

So what we are doing here with this mine is we are creating a pathway—a pipeline—for this foreign company to build a mine almost certainly polluting the Boundary Waters to take the copper to send it to China where they then have a sweetheart deal for smelting and then sell it back out on the open market.

This is not an “America First” strategy, so I would encourage my Republican colleagues as you consider this to take a look at who is benefiting from this mine, and it certainly is not going to be Minnesotans whom this land belongs to, along with the rest of this country. No. The real winners of this deal are the Chilean billionaires who will further line their pockets with profits from this mine.

Should this resolution come before the Senate, I urge my colleagues to vote no on rolling back protections for the boundary waters wilderness area.

We can support mining but not this mine and this place. We can be good stewards of our natural resources, and we can support mining but not this mine. These public lands belong to all of us, and we should not allow them to be exploited by a foreign mining company for our loss and for their gain.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

IRAN

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, nearly 20 years ago, I joined with then-Republican Senator Gordon Smith of Oregon to introduce the Iran Counter-Proliferation Act.

Key provisions of that bill included significant tightening of petroleum-related sanctions that eventually became law and helped push Iran to the negotiating table over its genuinely dangerous nuclear program. Those tough sanctions and unified allied pressure, including from Russia and China, led to an agreement that contained Iran’s nuclear program with aggressive international inspections.

I remember hosting the International Atomic Energy Agency Director General many times in the ensuing years where he provided me with updates on the inspections. While sometimes contentious, they were, in fact, working.

During those years, I also met directly with Iranian officials to discuss this agreement, to push them to end their support for regional proxies, and to help return missing and detained Americans in Iran.

So I am not naive about the Iranian regime’s threat to the region and even its own people. And while the nuclear agreement wasn’t perfect then, it was working. It allowed us to confront Iran about its otherwise troubling behavior without the threat of an Iranian nuclear weapon. We made progress.

Yet, during his first term, President Donald Trump walked away from this agreement and replaced it with nothing—nothing but bluster and wishful thinking. The President’s approach did not stop Iran from pursuing its nuclear

program, but it did undermine the coalition that we had created to counter Iran’s nuclear aspirations.

The mess we find ourselves in today—and it is a mess—is one the President has helped to create through his narcissism, impulsiveness, crude threats, and lack of planning.

I have learned during the course of my service in Washington that it is far easier to get into a war than it is to get out of one. We find ourselves today facing a set of easily predictable policy problems despite the stunning skill and bravery of America’s military.

The belligerent regime in Iran has not fallen. Already difficult leaders have been replaced by even harder hardliners, with the Revolutionary Guard gaining even more influence.

Iran continues to rebuild its military capabilities and threaten our troops, interests, and allies in the region.

The Strait of Hormuz, which had largely been free and open for the last several decades, is now being held hostage by the remaining Iranian regime—one that is brazenly still threatening ships and charging outrageous tolls for safe passage.

If I asked the American people randomly “What is this war all about?” they would start by saying that Iran is a bad actor. Agreed. No argument there. But what are we trying to achieve there?

If they are puzzled by that question, I am, too, because you listen to how the President explained his strategy from the start—let me tell you what the list contains partially. I don’t know the complete list.

Why did we do this? Regime change. That was announced almost immediately. Several days later, that was removed.

How about ballistic missiles? Ballistic missiles for sure, and then later, it was said: Well, there is no capacity for ballistic missiles striking the United States or our friends in the near term.

How about nuclear weapons? We want to stop nuclear weapons. But didn’t the President say 6 months ago when we attacked that we had obliterated their capacity to build nuclear weapons? He came back to say that was on the agenda too.

When you go through it, the list keeps growing. The initial explanation for why we were there had never mentioned the Strait of Hormuz, and now it is a daily topic. One day, we are fighting to keep them open; the next day, we are fighting to keep them closed. I can’t follow the bouncing ball. I don’t know what the President’s agenda is when it comes to the Strait of Hormuz.

The fact that the President suggested last week that the United States would jointly collect payments for access to the Strait of Hormuz is beyond imagination. These funds are being used as extortion funds by Iranian hardliners to rebuild the country’s military and continue to fund its terrorist proxies.

After weekend talks in Pakistan—21 hours with the Vice President—went absolutely nowhere, President Trump announced a U.S. blockade of the Strait of Hormuz.

At a time when our gasoline prices are skyrocketing, when the revenue from oil, because of the new barrel prices, is reaching record levels not just for the Iranians’ profit but the profit of the Russians, who use that to fight in Ukraine, for goodness’ sake, who ever sat down at the table before this invasion and analyzed these possibilities, and what was their conclusion? Did we really go to war in Iran to worsen the free flow of goods in the critical Strait of Hormuz and enter into an extortion business with the Iranian regime? It is upside down.

The equally predictable move by the Iranians to try to squeeze the global economy has hurt American consumers and farmers and the global economy—a surprise to no one except President Trump. Americans are already struggling to make ends meet because of the President’s cuts to Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act and his tariff taxes. He is doing everything he can to make this economy even worse. The increase in gas prices—now more than \$4 a gallon in Chicago—may be too much for many to bear.

While Americans suffer under high prices, our adversaries are reaping the benefits in profits. The increase in global oil prices and the desperate easing of some oil sanctions by Trump have been a gift to Vladimir Putin, who takes this revenue to renew his bloody war against the Ukrainians. Was that thought about before we invaded Iran?

And let’s not forget that Putin, who continues to snub any attempts by President Trump to end the war in Ukraine, has also been helping target American interests in the gulf. He is not neutral; he is helping the Iranians at the expense of American soldiers.

I cannot say it better than New York Times columnist and Middle East expert Tom Friedman. Here is what he wrote recently:

Trump has no clue how to get out of the mess that he has created by starting a war without thinking through the implications.

We desperately need a coherent plan to end this war, one that addresses the remaining highly enriched uranium still in Iran. We need a plan that stabilizes the U.S. and global economy and makes sure any further wars are done with the consent of Congress.

It is not too much to ask that this President—every President who wants to engage in a war follow article I, section 8 of the U.S. Constitution, which gives the authority to declare war to Congress. Notably, it is for the American people to decide through their elected Members of Congress. That is why I still support Senator TAMMY DUCKWORTH’s War Powers Resolution which will be on the floor this week. It is time for us to accept our constitutional responsibility and try to get this mess under control with Iran.

If there was ever a reminder of the importance of the constitutional role of the people's elected representatives, it is in the declaration of war.

This current mess reminds us that those who wrote the Constitution had real wisdom, and those who are executing the plans for this war have not demonstrated that feature.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

The Senator from California.

SAVE AMERICA ACT

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, as everybody knows, this last Sunday night, the world watched the people of Hungary achieve something very, very powerful. They voted an autocratic leader out of office. After 16 years of "illiberal" democracy, after 16 years of centralized power—crony capitalism, dismantling freedom of the press, and shredding the rule of law—Hungarian voters overwhelmingly showed up to make their voices heard with nearly 80 percent of voters casting a ballot.

Meanwhile, here we are in the United States of America—in the U.S. Senate—continuing to debate a bill that would make it harder for Americans to make their voices heard in the electoral process.

Here we are, 2 weeks since Donald Trump signed yet another unlawful executive order. His order would make it harder for eligible Americans to register to vote, to stay registered to vote, to exercise their fundamental rights to vote, this time targeting vote-by-mail.

It is absurd; it is unconstitutional; and, most importantly, it is not going to work. American voters will not be silenced.

So he can try rigging the rules of our elections to desperately try to hold on to power, but it is not going to work.

He can try to silence the opposition in the media. It is not going to work.

He can try subverting democracy itself by shrinking the electorate and limiting how people can vote, but it is not going to work because if the No Kings marches are any indicator, the American people know what to do when our rights and our democracy are being attacked.

The American people show up and use every lawful option available to cast a ballot and make their voices heard. We know this because we have seen it before—yes, around the world, like in Hungary this last weekend but also right here in the United States—throughout the course of our history. And I believe strongly that we are going to see it again this November.

Now, throughout our Nation's history, we have steadily worked to expand the right to vote to strengthen

our democracy through lawful and inclusive participation, not by trying to further restrict it or further deny access to the ballot.

From the fight for women's suffrage to the struggle against Jim Crow and the Civil Rights Movement overall, each generation has moved us closer to the promise of a more inclusive democracy.

But President Trump and his Republican enablers want to take us backward because with inflation up, the cost of living up, prices at the gas pump up, and our Nation spiraling deeper into an unpopular and unlawful war in the Middle East, Donald Trump sees the writing on the wall.

And if you can't rig the rules of the election, making it harder to register to vote if you are eligible, making it harder to stay registered to vote or actually harder to cast your ballot, then maybe there is a chance that he can hold on to power. That is his only hope.

Now, I know, colleagues, that we have been away for a couple of weeks. It was a State work period last week and the week prior, but here we are, coming back after a couple of weeks. And let me refresh our memories as to what is before us: the SAVE Act and what the SAVE Act specifically does.

First, it requires documents like a passport or an original birth certificate in order to register to vote, documents that tens of millions of Americans don't have readily available. A passport is just one example. Half of American citizens don't have a passport. And so it becomes a barrier to be able to register to vote, let alone trying to cast a ballot in November.

The language of the SAVE Act also says that if your name doesn't match—think about this—there are people who change their names, most typically when people get married and choose to change their names. All of a sudden, the name on your ID no longer matches the name on your birth certificate. So you are going to have to go through some extra bureaucratic hoops to be able to register and participate in our democracy.

Then this bill does more. It forces Americans to register, to update their registration, or to provide proof of citizenship in person if they have been falsely flagged as ineligible, meaning you are going to have to take some time off from work. And maybe the county elections office is near where you live or work or maybe it is quite the distance, but that burden is now on you to continue exercising your fundamental right to vote.

This bill also requires States to turn over their sensitive voter rolls to the Department of Homeland Security. Why? The Department of Homeland Security has nothing to do with election administration. But under this bill, they will run the names and voter information from the States through databases that we already know are flawed and already falsely flag eligible American voters as potential noncitizens.

And when they do that, DHS then communicates to the States orders to remove them from the rolls. This isn't speculation. This is already happening in States that have voluntarily begun this exercise with DHS.

And don't forget, colleagues, the Republican bill attacks vote-by-mail, the same vote-by-mail that 48 million Americans relied on in the last election, the same vote-by-mail that Donald Trump himself repeatedly has utilized as an option to cast his ballot, including a few weeks ago in a special election in Florida.

So Donald Trump thinks voting by mail is safe and secure enough for him but not for the American people? What is with that hypocrisy?

So, in other words—again, this is a refresher; this is a reminder—the SAFE Act is a bill that makes it harder to register to vote, harder to stay registered to vote, and harder to cast your ballot.

But we know what the goal is. To quote the Legal Defense Fund, which has spoken up on this bill, this is about "shrinking the electorate and controlling who can vote in America."

You can try to describe it some other way. You can try to characterize it some other way. But that is the bottom line. But with this bill stalling here in the Senate, President Trump is now trying to take matters into his own hands once again.

His aim is to—his words, not mine—"take over elections" with this most recent illegal Executive order that I just mentioned. He wants to force States to rely on the Federal list of eligible voters created by the Department of Homeland Security, using those same flawed databases.

And he wants States to hand over not just the voter rolls, now, actual authority for absentee and mail voting to the Trump administration. And if they don't, the U.S. Postal Service won't deliver voters' absentee ballots? That is outrageous.

Let me say that again. If States don't follow Donald Trump's directives, ballots will go undelivered, meaning lawful votes cast legally by U.S. citizens will not be counted.

This order is unconstitutional; it is illegal; and it will not stand. As if that wasn't bad enough, this order goes further. This order threatens criminal penalties for election officials to mail carriers just for doing their job.

Colleagues, the Postal Service is an independent agency, and it is independent for that reason. So they cannot be subject to this Executive order.

The Postal Service is required to deliver all mail, period—including and especially election mail, like mail ballots.

The Constitution is crystal clear about who runs our elections. In case you were wondering where the authority argument comes from, read the Constitution. It is simple: States administer elections, not the President. Congress can have a say in the time,