

of dollars from hard-working taxpayers. They are doing it through fraud, and the way to stop fraud is to punish those who commit it. And that is exactly what Republicans are doing.

For 4 years, Joe Biden and the Democrats treated fraud as acceptable and inevitable. Criminals defrauded hard-working taxpayers by deception and deceit. Democrats knew about it. They looked the other way.

Republicans are putting an end to it. We made fighting fraud a top priority. That is how to protect hard-working taxpayers and their money.

Republicans passed the Working Families Tax Cut law. We strengthened eligibility requirements for Medicaid. We ensured that illegal immigrants did not receive taxpayer-funded healthcare. We put in place work requirements for Medicaid and for food stamps.

At the same time, President Trump created an anti-fraud task force. Vice President Vance is leading the charge here. He has an incredible effort going on now, and he is working with clarity and urgency.

Criminals are now hearing a clear message: No amount of fraud is too small to prosecute.

The battlefield against fraud is nationwide, and Minnesota is ground zero for fraud. We know the story. Let me tell you how bad fraud is in Minnesota. Criminals are using children—children with autism—as a way to get rich quickly.

Mr. President, 8 years ago, the Minnesota Medicaid program for children with autism spent \$6 million. The money is needed and used to help children actually diagnosed with autism. But driven by massive criminal fraud, the pricetag ballooned from \$6 million to \$192 million going out.

How did this happen? Well, the program was being looted by crooks, by criminals, and loaded up with corruption. The money was being siphoned away from children with autism—children in need.

Last month, Federal officials charged 15 individuals for stealing \$90 million connected to the State's federally funded healthcare program. According to the Justice Department, that includes the largest autism fraud scheme ever prosecuted.

The schemes didn't stop there. Remember the fraudulent daycare center in Minnesota? No children—zero children—were actually enrolled in that facility. It was set up for one purpose and one purpose only: It was set up to steal money from the U.S. Treasury.

So I just heard the minority leader, Senator SCHUMER, here on the floor talking about daycare centers. Why did the Democrats ignore the abuse of daycare centers to steal money from the American people, from our taxpayers? They don't seem to care about that. They just say: Send more money, send more money, send more money.

And then he comes to the floor, complaining about daycare centers, when it

is the fraud in Minnesota, with their own candidate for Vice President being the Governor, overseeing it, ignoring it, allowing it to happen. They don't seem to care about any of those things.

Well, our colleague Senator JONI ERNST investigated. She discovered one of these so-called daycare centers that SCHUMER is out here talking about as wonderful things. One of these daycare centers raked in over \$230,000 from the Small Business Administration alone, just during the pandemic.

Remember, there were no children at the location—none. The Biden administration looked the other way, and the disgraced Governor of Minnesota looked the other way as well.

In total, stolen funds in Minnesota have now been identified as exceeding \$9 billion. It is a staggering sum. And that is only one State run by Democrats. California is just as bad, if not worse. I would put it as worse.

Last week, many of us met with Dr. Mehmet Oz. Dr. Oz runs the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid, confirmed here by the Senate. Dr. Oz says nearly half of hospice providers in Los Angeles are fraud—fraudulent hospice providers.

When you think about hospice and what it does—what it is supposed to do—in terms of caring and compassion, comforting those who are dying, not in California—it is used to defraud the government. Many of these so-called hospices don't serve a single patient. Many are shell offices, all in the same office building.

Recall, Los Angeles has only 3 percent of the population in the United States. Somehow, 33 percent of all hospice providers in the entire country are listed in L.A. There aren't that many people who are patients to justify that.

How can it be? Well, it is a racket. That is what it is. It is set up to steal money from the government, from our taxpayers.

And Democrats are well aware of the fraud, and they refuse to stop it. They refuse to talk about it. They want to keep looking the other way.

In Ohio, the anti-fraud task force dismantled a criminal scheme that stole tens of millions of dollars from Medicaid. The criminals submitted false claims for so-called behavior health services. These services were never provided. Criminals used the money to buy a fleet of luxury vehicles, including Maseratis, Mercedes, and a Bentley.

Thankfully, Senator JON HUSTED and Senator BERNIE MORENO of Ohio voted for the Working Families Tax Cut law. They voted to root out exactly this kind of waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption.

Nationwide, total estimates of Medicaid fraud are as much as now \$120 billion a year, and the fraud got worse after ObamaCare became law: bigger government, more money, more areas in which criminals can steal.

Vice President VANCE is encouraging States to fight fraud in their Medicaid Programs. Those who don't enforce the law will lose Federal funds.

A pattern has emerged. Democrats run the blue States. They control the big cities. And when criminals steal vast amounts of money from hard-working taxpayers, elected Democrats go silent.

Appallingly, we have seen cases where Democrats actually tried to silence whistleblowers, who sound the alarm to try to want to point out what is happening. Democrats try to muzzle them.

Here in the Senate, every single Democrat voted against landmark legislation to fight fraud, to fight waste, to fight abuse, and to fight corruption. Democrats would rather protect thieves than protect hard-working American taxpayers and the people that these programs are created to help.

The American people are absolutely infuriated by the fraud that is being exposed. They are finally seeing the results in combatting it, and they want these people to go to jail.

Republicans are fighting the war against fraud. We are fighting to protect taxpayers, to protect vulnerable families, and fighting to punish the criminals who steal from our country and our communities.

The American people deserve accountability. Criminals deserve the consequences.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

MEDICAID

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, the President called it the Big Beautiful Bill—his budget—the Big Beautiful Bill. That Big Beautiful Bill did give tax breaks—there is no question about it—primarily to the richest people in this country.

Is that what you think is a priority for America? It is not what I think. It is one of the reasons I voted no.

The second thing it did was to cut Medicaid reimbursements to hospitals and healthcare providers by \$1 trillion over the next several years—\$1 trillion.

Do you know what the hospital administrators in Illinois told me would happen as a result of those cutbacks of Medicaid payments? Hospitals will close, particularly downstate hospitals in rural areas and those in the inner cities.

We went to those administrators of the hospitals directly and said: Forget the political hype in Washington. What is going to happen on the ground in the State of Illinois and across the Nation when \$1 trillion in Medicaid reimbursement disappears?

They said: Well, first, the hospitals will close certain departments.

I have noticed in Central Illinois—my own experience—that means usually the delivery of babies, as well as behavioral medicine, mental health counseling. Those are the first to go.

But some hospitals won't make it. The hospitals in rural areas, as you

know, are small and willful and do their darnedest, with volunteer help from the communities, to stay open, and they are critically important.

If you happen to live in rural Illinois, maybe you are a farm family, and there is a terrible accident that occurs on the farm. Driving 20 minutes versus driving an hour and 20 minutes can be life or death.

So the Republicans who want to cut \$1 trillion from Medicaid—\$1 trillion—and give tax breaks to wealthy people? Vote me no. Vote all the Democrats no. Those aren't the priorities of this country.

FISA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, when it comes to fraud, there is no excuse for it, but let's not overstate the obvious. Government Agencies across this country are doing the best they can in some instances but can always do better.

I don't think that we have a monopoly when it comes to virtue in our party or any other party. There are those who break the law and should be held accountable, and there are those who are doing their best to uphold the law, and they should be encouraged. To suggest that the Democrats are the party of fraud and the Republicans are the party of virtue—you know better than that. People in both political parties could have a tuneup when it comes to virtue, and I add myself to that list as well.

Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, or FISA, is a powerful tool for collecting information that has been abused for way too long. Most Americans would flunk the test of, what is FISA? what is 702?

Here is what it boils down to: We approve, under law 702, allowing our intelligence Agencies to collect the private communications of foreigners overseas without a warrant. Why? We suspect those foreigners are involved in activity that is not safe for the United States. Am I supportive of that? Count me in.

But section 702 enables surveillance of more than just foreigners overseas; millions of innocent Americans' texts, emails, and phone calls are swept up in this dragnet if they communicated with a foreigner. So if you find somebody in a foreign country whom you suspect of illegal or dangerous activity and you wiretap their telephone communication, the person on the other end of the phone may not be a foreigner but an American citizen.

Unfortunately, it turns out that thousands and thousands of American citizens have their texts and phone conversations tapped under section 702. Our intelligence Agencies, including the Federal Bureau of Investigations, puts these communications in searchable databases that they use to spy on Americans without a warrant.

The independent Privacy and Civil Liberties Board and the FISA Court have documented shocking abuses of

section 702 by our own government intelligence Agencies. And 702 has been used to spy on American religious leaders, American political parties, American journalists, and protestors from across the political spectrum. Such abuses have been documented under both Democrats and Republicans.

But the prospect of placing warrantless—that means no court approval ahead of time—surveillance power in the hands of this administration is particularly alarming. President Trump and his appointees have repeatedly weaponized the power of the Federal Government to target President Trump's perceived enemies.

Take Bill Pulte, President Trump's first choice to serve as the Acting Director of National Intelligence. Pulte currently serves as the Director of the Federal Housing Finance Agency, where he has pushed for criminal referrals against those who have angered President Trump, from New York attorney general Letitia James to Federal Reserve Governor Lisa Cook.

Even though Pulte himself has no—no—intelligence experience, President Trump chose him to lead our national intelligence apparatus and to help oversee that powerful section 702. The public outcry changed the President's mind. The President, after he heard from both Democrats and Republicans what a terrible choice Pulte would be, dropped him and now has nominated Jay Clayton, U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York, to serve as Director of National Intelligence.

This episode demonstrates the inherent danger of warrantless surveillance. No single branch of government in the United States should have unchecked power to spy on Americans, whether this power is in the hands of Bill Pulte; Jay Clayton; Kash Patel, the leader of the FBI; or whoever President Trump installs next.

Repeated efforts to rein in the abuses of section 702 with minimal reforms have failed time and time again. And now the Trump administration refuses to disclose the latest ruling from the FISA Court detailing ongoing abuses.

The long and ongoing history of abuse makes it clear that without checks from a separate branch of government, section 702 will always be at risk of abuse as a massive delegation of power to an executive Agency. That is why the drafters of the Constitution many years ago—250—decided that we should never have warrantless searches of Americans. They prohibited it.

It is time to stop tinkering around the edges of 702 and make meaningful changes once and for all. That is why I joined Republican Senator MIKE LEE of Utah to introduce the SAFE Act—a bipartisan bill in the Senate that would require the government to obtain a judicial warrant before searching Americans' communications collected under section 702. But Republican leadership have refused to hold a vote on the SAFE Act and instead have attempted

to extend FISA's authorization without any serious reform.

I have been through this many times since 9/11. I am obviously skeptical of this power being given to the government. And I have watched, when we find abuses, well-documented abuses, the limited reforms that are finally accepted, and they just don't do the job.

Let me give you, from the Brennan Center for Justice report, some numbers that tell the story.

Congress and the FISA Court have attempted to place some modest limits on the government's use of backdoor searches.

That is what they call it when Americans are swept up.

Intelligence agencies, and the [Federal Bureau of Investigations] in particular, have habitually violated those limits. In 2022, the FISA Court observed that "compliance problems with the FBI's querying of Section 702 information have proven to be persistent and widespread." Indeed, in March 2022, the government reported more than 278,000—

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noncompliant searches of information obtained through FISA.

These noncompliant searches would include eavesdropping on Americans without government approval—278,000.

Moreover, from 2018 through 2024, the law required the FBI to obtain a warrant before conducting backdoor searches in a very small subcategory of cases involving certain criminal investigations. Despite conducting dozens of such searches during that time, the FBI never once got a warrant.

As required by our Constitution.

The abuses continue, and there are those we know nothing about that are going on as of this day.

There was an investigation of the use of FISA, leading to a classified report, which I have seen myself in the Senate intelligence SCIF. Members of the Senate can have access to it, but the Trump administration refuses to make it public for the rest of America. That is unfortunate. It makes the argument that I believe is compelling in this case.

Republican leadership have refused to hold a vote on this reform measure Senator LEE and I have introduced. They have argued this program is just too essential to allow for any delay in reauthorization or consideration of real reforms.

Yet, just recently, President Trump said that before we reauthorize FISA, we have to agree to add his elections reform measure—the one that requires ID requirements before you can vote. Now, there are certain IDs which are easy, but in the original version of this bill that the President wants, driver's licenses, which we use all over the country, would not be acceptable.

Congress has time to get this right. Section 702 surveillance operates under yearlong certifications approved by the FISA Court, and it has already been recertified through March of next year, 2027. This means intelligence collection under 702 will be able to continue until next March even if the law technically expires this week—or last week.