

extraordinarily valuable food and medicine literally rotted on the ships.

Due to the absence of strong U.S. leadership in addressing this conflict and the fact that the international bodies have not been coordinated, there has been an opening here for outside influence. Foreign entities and governments are backing their surrogates on each side in a way that is, again, chilling.

In my State, in Virginia, we have a large Sudanese diaspora. Since the conflict began, I have sat with and heard from many members of that community, and it is clear what must be done.

I still remember a young family. Literally, they were in their late twenties. They had to rush and leave the country because the civil war was breaking out. They left behind at that point, I think, their 6-month-old daughter. Three years later, their aging parents are not really able to take care of that daughter, who is now 3½ years old. The parents have not seen the daughter in 3 years, and they have no idea what will happen to her on a going-forward basis.

The Sudanese people did not ask for this war. As I mentioned at the outset, the outbreak of this violence and this civil war between these warring generals, warring groups trying to divide the spoils of the country, came literally 4 years after pro-democracy protests swept parts of Sudan in 2019.

In 2019, literally the young people of Sudan overthrew al-Bashir, the previous dictator who had been around for close to 40 years. What happened was there were literally hundreds of civic, professional, and political organizations that came together at that moment in the revolution—this was a people's revolution—and they thought that after the long term of this dictator, they might finally have civil liberties and an actual democracy.

I believe very strongly that the Sudanese people deserve an opportunity to live in peace and to have a responsive, democratically elected government that incorporates civil society, women, and youth. Instead, we have some of our allies in the region—Saudi Arabia backing one side and the Emirates backing another. Because of this divide, you now have other countries, like Russia and Iran, coming in to try to make more mischief and try to bring about more hardships.

Again, I urge all of us on both sides of the aisle to do more about this crisis in Sudan. I urge the administration to go forward and choose an envoy in the way the Biden administration had chosen former Congressman Tom Perriello. Please choose an envoy that can represent the President. This is a conflict by which the President of the United States, with the enormous influence he has with countries in the gulf, could use that power to, frankly, cut off the aid that funds this civil war tomorrow.

As we enter the fourth year of this conflict, please, regardless of partisan affiliation, we all ought to urge Presi-

dent Trump to make sure this conflict comes to an end so that, at the end of the day, the Sudanese people, whether they are in Sudan or are part of the diaspora around the world, can actually live in peace, have a government that reflects their needs, have a country that is blessed with lots of natural resources, and can actually enjoy the potential prosperity that was promised—that held out that hope—back in 2019 when young people overthrew the prior dictatorship. We should no longer allow this crisis to go unheard or unrecognized. Part of the problem is that, unfortunately, the country has barred a lot of the international press.

I urge any of my colleagues, as there are Sudanese diasporas in every State in our country, to meet with those communities, to hear their stories, to hear their struggles.

You know, again, there are no good guys in this battle between these warring factions. American leadership could bring this war to an end. It would go a great deal toward restoring people's trust around the world of the value of strong, moral American leadership.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

DIRECT FILE ACT

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, it is tax day, April 15—the anti-holiday.

This tax day, in particular, is a tough one. Tax day 2026 is a reminder that Donald Trump and Republicans will put the interests of giant corporations ahead of the interests of typical Americans. There is no clearer example of Trump corruption in practice than betraying taxpayers and killing the Direct File Program as a favor to his allies.

Here is what this is all about: When it comes to taxes, Democrats start with the proposition that for the vast majority of Americans—wage-earning workers whose taxes really aren't complicated—filing your taxes ought to be free and easy. Our view is you shouldn't have to pay a penny to perform your basic civic duty.

That is why, back in 2022, after years of hard work, we passed funding for the IRS to build a Direct File Program, a way for taxpayers to file directly with the IRS online for free. The IRS launched a pilot project for 2024. They expanded it in 2025. Hundreds of thousands of people used Direct File. It was hugely popular—in effect, a beloved program. A lot of people are skeptical that the government is still capable of building useful things. Direct File proved the skeptics wrong. It proved that the Federal Government can still come up with great public services from the ground up.

Well, the tax prep giants saw it as a threat, and over the years, I saw them spend millions to try to defend the status quo that was failing. The prep giants unleashed a tidal wave of lobbying

to try to squash the program before it reached escape velocity. They found some willing partners in Republicans here. Going into this year, Trump and Republicans killed Direct File. Millions of Americans should have had an opportunity to use it to file for free, but now, they are back at the mercy of the tax prep companies.

The Republicans who killed Direct File say it is no big deal because there are other free options out there, programs that partner with the private companies. The reality is that tax prep companies have already demonstrated they can't be trusted. The worst example was with Intuit. When Intuit was involved with the Free File Program, it was caught burying the free option on a website you couldn't find with a traditional search engine. It steered users toward options that battered them with upcharges and misleading marketing. Finally, they quit offering Free File when they got called out on what were genuinely underhanded tactics.

My view is, the debate over this subject isn't that complicated. The government requires people to file and pay taxes, so the least the government can do is to make the filing process simple and free and as painless as possible. Donald Trump and Republicans don't agree because they destroyed a wonderful, new public service when they shut down Direct File.

My Finance Committee colleague Senator WARREN has been a terrific partner and a champion of Direct File. I have enjoyed working with her over the years on this critical issue. I am behind her effort 100 percent as the ranking Democrat on the Senate Finance Committee to revive Direct File. We are not going to let this go no matter how long it takes, and I urge all of my colleagues here in the Senate—as it used to be bipartisan—to support Direct File.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

DIRECT FILE ACT

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, today is tax day. Today is a day when millions and millions of Americans file their returns. On average, Americans spend about \$270 and 13 hours preparing their taxes for filing. That is just nuts. That is a higher expense and a higher amount of time than millions of Americans should be spending. Look, for people who have complex holdings and lots of economic interests, that is one thing, but for tens of millions of Americans, the Federal Government already has all of their critical data, and their tax filings should be quick and free.

The simple idea behind a bill that I am cosponsoring with Senator ELIZABETH WARREN the Direct File Act is that there ought to be a program. In fact, there used to be a program. Congress told the IRS several years ago to create a way for Americans to file their taxes quickly, simply, and for free, and

they started a pilot program. The IRS started a pilot program called Direct File in 2024.

I used to be the senior Democrat on the Appropriations subcommittee that oversees the IRS and was actively involved in trying to develop and improve this program just from the Senate's side. It was exciting to me to get the initial reports that hundreds of thousands of Americans used Direct File in its first year, and after several years, they demonstrated that, on average, folks were saving \$160, and 90 percent had a positive experience—either an above-average positive or an excellent experience. Many did their taxes in less than an hour—13 hours?—1 hour—accessing all of the government information that they had already in their database and then simply confirming it and filing versus having to work with someone and pay someone to prepare their taxes.

Well, President Trump shut down this program last year. Why? I don't know, but it is certainly uncomfortable that there was a major donation to his inauguration from the leading company that makes you pay taxes to file taxes—that makes you pay a fee to them to file and pay your taxes.

So, folks, today on tax day most Americans are looking for whether there is a way for them to file quicker, cheaper, and more easily. Three-quarters of Americans feel like they have paid as much as they expected, if not more, this year in spite of the No. 1 priority of the Republicans in this body last year, which was a big tax bill that gave tax cuts to millionaires. Working Americans did not see the tax relief from the so-called Big Beautiful Bill that they expected. They mostly saw cuts to healthcare and to food assistance.

It costs \$160, on average, to pay someone to prepare your taxes. Well, that may not seem like a lot to a business executive—to a big tax company executive—who got a big tax cut himself, but it means a lot for tens of thousands of my constituents, of working Delawareans. It does not have to be this way again next year. We should pass this bill and, once again, make it easy, free, and fair to file your taxes.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill, and I am excited to join with so many of my colleagues in advocating that, by unanimous consent, we simply reopen the path toward easy, free tax filings for Americans next year.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

DIRECT FILE ACT

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I am here on tax day to highlight how the Trump administration has made filing taxes more costly, more complicated, and more time-consuming for working Americans. Nobody likes paying taxes. It is painful, but this administration somehow has managed to make it even more painful. From

eliminating a free, easy-to-use tax service program to cutting funding and staff at the Internal Revenue Service, the Trump administration has made it needlessly harder for millions of Americans to meet their tax obligations this season.

On tax day, we recognize there is an obligation. Most Americans fulfill it. But, at the very least, the government can make it less painful, not more so. But, in late 2025, at the behest of giant tax preparation companies like TurboTax and H&R Block, President Trump canceled the popular Direct File Program. That was a free online service that allowed taxpayers to file their Federal income taxes directly with the IRS.

By every measure, believe it or not, this government program was a runaway success. It received overwhelmingly favorable reviews. Remember, this is a service enabling people to pay taxes, and people loved it. Ninety percent of survey respondents ranked their experience as "excellent" or "above average." It was estimated to save the average taxpayer \$160 and hours of their time.

In short, this program worked. No more third-party companies nickel-and-dime taxpayers with expensive rates and junk fees. It was just straightforward, no cost, an option that hundreds and thousands of families relied on to pay their taxes.

And studies projected that a full-scale, permanent Direct File Program would have saved Americans \$11 billion annually in combined filing fees and time costs.

The Direct File Program also helped lower income families because they were able to access millions of dollars in unclaimed tax credits, with projections suggesting it would have delivered up to \$12 billion in additional tax credits annually. That is a lot of money. As costs increase for everything—food, housing, healthcare—this program was an easy way to give working Americans a well-deserved break.

But the Trump administration canceled the program. It caved to the tax software companies, and, yet again, it put profits over people. Frankly, this is just stupid. It is dumb. It is crazy, if you consider the public interest.

Americans are required to pay taxes. So the Federal Government should have an easy way for them to do it, and I am proud to have introduced the Direct File Act with my colleagues. Our bill would reinstate the Direct File Program and prohibit the IRS from entering into agreements that restrict its ability to provide these free services.

Sadly and unforgivably, Republicans are opposing the Direct File Act. I guess, instead, they are cozying up to the Big Tech companies and putting corporate interests above those of everyday Americans. You would think, in this kind of issue, we would have common ground. It is an easy issue.

And taxpayers deserve better from the IRS. They need an Agency that is

fully staffed, adequately resourced, and capable of delivering timely, reliable service, including refunds.

A lot of people say: Oh, well, the IRS. We hate the IRS.

Well, you hate the IRS until you are owed a refund or until the IRS makes a mistake because they are understaffed or because they don't have modern technology that could save all of us money.

And that is why I recently sent a letter to the IRS, urging them to take immediate steps to ensure it is fully prepared to meet American taxpayer needs during this 2026 filing season.

President Trump seems to be on a mission to make life more difficult and more expensive for Americans, and he seems to be succeeding. Eliminating the Direct File Program, as well as cutting funding and reducing staffing at the IRS, is simply increasing costs and making the system more difficult, more painful, more onerous for all taxpayers—maybe except for the millionaires and billionaires who can well afford their accountants and wouldn't use the Direct File Program. But for most of the people of America who want to pay their taxes and do it, it simply imposes an additional unnecessary burden.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 3948

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, I want to say thank you to my partner in these efforts, Senator BLUMENTHAL, and to all the others who have come here to speak on tax day about how outrageous it is that a program to actually let people pay their taxes online for free has been destroyed by Donald Trump and the Republicans.

So I am about to call up a bill to the floor that would let Americans file their taxes for free directly with the IRS. It is amazing to me that anyone could oppose this, especially when filing your taxes is something that Americans are required by law to do every year. But as sure as the Sun will rise, Republicans are going to block my bill.

For years, giant tax prep companies like TurboTax and H&R Block have rigged our system so they can cash in on your hard-earned dollars, and the result is that people spend now an average of 8 hours and \$160 each year just to file their taxes using tax prep services.

These big companies don't just take a fee for filing your taxes; they have actually become experts at figuring out ways to upsell, to charge junk fees, and to make money off your personal information. It is really outrageous.

So I drafted a bill that would allow Americans to file their taxes online for free and directly with the IRS through a program called Direct File.

Now, tens of millions of people wouldn't have to go to a paid preparer if they didn't want to. They could just file directly with the IRS.

Over 160 Members of Congress have joined me on this bill. Over 100 unions