

short, we need a Department of Justice that will deal out justice evenhandedly, without fear or favor.

I believe that being Attorney General is probably one of the toughest jobs here in Washington, DC, because you are not only the chief law enforcement officer for the country, you are also a member of the President's Cabinet.

But even given the difficult nature of the job, Merrick Garland practically abdicated his responsibilities as chief law enforcement officer in order to be a partisan advocate for President Biden's policies.

President Trump's Attorney General will have a chance to turn the page from Merrick Garland's failures by reversing the partisan hackery that has been a part and parcel of President Biden's Department of Justice. President Trump's Attorney General can restore the Department of Justice to its core mission. Pam Bondi can serve President Trump and the Nation well by enforcing the law that is on the books and ending the weaponization of political enemies.

Similarly, Kash Patel has an opportunity to turn the page from the abuses and the lack of accountability that we have seen at the FBI in recent years.

So I look forward to working with Ms. Bondi and Mr. Patel in their noble endeavor to restore trust in our Nation's justice system, and by doing so, to restore the trust of the American people.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

FOOD FOR PEACE PROGRAM

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, today I want to speak about a program that has shaped our Nation's humanitarian efforts and made a significant impact on my home State of Kansas, a program called Food for Peace.

In 1953, agricultural surpluses had reached an alltime high, but the price of storing excess commodities was too expensive to rationalize, and it was at risk of going to waste.

Kansas farmers, like Cheyenne County's Peter O'Brien, worked hard to cultivate and grow these commodities. Looking for a solution, Peter suggested at a local Farm Bureau meeting that maybe the excess food could be sent to countries in need. Peter understood that, out of our abundance, we have a moral duty and opportunity to feed the hungry. His idea sparked the origin of a program we now know as Food for Peace.

Another Kansan, one of my predecessors, Andy Schoepel, led the Food for Peace Act in the Senate, which was signed into law by President Eisenhower, another Kansan, in 1954, and Senator Bob Dole from Russell, KS, later championed the reauthorization of Food for Peace.

The program's premise was simple but impactful: By leveraging the food surpluses we produce in Kansas and across the Nation, we could address famine around the world, while cre-

ating new markets for our commodities and bolstering our agricultural economy.

The first shipments of American wheat and corn were sent to Korea and Greece in 1954, and by the end of Food for Peace's initial year of operation, it had fed 1.2 million people. Over the last 70 years, the program has fed more than 4 billion people in more than 150 countries, all with American-grown commodities.

Hunger, whether driven by price increases or food shortages, can act as a catalyst for protest and armed conflict. We have seen how food can be used as a weapon of war as radical Islamic groups in Syria used food as a means to recruit soldiers. We have witnessed regions of the world that are critical to America's strategic interest descend into chaos due to people not having access to affordable food.

In a turbulent world, stricken with conflict, American leadership is more than just our military and our economic might. Food aid provided by the United States reduces despair and increases stability within fragile countries by enabling economic productivity and minimizing the risk of radicalization.

For countless individuals around the world, their survival is dependent upon the resources provided by the American people. These vulnerable populations rely on the strength and prosperity of the United States. However, much work remains in the ongoing battle against hunger, and part of that battle is improving the process and programs that administer our aid.

Food for Peace is administered by the USAID, and the inefficiency of USAID has been a growing concern. The Agency struggles with bureaucratic delays, mismanagement, and a lack of coordination, which undermines its ability to deliver effectively aid to those in need. This inefficiency not only wastes taxpayer dollars but also diminishes the impact of America's foreign aid in addressing global crises.

Reports suggest that millions of taxpayer dollars have been allocated to promoting tourism in Lebanon and Egypt, funding the purchase of electric vehicles for Vietnam, and inadvertently supporting the cultivation of opium in Afghanistan.

Even more concerning, it has been confirmed that \$9 million intended for civilian food and medical supplies in Syria fell into the hands of terrorist organizations linked to al-Qaida, due to the failed oversight of USAID.

Amid these concerns of corruption, President Trump has taken steps to dismantle USAID. In conjunction with the President's action and with approval of the White House policy team, I have introduced a bill with Senator JOHN HOEVEN and Senator ROGER MARSHALL and Representative TRACEY MANN to move Food for Peace from the turbulent USAID program and move it to the Department of Agriculture, in an effort to prevent waste and bring

the program closer to farmers that depend upon it.

USDA has a long and proven history of managing agricultural policy and programs that support American farmers, food distribution systems, and global security efforts. USDA has boots on the ground and the infrastructure already in place to support the logistics for food assistance. The Agency understands how to move crops efficiently, sustainably, and quickly. This knowledge is indispensable when responding to international crises, where speed and reliability can mean the difference between life and death. By placing Food for Peace under USDA's authority, we make certain that the program is in good hands and can continue to bring revenue to American agriculture.

As of just a little over an hour ago, the Senate confirmed the new Secretary of Agriculture, Brooke Rollins. I have no doubt she will be an excellent advocate for our Nation's farmers, and I appreciate the conversations we have already had on this legislation. The Secretary has told me she is excited about this proposal and looks forward to working together on this issue.

We produce more than we can consume in this Nation. So without programs to export to, our ability to make a living in agriculture in Kansas and across the country disappears.

In fiscal year 2023 alone, \$713 million of U.S.-grown commodities were purchased by the Food for Peace program, putting money back into the hands of farmers. In rural America, food assistance programs like Food for Peace put American-grown products in the hands of the hungry, and this food is a tangible extension of the hard work and dedication of farmers and ranchers.

I am pleased to help find ways to make our delivery of food aid more effective, more efficient, and remove the challenges and things that we have seen that are so disturbing.

America is the greatest country on Earth and the most prosperous. Food for Peace bolsters the farmers who feed us, creates a more stable world, and feeds the hungry.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I am here to speak in opposition to the confirmation of Senator Kelly Loeffler to serve as Administrator of the Small Business Administration.

I am concerned for the more than 722,000 small businesses that call Massachusetts home and that last year relied on \$708 million in loans from the Small Business Administration.

I am concerned because of Donald Trump and Elon Musk, who have sent a clear message: They are here to illegally cut off funding for critical government Agencies and services. They are here to make government work for billionaires but at the expense of working-class people, and they are filling their Cabinet with people who are going to carry out that illegal bidding.

As I stand here today, DOGE operatives continue to work under the cover of darkness, including at the Small Business Administration. The American people want answers. Is the private information of families and businesses and individuals safe at the SBA? Will an entrepreneur looking to open their beauty salon be looking to close on an SBA loan and get their money on schedule? Can government contractors, many of whom are veterans, continue providing critical services while getting paid on time?

Lawmakers and American families alike are scrambling to figure out whether the government is open for business. Small business owners are wondering what will come from the illegal access to their private data by Musk's minions. These are just small business people across the country who have handed over the financial secrets of their families, and there is no guarantee that all of those secrets of their families are being protected right now. They are small business people. We have 7 million people in Massachusetts and 722,000 small businesses.

Meanwhile, Donald Trump continues to attack DEI—diversity, equity, and inclusion—when, in reality, the administration is carrying out a different kind of DEI—“defending Elon's interests.”

So today, I stand in opposition to the confirmation of Kelly Loeffler because of this effort which is going to be throwing us into a constitutional crisis through their illegal actions. I fear that, as Administrator, Senator Loeffler will put the interests—at the command of Donald Trump and Elon Musk—of the more than 34 million small businesses second and of Elon and billionaire interests first.

In a moment when our democracy is under threat, I expect a clearer commitment to the rule of law. So far, Senator Loeffler has offered an unapologetic defense of Trump's Executive orders, which attempt to supersede the law of the land, and has supported pardons for the January 6 insurrectionists.

Taxpayers need to ensure they have an environment which is fair and impartial at the SBA. Instead, Senator Loeffler has, in the past, basically bragged that she is more conservative even than Attila the Hun.

I need to make sure that this environment that is being created is one which is going to be hospitable to small businesses, because they need to ensure that there is an Administrator who will act ethically and for the benefit of America's entrepreneurs. Small businesses need an Administrator who will help them compete and innovate. They do not need an Administrator who is only listening to the White House's, Trump's, and Elon Musk's orders.

To conclude, under the Biden administration, we saw a record number of new small businesses, but just because they were recovering, it doesn't mean they weren't hurting.

So to all of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, we have to work together to uplift our entrepreneurs and promote a ruthless Darwinian marketplace that would bring a smile to ADAM SMITH. That is my goal. The vibrancy of our communities depends on us ensuring small business can compete, expand, and create jobs.

By crippling government from within, Trump is trying to damage the critical services that help working families put food on the table. So I urge a “no” vote on the confirmation of Senator Loeffler to serve as Administrator of the Small Business Administration.

Unfortunately, by now, we are able to look back and see the totality across the EPA, across the NIH, across the President's call for the dismantlement of the Department of Education as to what the real story line is here as the Trump administration and the DOGE apparatchiks move into Agency after Agency and are in the Small Business Administration right now.

So my goal is to try to protect that SBA that we have all known on a bipartisan basis for generations—to just protect it from this storm of partisanship that is taking over our country, and on that basis, I recommend a “no” vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, later today, we have the opportunity to advance the nomination of the Honorable Kelly Loeffler to be the Administrator of the Small Business Administration.

Senator Loeffler is immensely qualified for this role. As a successful businesswoman, it is abundantly clear that Senator Loeffler truly understands what it takes to be an entrepreneur and will be an effective voice for small businesses across America.

Since President Trump's election in November, optimism on Main Street has surged to its highest levels since 2018. Our Nation's job creators—small businesses—are excited about the prospect of having a dedicated and knowledgeable leader at the helm of the SBA.

Last week, the Small Business Committee, on which I serve as chair, favorably reported her nomination out with a bipartisan vote—a sure sign that my friends on both sides of the aisle believe she is fit to lead the SBA.

Senator Loeffler will bring accountability back to the Agency and promote policies that will truly benefit America's small businesses. As evidenced in her nomination hearing, Senator Loeffler's experience and her expertise make her the right person to lead the SBA and advocate for our small businesses.

Growing up on her family's farm in Bloomington, IL, Senator Loeffler experienced firsthand the problems facing America's farmers and small business owners. And as a fellow farm girl myself, I look forward to having some more Midwest common sense in Washington, DC.

Senator Loeffler also witnessed her parents start up a small trucking busi-

ness and navigate complex rules and regulations. She understands the struggles small businesses face because—do you know what?—she has experienced them. Fortunately, Senator Loeffler is ready to cut the redtape and reduce the burdens that so many of our job creators still face today.

Senator Loeffler is also a successful entrepreneur. She was the first employee and CEO of a financial technology company. Through her hard work and tenacity, she aggressively grew the company and took it public within 3 years.

Additionally, Senator Loeffler knows what it means to work for Main Street and the American people. During COVID, as a U.S. Senator, she worked tirelessly to bring relief to the people of Georgia, specifically through the Paycheck Protection Program. However, she, like me, recognizes that some took advantage of this program, and they need to be held accountable. During her confirmation hearing, Senator Loeffler detailed her zero-tolerance policy for waste, fraud, and abuse in the SBA. That should be welcome news for all of us.

In addition, Senator Loeffler indicated the need for a full-scale audit—I started my political career as an auditor, so I agree with this—a full-scale audit at the SBA to uncover improper spending and stated she would rely on that data to make the best decisions for the future of the SBA.

Senator Loeffler also noted the importance of working with Congress, particularly when it comes to disaster relief. She recognized the tragedy of the SBA's disaster shortfall, which lasted for 66 days in the middle of back-to-back natural disasters. She recognized this should never happen again.

SBA's vital role in the disaster process cannot be overstated, and we must ensure we have an Administrator who will alert Congress at the first signs of any concerns.

The SBA needs a strong leader with a proven track record in business management, and Senator Loeffler brings all of that and more to the table.

I look forward to working with Senator Loeffler to ensure small businesses all across America can thrive and maintain these high levels of optimism we are already seeing under this administration.

I urge my colleagues to advance her nomination and support her with a “yes” vote.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. 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 HOWARD LUTNICK

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, I rise in support of the nomination of Howard Lutnick to be Secretary of Commerce.