

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

manner, and way elections happen, but it is Congress, the legislative branch, not the President, not the executive branch.

Like the SAVE America Act, this Executive order isn't about securing elections; it is about controlling who gets to participate in them. It is a political move, and it is a power play, and it is based on a false premise. Voting by mail is, indeed, safe. It is, indeed, secure. It is a deeply American tradition that dates back not just a few years or a couple of decades but for well over a century.

Vote-by-mail was used by both Pennsylvania and New Jersey during the War of 1812. Union soldiers voted by mail throughout the Civil War because even in times of war, we should not have our women and men in the armed services sacrifice their fundamental right to vote. During World War II, Japanese Americans held in internment camps voted absentee in the 1942 and 1944 elections.

In 1978, California—my home State of California—became the first State in the Nation to allow no-excuse absentee voting to help more citizens vote securely and vote conveniently. Flash-forward to today. Now 28 States allow no-excuse absentee voting, plus an additional 8 States that have universal mail voting. You add that up, that is a supermajority of the country. Even American astronauts have been able to vote by mail from the International Space Station since 1997.

Yet, despite the years of experience, despite the years of success, despite the years of secure mail-in voting, we are seeing relentless attacks against it by Donald Trump and his Republican allies in Congress because expanding access to the ballot box does not serve those who want to limit participation.

But here is what we all need to remember: You can bring a bill designed to suppress the vote. You can keep signing illegal Executive orders. You cannot and will not stop the American people from voting. You cannot stop them from speaking up, and you cannot turn back the clock on the progress this country has made.

Democrats—we are going to continue to fight voter suppression bills like this one here in Congress no matter how long it takes, and leaders across the country will continue to challenge illegal and unconstitutional orders in the courts. But ultimately the most powerful response will come from the American people themselves this fall at the ballot box because Americans don't sit back or stay at home when their rights are threatened; Americans show up, Americans speak out, and Americans vote. And you can be sure they are going to do so again this November.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, the right to vote is the very bedrock of our American democracy. Two hundred

fifty years ago, our Founders set out to create a nation governed by the people. At the time, they were renouncing a monarch who they called a tyrant for his overreaching actions.

The new government the Founders created in response, which has endured for 2½ centuries, was built upon entirely enshrining the fundamental principle that power lies with the people, and they exercised that power to hold their leaders accountable through their vote.

Two weeks ago, President Trump signed a sweeping and unconstitutional Executive order that would place the most significant restrictions to the right to vote in recent memory. There is no question this order is an attack on the right to vote, and it goes against the very heart of the free and fair elections that make our Nation a strong democratic Republic.

To preserve the power of the people to determine who their leaders are, our Constitution gives States the power to conduct elections. There is no authority for the President or the executive branch to make sweeping changes to our elections. The Founders designed it that way precisely to ensure that no single leader—especially one as powerful as a President—could hold sway over the outcome of those elections.

To be clear, in our country, the voters choose their leaders. Leaders do not have the power to choose their voters. But that is exactly—that is exactly—what President Trump is trying to do with his Executive order and what our Republican colleagues are trying to do by passing the SAVE Act.

Under this Executive order, President Trump is illegally co-opting the Postal Service and the Department of Homeland Security to ensure that he can pick and choose who gets to vote. It is all done under the guise of protecting the security of our elections, under the guise that the 2020 election was stolen.

Well, Mr. President, the facts simply do not back that up. In fact, there is no evidence—no evidence—that election fraud or noncitizen voting is a widespread problem in our elections. And in the very few cases that we have, they are effectively prosecuted, and they should be.

But the President and his allies want to use the Department of Homeland Security and the Social Security Administration to create a new "State Citizenship List" that will determine who is eligible to vote in our election. Every State already determines whether people who register are actually eligible to vote.

To ask Federal Agencies that have no election administration responsibilities to do this is not only against the law, it risks removing eligible voters from the voter rolls. The Department of Homeland Security has already admitted that the Federal data sources that would be used to compile these new State Citizenship Lists, such as the outdated Social Security records,

are absolutely riddled with inaccuracies. If that data is applied to voting, it risks American citizens being incorrectly purged from voter rolls and denied their constitutional right to vote.

The President's Executive order also weaponizes the Postal Service. It forces them to play a key role in elections as a regulator of absentee ballots.

The reason the Postal Service is one of our Nation's most trusted institutions is because it is completely neutral. In fact, Congress intentionally created the Postal Service to be an independent establishment and gave the postal power to the Board of Governors. The Postal Service doesn't care which politicians you may support. Its only priority is to deliver the mail to every community in the country.

The President is now trying to corrupt—trying to corrupt—this mission. If the President is successful in forcing the Postal Service to play a role in running elections, he will completely erode the trust of this storied institution.

What is truly crazy about the President's Executive order is that the Postal Service regularly takes extraordinary measures to ensure that election mail is actually delivered on time regardless of partisan politics. In fact, mail-in voting is a safe and secure way for voters to participate in our democracy. Millions of Americans, including President Trump, use this method to exercise their right to vote. And the Postal Service record stands for itself. Last election, they delivered over 99 million ballots, and 97 percent were delivered within just 3 days.

American elections have a long history of being free, fair, and secure, and vote-by-mail is a key part of ensuring that more Americans can participate in our democracy.

The President's Executive order and the SAVE Act Republicans are trying to pass through Congress are basically nothing more than an effort to undermine the security and the integrity of our electoral process.

I urge my colleagues and every American to stand up to this illegal power grab and help protect the core values that have always made our Nation great.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, let's see if we all agree on something. People should not be allowed to vote in elections illegally. Is that a radical idea? I think it is a basic idea. It ought to be against the law for somebody who is not legal to try to vote in America. It is. It is a felony. Well, how often does this happen that people who are ineligible to vote—like immigrants—try to actually vote? Well, let's think of this possibility.

In a 20-year period of time, we did a survey of all the people who were caught trying to vote illegally in the United States. Now, keep in mind that in each election cycle, 25 to 50 million

Americans registered to vote. So in a 20-year period of time, think about all of the possibilities of people who are registering to vote and how many were actually illegal when trying to register to vote. How many do you think? Seven million, right? No. Seven hundred thousand? No. Seventy thousand? No. Seven hundred? No.

In a 20-year period of time, 77 people in America who are ineligible tried to vote—77 out of millions who are being registered every election cycle. So the Republicans said that is enough—77 is enough. Let's make everybody in America reregister—everybody. We will catch those 77 or anybody who looks like one.

You think to yourself: Why are you doing this to me? I have been legally voting in America for decades and nobody has questioned it, nor should they. Why do I have to go through a registration? Well, that's because we shouldn't have anybody illegal voting. I agree we shouldn't. But with 77 out of millions, OK, you want to reregister to vote? The bill before us says there is a simple process you need to follow. You have to show identification.

Well, that is easy. I just got on a flight the other day, and I had to show my ID. Everybody shows their ID. But what ID did you show? Your driver's license, right? That is what I use. I have got one of those upgraded driver's licenses we are all supposed to have that proves my identity. They accept it, put me on an airplane. Nobody says: He is really a terrorist. He showed me his driver's license.

But their bill doesn't include a driver's license. If you want to prove your identity, you have to show a passport. That is one way to do it. Well, how many people in America have a passport? About half. About half do. And if you don't have a passport and you want to get one just in time for the election, get busy.

The first thing you need to do is be prepared to write a check for \$165 for your passport and then you go through the process. It may only be 4 weeks, but it may be longer depending on how much you want to pay. That is one way that you can prove your identity.

The other way is pretty simple—produce your birth certificate. Got one handy? What name does it show on there? For a lot of ladies, it shows their birth name—what their family name was when they were born. They have since gotten married. They may have a hyphenated last name. The names don't match up, so birth certificates don't work out that well.

Why are we going through this hassle? Seventy-seven people tried to vote who shouldn't have in 20 years. That isn't what it is really about. I used to work for a fellow in politics who used to say: For every political issue, there is a good reason and a real reason. A good reason is to stop fraud in voting. The real reason: turn this election upside down in November. And why do they want to turn it upside down? Be-

cause this President thinks he is going to lose.

Why would he think he is going to lose? He might have been listening to the "Hungarian Rhapsody" over the weekend; and if he was, the people of Hungary threw out Viktor Orbán and put in the person who is on the left. Despite the campaigning of Vice President Vance and the support of President Trump, the rightwing candidate lost—overwhelmingly lost in Hungary. The fear is the President's party is going to lose in November. The voters have the ultimate decision.

The point I am getting to is there are so many things we could be working on now, but to have Americans reregister to vote with questionable identification services accepted, with people writing out a \$165 check so that they have a passport so that they can vote in November, this is all unnecessary and overdone. What we are telling you today is, there are more important things for us to worry about in America.

First and foremost, let's get these gasoline prices down. Filled your tank recently? Mr. President, \$4 a gallon, \$5 a gallon? In Illinois, you run into both. It means that families are going to put a lot more money into the tank than they did before because of this President's undeclared war—that is what we are facing.

If this Chamber continues to debate this misguided SAVE America Act, we also must reconcile with the President's recently signed Executive order—listen to this—an unlawful, unprecedented attempt to meddle in elections under the banner of integrity. Why? Because it is a blatant attempt by President Trump to exceed his constitutional authority by directing the administration to determine the eligibility of American citizens to vote. This is a reckless solution to a problem that doesn't exist. Mr. President, 77 voters over 20 years.

This Executive order shouldn't come as a surprise. As I mentioned, the President has long sought to sow distrust in the integrity of our elections. Last month—listen to this—the President wrote, and I am quoting him now: Mail-in voting means mail-in cheating.

Hmm. Interesting. Public records recently revealed the President himself voted by mail—What? I thought it meant cheating—in a recent special election for a State house district that includes Mar-a-Lago. So according to President Trump, vote-by-mail is cheating when the nurse who is working strict work hours or the elderly person with mobility issues uses it, but it is totally fine when he himself personally uses it to vote. The hypocrisy of this White House knows no bounds.

There are serious concerns that the processes and systems that Federal Agencies would employ to enforce the President's Executive order are filled with errors and produce unintended consequences.

Under this order the Department of Homeland Security—this is the Presi-

dent's Executive order—the Department of Homeland Security and Social Security Administration would be responsible for determining a voter's citizenship status, empowering them at the Federal level to create a list of approved voters who may receive mail-in ballots; however, nearly a quarter of the Social Security Administration records lack any citizenship information.

They haven't thought this through. The same bad data already used by DHS's Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements—or SAVE Program—which has repeatedly misidentified American citizens as noncitizens. They make mistakes; they question whether you can vote. And people who are doing this legally and accurately shouldn't have to put up with it.

So they basically tested the President's SAVE Program to see how many people were actually not voting properly. They went to Boone County, MO. More than half of the voters that were flagged as ineligible turned out to be American citizens. The system doesn't work.

The President's Executive order also requires the Postal Service to send mail-in ballots only to the administration's approved list of voters. So if you want to use a mail-in ballot—and more than half the people in Illinois do—you have got to pass muster and approval by the President first; your name has to clear the list. As a result, when eligible voters are misidentified as noncitizens, they will not receive a ballot to vote by mail and will be purged from the voter rolls essentially blocking access to the ballot.

The point I am getting to is this: This right to vote that we have in the United States is a key to our democracy. People died to give us this chance to be American citizens who have the right to vote and make up our minds about who would be sitting in this chair or that chair or the other chair. That is your decision, nobody else's. This President should not be able to take it away from you or complicate your life to the point where you have to start dreaming up identification services to go and reregister to vote. That is just wrong.

We are only a few months away from this election. We can't let this happen. The reason we are debating this issue on the floor today is to make sure that they don't hurry and pass this provision without thinking it through. Millions of people's opportunity to vote is at stake.

I come to the floor today to say: If you can't protect the right of Americans to vote however they want to vote in their conscience, then you have forgotten the very basics of our democracy.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I rise today alongside my colleagues to speak

out against an attack on a fundamental right of every American citizen—the right to vote. I want to thank Senator PADILLA, the ranking member of the Rules Committee, for leading this important effort.

The deceptively named SAVE America Act is all about sowing doubt in our elections and making it harder for American citizens to register and to vote. It is all part of an effort by the administration to pick who votes rather than allowing voters to pick who wins.

Former DHS Secretary Kristi Noem said that the SAVE Act was important “to make sure we have the right people voting, electing the right leaders.”

President Trump endorsed the SAVE Act because it will “guarantee the midterms.” He said that Republicans “should take over the voting in at least 15 places. The Republicans ought to nationalize the voting.”

Steve Bannon agreed that, in his words, “President Trump has to nationalize the election. You’ve got to put—not just, I think, ICE—you’ve got to call up the 82nd and the 101st Airborne. . . . You’ve got to get around every poll.”

As I will explain, the SAVE Act is precisely the vehicle that Trump, Noem, Bannon, and others will use to trample the Constitution’s provisions that States run elections and sow doubt about this fall’s election result.

The SAVE Act isn’t about election integrity. It is yet another power grab by President Trump. It is no different from him begging the Republican secretary of state in Georgia to find votes in 2020 or failing to act when a violent mob invaded the Capitol on January 6.

The President is interested in one thing and one thing only—himself. Look no further than putting his name on the Kennedy Center, tearing down part of the White House, or adding his face and signature to our currency. It is always about his ability to stay and seize more power, and the SAVE Act is no different.

Here is how the SAVE Act is another power grab for President Trump. First, under the guise of solving the illusory problem of noncitizen voting, the SAVE Act would require documentary proof of citizenship to register to vote. That means presenting your birth certificate and a government-issued photo ID in person at the time you register.

Well, many people, such as married women, do not have a birth certificate that currently matches their name or cannot find their birth certificate. Nationwide, there are 69 million married women who have changed their name, and 21 million people don’t have ready access to a passport or a birth certificate. I do not think the Federal Government should be in the business of making it harder for these people to vote.

Second, it would require government-issued photo ID to vote in person. Now, I represent a State that requires voter ID. Rhode Island has taken a sensible

approach. But the list of acceptable forms of ID to vote under the SAVE Act would be much narrower than what is required under Rhode Island law.

Every State has developed its own rules for verifying eligibility status because that is what the Constitution directs. I am opposed to the Federal Government telling Rhode Island what to do.

Third, it would require anyone voting by mail to also include a photocopy of their ID, adding more items to a mail ballot process, particularly for American citizens who are already registered. It will only make it harder to process the ballots in an accurate and timely fashion.

It also represents an invasion of privacy because election officials will see actual copies of Americans’ most sensitive documents, containing their personal information, in a way that has never happened before.

We all treasure the secret ballot, which allows people to go into the polling place, register their approval or disapproval, but not have it identified with them unless they choose. And this bill will upset that tradition and that safeguard on democracy.

Fourth, it would require Rhode Island to turn over its voter rolls to the Federal Government, including your Social Security number and other private information. This is especially insidious.

It is an unconstitutional intrusion into Rhode Island’s authority to determine the time, place, and manner of elections under article I, section 4 of the Constitution. And depending on how President Trump decides to implement this provision, he could require that some people reregister before the 2026 election, and he might just pick out blue States or swing States. But here is the key point: The SAVE Act gives Donald Trump the power to decide who has to reregister and who gets to vote.

And, fifth, it would place an unfunded mandate on Rhode Island taxpayers to pay for new voter forms and signage, as well as advertising to alert voters to the dizzying and complex array of Trump-mandated restrictions on their fundamental right to vote.

I note that my Republican colleagues used to be opposed to the Federal Government commandeering State officials and micromanaging their affairs.

In the *New York v. United States* case before the Supreme Court, Justice O’Connor wrote that, in her words, “even where Congress has the authority under the Constitution to pass laws requiring or prohibiting certain acts, it lacks the power directly to compel the States to require or prohibit those acts.” This case was decided in 1992 and overturned Federal mandates for States to dispose of nuclear waste.

And in the Supreme Court case of *Printz v. United States*, Justice Scalia took this anti-commandeering principle even further by writing:

We held in *New York* that Congress cannot compel the States to enact or enforce a fed-

eral regulatory program. . . . Congress cannot circumvent that prohibition by conscripting the State’s officers directly. The Federal Government may neither issue directives requiring the States to address particular problems, nor command the States’ officers . . . to administer or enforce a federal regulatory program. . . . Such commands are fundamentally incompatible with our constitutional system of dual sovereignty.

This case was decided in 1997 and overturned Federal mandates to States to conduct background checks on firearm purchases.

So based on the logic of the SAVE Act, it is fine under the Constitution for State officials to be compelled to help President Trump avoid the accountability that a Democratic Senate or House might bring after November, but State officials cannot be compelled to help clean up nuclear waste or make sure that violent felons don’t buy firearms. That doesn’t make much sense to me, and I hope my colleagues feel the same way.

Now, this legislation has not yet been passed through the Senate because I think it lacks votes on both sides of the aisle. Many of my colleagues know this is bad policy, know that it is unconstitutional, and know that it would disenfranchise millions of their own voters, particularly rural voters. They know that the SAVE Act would cause chaos because it is effective immediately.

The 2026 elections are already underway. Several States, like Texas, have already had primary elections. And all of my Republican colleagues were elected under the State-run election system that this bill would decimate. But today, because Trump has said so, they are claiming that this very system is rigged and must be completely overhauled, with immediate effect.

President Trump realizes the SAVE Act doesn’t have the votes to become law, so he is running his usual playbook to try and implement pieces of this legislation in a lawless and haphazard manner.

First, Trump’s Department of Justice has tried to amass private and personal voter roll data from nearly every single State. It has sued 30 States plus the District of Columbia for refusing to comply with those demands. I am proud that my State of Rhode Island is among them. But DOJ is not fighting fairly in court. According to reporting by WIRED Magazine, DOJ lawyers misled the Federal judge in Rhode Island overseeing this case about how the Federal Government is using this data. The lead DOJ lawyer initially told the judge that the Federal Government had not conducted any analysis on that data. But 2 weeks ago, DOJ filed a brief, in their words, “to correct and clarify the record that preliminary internal data analysis of the nonpublic voter registration data has begun.”

They are using sophisticated cyber and AI tools to generate the list of people, I believe, who they think should not vote. That is very startling and

disturbing. DOJ is already taking incredibly sensitive data—driver's license numbers, dates of birth, even Social Security numbers—and gearing up to remove people from the rolls. They are doing this even though the SAVE Act is not even the law.

And, mind you, the lawyers at DOJ who are doing this are not career prosecutors who do things by the book. They are being led by Eric Neff, a partisan loyalist to Donald Trump, a member of the MAGA movement, who helped Trump perpetuate the Big Lie that the 2020 elections were stolen. And that is exactly what they are preparing to do for 2026 and 2028.

Second, Trump has signed an Executive order to make it virtually impossible to vote by mail. He is trying to demand that the Postal Service deny a mail ballot from any voter who is not preapproved by his administration. That is a gross violation of States' constitutional authority to run elections, and that is an illegal and unfunded mandate for the Postal Service, which is already in deep financial trouble and has not been a part of the Federal Government since Richard Nixon was President.

You can bet that, under Trump's direction, the Postal Service, which is supposed to do the ministerial function of collecting and delivering the mail, will be conscripted to support his power grab.

I am very proud to be here today, joined by my colleagues, in sounding the alarm about this bill. We want to help our fellow citizens participate in our elections because only their participation will ensure that the government is truly accountable to the people it represents.

I hope that my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will understand that and oppose these efforts to suppress the right to vote, which is a fundamental right of the people and has been protected by generations of American men and women wearing the uniform in the United States. And not only do we dishonor the Constitution through this bill; in my view, we dishonor their sacrifice.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, Donald Trump has been trying for quite some time to coerce the States into handing over their voter lists since his first term. That is so he and Stephen Miller can create a list of people they do and, most importantly, don't want to have voting in Federal elections. It would allow Trump to block his political enemies.

His Executive order is a desperate attempt by a failing President to cling to power by taking control over how States run their elections, and the reason I am here is its effect on States like Oregon that rely on vote-by-mail.

I am the country's first U.S. Senator elected completely by mail, and I can tell you the people of my State under-

stand better than anyone that vote-by-mail is safe, easy, and effective. We have been doing it for over 30 years. Oregon is one of nine States that currently conducts elections by mail.

Trump talks a big game about vote-by-mail being riddled with fraud. As usual, he exists in his own reality. States that use mail-in voting experience fewer instances of voter fraud than any other system. A review of the vote-by-mail system by Oregon's Legislative Fiscal Office found that, from 2000 to 2019, there were approximately 61 million ballots cast, and, of those, 38 criminal convictions were obtained for fraud, amounting to a 0.00006 percent fraud rate.

So let's be clear. First of all, this Executive order is unconstitutional. The Constitution explicitly grants States the power to establish the times, places, and manner of elections, including creating and managing voter lists. That power does not rest with the President.

The State of Kansas passed a similar law that was struck down by the courts because it illegally blocked 31,000 eligible voters from registering to vote.

Second, this Executive order is illegal. The creation of a national voter database would give the Trump administration unprecedented access to private voter data. Forcing the Social Security office to share private voter data with another Agency is a clear violation of the Privacy Act.

When news dropped about the Executive order, I immediately wrote to Social Security Commissioner Frank Bisignano, demanding more information about this data-sharing agreement. This would force Social Security employees to put aside their real jobs—helping seniors and Americans navigate Social Security benefits—and, instead, they would have to execute Trump's voting witch hunt.

Americans are already being forced to endure long waits to receive their hard-earned benefits because of Trump's intentional mismanagement of the Agency. Under the order, they would have to wait even longer because the Agency is too busy doing Trump's illegal, unconstitutional, and unethical bidding.

From day one of his Presidency, Donald Trump has shown as much consideration for the personal privacy of the American people as a bull in a china shop. He essentially handed over the keys to the kingdom when he gave Elon Musk and DOGE unfettered access to the government's internal data systems. We still don't know who ended up having access to the data. Now he wants to do it again—this time, to create a database of voters that allows him to pick and choose who can vote. What he would be doing is weaponizing a fundamental democratic right—the right to vote—and potentially target his enemies.

Given this administration's track record of mishandling and weaponizing Americans' personal information and

data, we can be sure this is a blueprint for who-knows-what with respect to chilling abuses by the Trump administration. There is no legitimate justification for a provision like this.

Anybody who facilitates Donald Trump's directive to create a voter database would be a willing and blatant voter suppressor. They would be as culpable in this travesty as Donald Trump.

Vote-by-mail makes it possible for millions of Americans to make their voices heard. Stephen Miller would tell you that if you can't vote by mail, you can vote another way. That will have drastic consequences for millions of rural Americans, seniors, and people with disabilities. They would be shut out—no voice in our democracy.

An elderly woman living in Eastern Oregon would be forced to drive for hours to the nearest election office to cast a vote. If she doesn't have a car or if she can no longer drive, she would have to find a neighbor or a friend to drive her.

If your mom lived in a nursing home, she wouldn't be able to cast her ballot by mail. You would be forced to find time in between running your kids to soccer and holding down a full-time job to get her to a polling place.

This is exactly what Donald Trump hates about vote-by-mail: It encourages voter participation. It makes it easier for people to be heard, and it makes it harder for Trump to rig elections in his favor. He is terrified of vote-by-mail because, if he doesn't suppress votes, he knows he can't win. It protects the constitutional right to vote.

From his postmarking rule changes to consolidating the Postal Service, shutting down mail processing facilities, and now this, he is in the spaghetti-throwing phase of his midterm election strategy. He knows his platform of pardoning pedophiles and making life more expensive is going to lose him the midterms. Instead of trying to lower costs and improve life for ordinary families, he is hell-bent on making it harder for people to vote.

His Presidency is failing, and the Republican platform becomes more unpopular by the day. That is why they are making such a desperate attempt to get the SAVE Act passed before November. Republicans know they don't have the support in the Congress—certainly not to overhaul Federal elections and enact a voter suppression bill. They are wasting our time debating it because not one of them—not one—has the backbone to stand up to Donald Trump.

Oregonians will be damned if we let Donald Trump do away with how we conduct our voting so Donald Trump could rig another election.

I will fight to make sure Trump's election-rigging scheme dies the death it so richly deserves on the floor of the Senate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CURTIS). The majority leader.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 671.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Andrew B. Davis, of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Texas.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 671, Andrew B. Davis, of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Texas.

John Thune, Bill Hagerty, Tim Sheehy, Jim Banks, Ted Budd, Katie Boyd Britt, Bernie Moreno, Tommy Tuberville, John R. Curtis, Mike Rounds, John Barrasso, Pete Ricketts, Kevin Cramer, John Cornyn, James Lankford, Ted Cruz, Rick Scott of Florida.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. BANKS. Mr. President, last week over the recess, I had the opportunity to visit Taiwan coinciding with the 47th anniversary of the Taiwan Relations Act. After I left Taiwan, I went to Japan and visited Tokyo, visited with many of our troops and some of our military bases and was briefed there as a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

What I got to see last week I believe was President Trump's national security strategy—the new national security strategy—in action. So I wanted to come this afternoon to the floor after returning—I am still a little jet-lagged from my visits overseas, but I wanted to spend a few minutes today talking about what I learned and how President Trump's new national security strategy is already making the United States more secure.

Through his bold actions in Venezuela, Iran, and beyond, President

Trump is demonstrating that America is stronger when the President acts unapologetically in defense of our national interests.

When the new National Security Strategy was introduced last September, many so-called foreign policy experts started immediately denouncing it.

Op-eds were written that said that because the security strategy focuses on the Western Hemisphere, that somehow means we are no longer prioritizing our competition with China. That is total hogwash. Nothing could be further from the truth.

I want to stick to the facts today about what the National Security Strategy really means. The new National Security Strategy describes the “Trump Corollary” to the Monroe Doctrine. The Trump corollary is about restoring “American preeminence in the Western Hemisphere” and about protecting “our homeland and our access to key geographies throughout the region.”

As the strategy makes clear, this is not a global retreat but an example of strategic focus. While we tackle the many national security strategies and challenges around the world, we must never lose sight of the issues that arise in our backyard. Securing the Western Hemisphere is necessary to project power to other regions around the world.

We have already seen the many ways that this strategy has played out. Early in his second term, President Trump announced that the Gulf of Mexico would be renamed the “Gulf of America.”

And, Mr. President, I know that you saw this too. Many people thought this was some kind of a joke. Those same so-called foreign policy elites made fun of President Trump for the name change. They said it was a joke, but, really, there is nothing that is funny about it. Renaming the gulf to the “Gulf of America” was a mission statement. It announced that America would dominate the Western Hemisphere once again and that America would lead on its own home turf.

Since then, President Trump has taken action in Panama, Venezuela, and perhaps soon even in Cuba, and America is better, safer, and stronger because of those operations.

President Trump's security strategy isn't something new. Since our Nation's founding 250 years ago, the United States has repeatedly kicked out foreign adversaries from the Western Hemisphere. European powers like the French, the Spanish, the British, and the Russians all tried over time to dominate in the region, but the United States never let that happen.

I think about President Teddy Roosevelt a lot in this era, in this new era—a lot of similarities between him and President Trump. President Teddy Roosevelt was unapologetic about acting in defense of America's interests. From Venezuela, to the Dominican Re-

public, to Panama, Teddy Roosevelt used military power to make sure that it was only America that ruled in her own backyard, and President Trump is bringing back this tried-and-true strategy.

Several weeks ago on the Senate's Armed Services Committee, we heard from the Under Secretary of War for Policy, Elbridge Colby, who is the key architect of this updated National Security Strategy. I had the chance to ask him some questions about our military actions and our strategy, what all of this means. Secretary Colby agreed that when we clean up our own backyard, we are not retreating from the rest of the world. In fact, securing our hemisphere is absolutely necessary to project power to the Indo-Pacific region and beyond. Imagine what it would be like if we had foreign adversaries in our backyard while we had to mobilize our forces in the event of a crisis. The results could be catastrophic.

The surest way to prevent simultaneous adversary aggression is to have fewer adversaries. In Venezuela, China has already lost one client. In Cuba, they may soon lose another. Even as combat operations continue, President Trump has already degraded substantially Iran's military capacity to act in coordination with other enemies.

By any count, President Trump is making a list of our enemies and neutering or outright eliminating them one by one. The result will be a safer, more secure world, with fewer threats. That allows us to concentrate our military power where it matters most: in the Indo-Pacific.

Here, the National Security Strategy makes another key contribution to deterrence. Rather than focusing simply on the defense of Taiwan, the NSS draws connective tissue across the entire first island chain, interlinking security issues from the Philippines through Taiwan to Japan. As I saw firsthand in the region, this broader view advances U.S. interests while better supporting the needs of our allies and partners who are positioned at the tip of the spear.

President Trump is backing up this strategy with a historic investment in our national defense in the form of a \$1.5 trillion defense budget that he has recommended to us in Congress. These investments are already resonating with our friends and allies around the world. In fact, in Taiwan, I spoke with President Lai, who is likewise proposing a defense budget of over a trillion dollars in Taiwanese dollars. As I urged leaders from Taiwan's legislature, I hope Taiwan passes this badly needed increase in short order.

Thanks to President Trump, America's key partnerships in the first island chain have never been stronger. We now have the strategy, the resources, and the will to leverage our military power to back them up. This is a combination that will serve American interests for years to come. I can't