

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

people in Louisiana get their news from the newspapers. That is just a fact. No. 1, as you might imagine, is the internet.

The world has changed. This trend is not partisan. It is not a Republican thing; it is not a Democratic thing. President Trump and former Vice President Harris, they both did popular podcasts in their election, and many of my fellow Senators and many of my friends in the House running for election also did podcasts as well. A lot of the pundits have even called the 2024 race the podcast election.

No American today—not one that I know of—is dependent on a single source of news to remain informed, and that is a good thing.

It might have made sense many, many, many years ago for the Federal Government to subsidize and fund public broadcasting. So 50 years ago, that might have made sense, but the ability of the American people today to access whatever news they would like to hear from whatever form of media they choose is no longer limited. It is virtually unlimited—only by the imagination.

So here is my question, Mr. President. It is something we need to think about. If all this is true, if media has changed and it is accessible to everyone, why is the U.S. Congress—why is the U.S. Congress still spending half a billion dollars a year—not half a million a year—half a billion dollars a year to fund the Corporation for Public Broadcasting? It makes no sense.

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting—we call it CPB—as the Presiding Officer knows, is a nonprofit entity that takes taxpayer money that it gets from Congress and distributes it to local TV and radio stations.

Now, you might not have heard of CPB, but you probably heard of two of its—I won't call them subsidiaries but two of its closely affiliated entities. I will call them the public broadcasting station—we call it PBS—and National Public Radio, NPR.

Now, here is how it works. Every year, Congress gives the Corporation for Public Broadcasting \$500 million, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting takes that money and gives it to a lot of the local TV and radio stations. And a lot of those local TV and radio stations are encouraged to and, indeed, do buy programming, if they are radio stations, from NPR; or, if they are television stations, they buy prerecorded, predeveloped programming from PBS.

Congress established this system and established the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in 1967—what—over 50 years ago. At the time, Congress tasked CPB—and I am not saying it didn't make sense then. It probably did make sense then. But Congress tasked the CPB with a mission to ensure that the American people had—and I want to quote here to be precise—“universal access to non-commercial, high-quality content and telecommunications services.”

And, indeed, CPB boasts on its website that 99 percent of Americans have access to public media. Hell, they ought to; we are spending half a billion dollars of your taxpayer money to make sure they do.

That is not the question, because Americans have access to all different types and forms of media today. They don't need to get their news from public broadcasting. This isn't the old days when people had one television set or one radio and lived in a rural area and that was the only source of news. The world has changed.

The issue today is whether the American people need taxpayer-funded public broadcasting to access high-quality content anymore. And they don't, and we all know they don't. You don't have to be Walter Cronkite's cousin to figure that out. Everybody has got a cell phone. Everybody is on the internet. Everybody has heard of podcasts. Everybody has heard of cable. Many people have streaming services.

Today, 97 percent of Americans have access to the internet. Why do we need public broadcasting? That is more than double the number of Americans who could access the internet two decades ago. Things have quickly changed. People now have a bottomless supply of news sources right at their fingertips, whenever they need them. Why do we have to give a half a billion dollars a year to subsidize a certain small, favored section of the media?

Parents can also, very easily, find free educational programming if they want to. They don't have to go to public broadcasting. All they have to do is go to YouTube. All they have to do is go to other streaming services. The popular YouTube series “Crash Course,” for example, has more than 16 million subscribers. “PragerU” is another educational content provider. It has 3.3 million subscribers.

For comparison, PBS only has 1.4 million subscribers. You know what the difference is? You give them half a billion dollars of your hard-earned money. That is the difference.

Now, some may argue: Well, we still need public broadcasting because it offers noncommercial programming. They argue it is really cool because you don't get interrupted by commercials. Well, the new Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, Mr. Brendan Carr, has just called that into question. He has called into question whether NPR and PBS are really noncommercial broadcasts. Mr. Carr has noted that NPR and PBS regularly run commercial advertisements during their shows and broadcasts, in contravention of Federal law.

No advertising? All you have to do is turn on the stations. Give me a break. And, in fact, the FCC has launched an investigation into NPR and PBS to determine whether they have been violating Federal law. There seems to be no distinction between the advertiser-funded content on PBS or NPR and the content Americans can access for free anywhere else.

But there is a key difference. I am going to keep coming back to it. PBS and NPR receive a truckload—a bucketload—of cash from the American people. In total, Congress will send the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and, indirectly, NPR and PBS, \$535 million in 2025. That is an increase of 20.2 percent since 2020. Has your income gone up 20.2 percent since 2020? I know your expenses have. By 2027, CPB wants Congress to send it nearly \$600 million. For what? For what?

PBS alone received roughly \$130 million last year in taxpayer-funded grants from the Federal Government through the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. That is 35 percent of its total budget. NPR, similarly, receives \$96 million through taxpayer-funded grants from CPB. That is also roughly 32 percent of NPR's total budget. Why? Why? Why CPB? Why NPR? Why any of these alphabet-soup entities? Why not the New York Times? Why not the Washington Post? Why not FOX News? Why these three particular entities? That is a question we have to ask. And we are not talking chump change here. We are giving them half a billion dollars a year.

NPR is one of the few—as far as I know, they are the only newsroom in the country that gets taxpayer funding. And you would think that after receiving nearly \$100 million—I want to single out NPR for a second. You would think that after receiving nearly \$100 million from taxpayers, that would motivate NPR to play it right down the middle, to only publish fair reporting. You would think that, with the American taxpayer giving NPR 100 million bucks every year like clockwork, you should be able to go to NPR and look at the news and say: I don't know what party these folks are in. I don't know whether they are liberals. I don't know whether they are conservatives. I don't know whether they are left of center or right of center. I just know that they fairly report the news.

But that is not the case, Mr. President. That is not the case. I want to give you a few examples of stories that NPR has published using taxpayer money. I will just read the headlines. The first headline, NPR News Service:

Michael Avenatti: A Profile of the Media-Savvy Attorney.

They love Michael Avenatti. You know where Michael Avenatti is today? He is in jail. You know why? He is a crook. But for a while, he was a media darling on NPR.

Here is another headline from NPR:

How racism became a marketing tool for country music.

I kid you not. The American taxpayers are spending half a billion dollars a year to pay a local station to buy content that says country music is racist.

Here is another headline from NPR:

Donald Trump's Long Embrace of Vladimir Putin.

Remember the Russiagate, the Steele dossier? NPR was right in there promoting it.

A couple more headlines that NPR is putting out there using your tax dollars. This headline:

Monuments and Teams Have Changed Names—

Let me say it again.

Monuments and Teams—

Presumably sports teams—

have Changed Names as America Reckons With Racism. Birds Are Next.

I don't know any birds that are racist.

Here is another headline:

Eating less beef is a climate solution.

I don't have anything against vegetarians. I am a semivegetarian myself. I eat beef, and cows eat grass. So that makes me a semivegetarian, but that is my choice.

Not on NPR.

Eating less beef is a climate solution. Here is why that is hard for some American men.

Here is a final headline. I could go on the rest of the evening.

How the Taliban adds to Afghanistan's woes when it comes to climate-fueled disasters.

Boy, I can tell you that is on the mind of every person in Afghanistan today, is climate change—and the Taliban, I can guarantee you.

I don't have a problem with these headlines. This is America. If you want to publish articles like this—which no person with a brain above a single-cell organism would call fair and balanced—if you are a news outlet and you want to publish this kind of stuff, that is your right as an American. We have freedom of the press. We have the First Amendment. You are not free in our country if you can't say what you think. You are not free in our country if you can't express yourself.

I am all for this if that is what these outlets want to do, but I am not for taking \$500 million every single year and giving it to these stations to the exclusion of everybody else so they can do it. That is immoral. That is illegal, as far as I am concerned—or should be.

Now, I am sure that there is an audience in some campus coffee shop that wants to learn about racist birds or the different ways in which cheeseburgers and the Taliban are contributing to climate change. But most American taxpayers would probably prefer that Congress spend their money on something other than these controversial points of view that appeal to only a small segment of America's population while the rest of us foot the bill.

Now, that is not just my opinion; a former editor at NPR, someone by the name of Uri Berliner, Mr. Berliner—he used to be an editor at NPR. He published a column last year, and in the column, he outlined the extreme bias at NPR. He detailed how NPR decided to censor the Hunter Biden laptop story. They wouldn't run stories about it; they said it wasn't real.

Mr. Berliner, the former editor at NPR, said that NPR told its readers:

We don't want to waste our time on stories that are not really stories, and we don't

want to waste the listeners' and readers' time on stories that are just pure distractions.

The Hunter Biden laptop is real. The FBI has it. It is there at the FBI Headquarters bigger than Dallas. Of course, we now know that the laptop was not just a distraction. Every bit of it was real. But NPR censored it using American taxpayer money.

NPR also similarly covered the COVID-19 lab leak theory as though it was a conspiracy. That is how the news coverage reads, in my opinion, that if you believe that COVID-19 originated from a lab leak, you are a conspiracy theorist.

I would point out that we are going to have to get some new conspiracy theories in America because all the old ones turned out to be true. The conspiracy theorists are up something like 37 to nothing—but not if you read NPR. They say or said that the COVID-19 lab leak theory—you had to be some kind of cone head, some kind of meathead, some kind of whack job to believe in that stuff. Now the Federal Government, the CIA, the FBI—they have stated publicly that the pandemic likely originated from—what?—a lab leak. I can't make this stuff up.

Now, other independent analysts have shown that NPR's content also leans left, and that is fine. As I say, that is fine. Many Americans lean left. I have got a lot of friends who lean left. I lean left on some issues. I think it is great. But I will tell you what isn't great: having American taxpayers spend half a billion dollars a year to fund a news service that, in turn, we all have to pay for. That is not right.

Since 1970, the U.S. Congress has given NPR more than \$14.5 billion. With all those taxpayer dollars, the NPR bought a \$201 million office space just up the road from the Capitol. It is swell office space, 200 million bucks' worth. NPR pays its hosts as much as \$532,000 a year. It pays its chief diversity officer \$320,000 a year. Pretty good work if you can get it. Not NPR's money. It came from you. You paid those salaries. Despite all the spending, NPR's audience continues to decline because they are obsolete.

Now, Congress does not send taxpayer money to the most popular podcast host in America. We don't. The anchors on FOX News, the anchors on CNN, the anchors on MSNBC, nor their stations—they don't get any taxpayer dollars, nor do any of the journalists that ask me questions every day in the hallway in this building—unless they work for NPR or PBS or their affiliates or the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Congress should not be picking winners and losers in the news media, but that is what we are doing.

The United States of America is \$36 trillion in debt. We can't afford anymore to blow half a billion dollars for public broadcasting when Americans can find the same content—and in many cases better content—online for free.

Now, if you want to support NPR and PBS or any other public media outlet, that is great. God bless you. This is America. You are free to do it. You are free to donate to those nonprofits as you see fit. Donate to them. But Congress should not compel taxpayers to fund a service that the American people don't need, especially when the content—well, you can read what the content is, and maybe you agree with it, but a whole bunch of Americans don't. A whole bunch of Americans don't think that birds are racist.

President Trump's Department of Government Efficiency is looking for fat to trim. As far as I am concerned, this gravy train, this gravy train with biscuit wheels called the Corporation for Public Broadcasting is the perfect example of a project the American people no longer need and should not fund.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. President, I have been given instructions to read this.

I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII—oh, I love this. This is great. I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII—this makes me so happy—the confirmation vote with respect to the Gabbard nomination occur at 11 a.m. on Wednesday, February 12; further, I ask that the cloture motions filed on Thursday, February 6, ripen following disposition of the Gabbard nomination; and finally, that if cloture is invoked on the Kennedy nomination—that is Mr. Robert Kennedy—the postcloture time count as if invoked at 1 a.m., Wednesday, February 12.

Thank you, Jesus.

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

Mr. KENNEDY. I yield to Senator PETERS, my good friend.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

NOMINATION OF TULSI GABBARD

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I rise in opposition to the nomination of former Representative Tulsi Gabbard to serve as our Nation's Director of National Intelligence.

Intelligence is absolutely fundamental to our national security. Our intelligence community, spread out all across the Federal Government, has built the world's greatest network of information gathering and analysis. This information keeps us and our community safe by providing the people who make policy decisions with a full picture to understand the current as well as potential threats to our national security, from terrorism risks to our homeland to emerging conflicts across the globe.

Spearheaded by the Director of National Intelligence, the U.S. intelligence community is responsible for monitoring terrorist activities, tracking foreign military capabilities, and even intercepting nefarious cyber attacks.

The courageous men and women in this community, stationed both here as