

filibuster. That was articulated by the Democrat leader as recently as the Democrat convention last summer—intentions that they had to get rid of the legislative filibuster so they—their party is in control—they could do the things they wanted to do that they felt that the American people were asking them to do.

Well, it turns out there was an election between last summer and now in which the American people spoke otherwise. And they had a very different view than the Democrats on a whole range of issues; issues on which, I think, the left and Democrat Party are completely out of step with the American people, not the least of which is allowing boys to play girl sports. That is a 90-percent issue with the American people.

The House passed legislation on it. We will vote on it at some point in the future. And I just can't imagine—I speak as a dad of daughters who were both female athletes, one of whom is in her high school and college hall of fame. I don't know how anybody—this is where I say I think there is just a certain intuitive common sense the American people have, and they voted for that, and made that abundantly clear in the election just this last fall.

So I say to that, again, just to remind people, when you hear this perspective about how Republicans don't have any room for dissent, they all have to be in lockstep—believe me, we have a lot of dissent on our side. Try leading the Republican conference. The Democrats, on the other hand, if you have a dissenting view, particularly on something like the filibuster—sorry, you are out of here.

Mr. President, today, it is ironic to me that we are going to vote on two nominees—President Trump's nominees—to be Secretary of Department of Health and Human Services and to be Director of National Intelligence who are former Democrats. And I will be surprised—I would like to be surprised—but I don't believe there is going to be a single Democrat that votes for either of the two people who, less than a year ago, were members of their party—in some cases, members of their party that go back decades. The Kennedy family—the Kennedy family—Democratic politics in America.

You have two nominees who were Democrats a year ago, but because they articulate views now or demonstrate a dissent from the ideology of the Democrat Party, no longer can get even one Democrat to vote for them here on the floor of the U.S. Senate.

Again, I am hoping to be surprised. That vote is going to happen in about 30 minutes on Tulsi Gabbard to be Director of National Intelligence. And then shortly after that, we will have a cloture vote on Robert F. Kennedy to be Secretary of Department of Health and Human Services.

In each of those cases, you have Democrats in good standing as recently as a year ago who have been pushed

out, come now—their nominees brought by President Trump for positions within his administration—and you are not going to see a single Democrat vote for them. But we will confirm them, and we will get these people into these positions as soon as possible. And in answer, I think, to the mandate that was given by the American people in November—and that is they want a different track in this country, a different direction. They have a different set of priorities than is being articulated here in the U.S. Senate.

Mr. President, we also had just recently a vote on Laken Riley. That was probably the most glaring example, again, of Democrats' willingness to filibuster, something they wanted to get rid of 2 years ago. They wanted to get rid of the legislative filibuster.

We get the majority, first time we put a bill on the floor, what do they do? They filibuster. Here we are, slowing down these noms—full 30 hours on Tulsi Gabbard. I assume they will do the same thing on RFK. But these are people that are going to be confirmed and going to be, again, working in this administration to implement the agenda that the President of the United States has articulated and the one that he carried to the voters in this last election, an election in which the voters gave him a decisive majority at the polls.

Mr. President, I hope, again, I am wrong. I hope we have a bipartisan vote today on either or both of these nominees. But I will tell you that based on my assessment of where the party is, the Democratic Party in this country, it would come as a great surprise to me if that is the case.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, let me begin with a quote from President Trump during his campaign for the Presidency.

He said:

When I win, I will immediately bring prices down, starting on Day 1.

Well, today is day 23, and prices are up 3 percent. Let me reiterate that Donald Trump said during his campaign that prices would come down starting on day 1. It is day 23, and prices are up 3 percent.

Donald Trump is already breaking his promise to the American people. Inflation is the No. 1 concern of most Americans, and Donald Trump said he would fight inflation, but he hasn't. Groceries are up 0.5 percent. Chicken, pork, steak are all more expensive. Egg prices are up 15 percent from last month. Gas prices are up 2 percent from last month. The prices of used cars are up. The price of heating your home is up. Housing costs are through the roof even though Republicans are racing to privatize Fannie and Freddie.

Well, welcome to the age of Trumpflation. Donald Trump is break-

ing his promise to lower costs. This was the No. 1 issue in the campaign to most people. Donald Trump said: Starting on day one, prices are going to start coming down. Well, they are up 3 percent, and it is day 20. Welcome, again, to the age of Trumpflation.

Donald Trump knows that he doesn't have real solutions to bring costs down despite his campaign promises. So what is he doing?

He is distracting and diverting the American people or trying to—with issues that have nothing to do with bringing prices down. He is distracting and diverting with issues like changing the name of the Gulf of Mexico; talking about changing the chairman of the board of the Kennedy Center; talking about building hotels in Gaza; talking about the Panama Canal; talking about annexing Canada.

These are not the things Americans signed up for. No way. If there is one mandate Donald Trump had, it was to fight inflation on day one like he promised to do, but he is not doing that. He is focused on everything else except what Americans want most.

Meanwhile, Americans woke up this morning to bad news for their bank accounts. They woke up to the grim reality that Donald Trump is not going to keep his promise to lower costs. They woke up—Americans woke up—to an era of Trumpflation, and, unfortunately, this is only the beginning.

DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY

Mr. President, on DOGE, we all agree—I have said it many times—that cutting waste in government and increasing efficiency is a good thing, but what DOGE is doing is something else entirely. DOGE is taking a meat-ax and attacking vital programs indiscriminately. Of the programs that he cuts, some may be wasteful; many, clearly, are not. Cut now, says DOGE. Ask questions later.

Meanwhile, of course, Trumpflation continues to get worse. If Donald Trump and DOGE want to focus on efficiency, they should do it as the Constitution maintains and the Founders wisely prescribed—through Congress. The Founders knew we needed debate; we needed sunlight; we needed transparency so we can see what programs can be improved or changed and what should be maintained. Instead, DOGE is taking a meat-ax and cutting vital programs that virtually no one outside of DOGE would call wasteful.

Cut now. Ask questions later.

I was in Albany and Syracuse on Monday, visiting community health centers. These centers throughout the country—CHCs as they are known, community health centers—are among the most effective and efficient users of government funding, and they rely on Federal dollars to provide high-quality, affordable healthcare for working people—far cheaper than for the people who would show up at a hospital. They are particularly important in rural areas where people have no option, but

many of these community health centers have had their funding cut temporarily, and too many are still unable to access funding. Some have even had to close. That means many working people suddenly have no option for high-quality, affordable healthcare near them.

Is this DOGE's idea of cutting wasteful spending—taking among the most effective, efficient parts of the healthcare system that deliver healthcare to people who need help with lower costs and cutting it without asking a question? Without examining what community health centers do? Meat-ax. Meat-ax. That is what they are doing.

Or let's look at programs like PEPFAR in the AID program. Again, they want to cut the whole AID. But what about PEPFAR? Do people at DOGE even realize what PEPFAR does? It helps combat things like AIDS. It has saved 25 million lives. Other programs stop things like Ebola in central Africa. If Ebola is left unchecked, it could, one day, spread to America—from Uganda to around the world today. There are flights from Kampala all over the world. So even if you oppose foreign aid on a policy ground, most people believe that PEPFAR and the programs fighting Ebola in central Africa are effective and cost-effective and make us more secure. God forbid Ebola would spread to the United States.

Do you want to see what government waste looks like? It doesn't look like those two programs. Thanks to DOGE, here is what government waste looks like that DOGE has created: Thanks to DOGE, half a billion dollars in food assistance through USAID is sitting in ports and ships and warehouses unable to move.

So the bottom line is simple: If you want to make cuts, you have sunlight, transparency, debate in Congress—not lawlessness; not breaking the law because you feel, well, that you know more than anybody else; not by implementing cuts and asking questions later. It is a formula for disaster when you do things like that. These policies will hurt children; they will hurt seniors; they will hurt veterans and so many other of our friends and neighbors.

#### RECONCILIATION

Mr. President, on reconciliation, today, Senate Republicans' scheme to pass tax cuts for the ultrarich takes the next important step. Later today, Chairman GRAHAM of the Budget Committee will hold a markup of the Republicans' first reconciliation bill.

Republicans claim that their bill will be fully paid for, but that means Republicans are laying the groundwork to gut things like nutrition assistance, funding for nursing homes, student debt support, and to kill clean energy jobs that employ Americans in red and blue States alike.

There has been so much focus on how Republicans are going to pass their sig-

nature bills—should it be one bill? Should it be two bills?—that at the end of the day, talking about process is a sideshow. This “one bill, two bills, or a hundred bills” is meaningless. What they are trying to do is give tax cuts to the very wealthy—further tax cuts to the very wealthy—who are doing just fine, and they are hurting average Americans by cutting programs—again meat-ax, slashing—across the board to do it.

They could carve up their bill. They could carve up one bill, two bills, five bills. As I said, it doesn't matter. They could carve it up in their agenda however they want, and they could change the order of policies they tackle first, but the endgame does not change. This is all about clearing the path to cutting taxes for billionaires and making the American people foot the bill.

The whole thing—the whole big enterprise—is aimed with one goal in mind: tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans—large tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans—who, as I said, are doing fine—not as fine as the average Americans, who just saw their inflation go up 3 percent.

Plain and simple: Again, what is their plan? To funnel more wealth to the ultrawealthy while slashing everything else to the bone: gutting Medicare and Medicaid; yanking school lunches from kids; blocking prescription drug reforms which make drugs cheaper for the average American; cutting funding for cancer research—one of the most popular things we do; cutting research for semiconductor manufacturing and letting China get ahead of us. No matter how they dress it up, no matter what spin they can put on it, the Republicans' agenda boils down to this: tax cuts for the wealthy and deep, deep painful cuts for everybody else.

#### NOMINATION OF TULSI GABBARD

Finally, Mr. President, on the nomination we are about to vote on in a little while, the Gabbard nomination, every single Democrat, I am proud to say, will oppose the nomination of Tulsi Gabbard because we simply cannot, in good conscience, trust our most classified secrets to someone who echoes Russian propaganda and falls for conspiracy theories.

So before my Republican colleagues cast their votes to confirm Ms. Gabbard, I hope they are going to think carefully one last time because America's safety—America's security—is at stake.

Is Ms. Gabbard really whom Republicans want leading intelligence Agencies? I will bet not.

Is she the best person we could find for the important position of Director of National Intelligence? Of all the people who know the intelligence world, I know some will be conservative like Donald Trump would want, but they wouldn't have the huge question marks about them that Ms. Gabbard has.

Do Republicans truly believe, I say to my colleagues, that someone who has so carelessly and repeatedly echoed

Russian propaganda and sympathized with the likes of Putin and Assad is the right person for this job?

I ask my Republican colleagues to think about the safety of the American people and the concern of our allies—and the threats posed by Vladimir Putin—before casting this vote.

Objectively, I think most Senators would agree there are better choices to lead National Intelligence. Do you know what my guess is? If we had a secret ballot, Gabbard might get 10 votes and 40 against her from the other side. People know—that is why they raised so many questions—but Donald Trump and Elon Musk, evidently, threatened them, and they are changing their views.

The Director of National Intelligence must be strong against America's adversaries. This is an amazing one. How could we put someone in when you hear about this? After Assad used chemical weapons against his own people in 2017 and 2018, Tulsi Gabbard turned against U.S. intelligence—by the way, at that point, Donald Trump was President—and sided with fringe conspiracy theorists to cast doubt on these two specific incidents.

I want to be clear about how strange and troubling this episode was. On one side, you had the entire U.S. intelligence ecosystem, the intelligence system of the French Government, and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons all saying the same thing: that Assad used chemical weapons against his own people in 2017 and 2018. The findings were not speculation. They were based on satellite imagery, witness accounts, medical experts—in other words, the kind of intelligence data that Ms. Gabbard would be responsible for evaluating if she—God forbid—gets this job.

On the other side were all these experts and all this evidence—fact-based—and you have Tulsi Gabbard relying on the judgment of an individual who had appeared on Russian-funded propaganda outlets, questioning those findings and shielding Assad for his inhumane conduct.

I have to say, I have never heard of a DNI nominee who was so ready and willing to question the findings of America's own intelligence operations and yet accept Russian disinformation so easily. And, of course, I am troubled by her long record of showing weakness against Russia when it came to Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

On the night Russia invaded Ukraine and launched the first full-scale invasion of a sovereign nation in Europe since World War II, what was Ms. Gabbard doing? She was on Twitter at 11:30 p.m., blaming NATO and the United States for starting the war in Ukraine when Putin invaded Ukraine. She said the war could have been avoided had NATO and the U.S. just accommodated Putin.

That is who we want as head of National Intelligence?

By the way, Russian state TV gleefully aired these comments shortly