my office. I depend on their counsel and their advice and their good judgment every day.

I want to talk for a few minutes about public broadcasting in America, but first I want to make a brief comment about the continuing saga that our new President is doing, in my judgment, a good job of prosecuting here in Washington. I am talking about his audits of Federal Government spending and all of the wasteful spending—I call it spending porn—that he is finding.

I want to make two quick points.

No. 1, it strikes me as breathtakingly ironic—the Senate might say cynical—that the people who are screaming so loudly about President Trump’s deci-

sion to audit Federal spending are the very same people who, under President Biden, wanted to hire 80,000 new IRS agents—with guns—to audit the American people. As I have said before, if it weren’t for double standards, there wouldn’t be any standards at all in this town.

The battle lines are drawn. The battle lines are drawn. Some of my colleagues have decided to support the bureaucracy and the spending porn over the American taxpayer. That is what they have done. And some of the same people—it is not just my Democratic colleagues. There are many people in Washington, DC, who have grouped together. They have circled the wagons, and they have decided to support the spending porn and the bureaucrats over the American taxpayer. That is their right. It is not against the law or unconstitutional to be foolish in America. But these are the same people—these are the same people—who chose to support illegal immigration over the rule of law. These are the same people who have chosen to support teachers unions over parents and kids. These are the same people who have chosen to support criminals over cops and victims. These are the same people who have chosen to support transgender athletes over women’s sports. These are the same people who have chosen to support Hamas over Israel.

They think they are winning. Maybe in this town—in this town—they are if you listen to a lot of the pundits up here, if you listen to a lot of the members of the “wokerati” in Washington, but they are not winning in America. The justice stick is coming, and I am very proud to be a part of that effort.

PUBLIC BROADCASTING

Mr. President, now, let me say a word about public broadcasting.

There was a time—I don’t know if the Presiding Officer remembers it, but I do—when families, in the evening, would gather around a single radio—they just had one radio in the house—or a single TV, often a black-and-white TV, to hear the evening news. For many Americans, particularly in rural areas, public broadcasting was the only option for them. That was true in some parts of our country. They could only access public broadcasting to get up-to-date news and information.

Those days are gone. Things are much different today. Today, Americans get their news everywhere—everywhere: websites, podcasts, social media posts, radio shows, cable TV, streaming, broadcast television. The world has changed, particularly the world of mass communications.

I think back 10, 15 years ago in my State, Louisiana. Newspapers were king, followed closely by local television stations. Newspapers led with the news, and everybody else followed in terms of what was newsworthy.

Boy, have those days changed. I polled recently in Louisiana to find out where my people in Louisiana get their news. And 4 percent—4 percent of the