

who, if not citizens, are inside the United States legally and legally authorized to work in the United States of America.

The Federal Government, through taxpayers, should not be funding hospitals that give puberty blockers to children or nonprofit museums or leftwing labor activist organizations or leftwing physicians activist organizations or groups providing legal aid or subsidized housing specifically to illegal aliens. It shouldn't do that. It shouldn't do that ever, regardless of who is in charge, especially in a time when the House of Representatives is under Republican control, when the Senate is under Republican control, and the White House is occupied by a Republican President. It shouldn't do it ever but especially not when Republicans are in charge of all three levers of the two political branches: the legislative and the executive.

Senate Republicans especially should not be facilitating this abuse of power and at the hard-earned money of the American people, many of whom work months out of every year just to pay their Federal taxes only to find that every dollar they have left buys less because we are spending too much money.

We shouldn't be facilitating this abuse of power and violating pledges that President Trump and that we ourselves, as Senate Republicans, have made on the campaign trail to root out and end wasteful, woke spending across the Federal Government.

Even in a Republican-controlled Congress, Democrats are still able to effectuate and fund a radical agenda that the American people opposed when they elected us to this majority and that we promised we wouldn't perpetuate. And yet here we are. It is tragic.

Congress does not need to and should not use earmarks as sweeteners, for lack of a better word, to make the appropriations process work. We cannot continue appropriations bills that perpetuate excess spending, especially when those same things are pushing policies that inevitably, invariably, deliberately hobble the efforts of this administration.

This is like putting a humidifier and a dehumidifier in the same room and just letting them fight it out when you promised only the dehumidifier would be there.

And at a minimum we should build on the successful rescissions bill initiated through the DOGE process and carried forward throughout the last year, the successful rescissions bill that, by exerting some basic fiscal discipline to enforce our conference rules and put an end to earmarks—or rather than just put an end to it, resume the end that we put in place 15 years ago, heal the breach that has now been there for about 5 years, and honor what is still our conference position.

Only then will we be able, I believe, to tackle the self-inflicted economic wounds that cloud the bright skies of opportunity before us.

As President Trump said in his end-of-year speech, just a few weeks ago, “we're poised for an economic boom the likes of which the world has never seen.”

I believe him, and he is doing a lot of things that are helping us get there. The least we can do is not undercut him. And to achieve that potential, we the Congress, we the Senate, and we the Senate Republican conference in the majority must act.

Earmarks aren't the way. They are the wrong way. Earmarks aren't the solution. They are the problem. We need to end them.

In connection with this package of bills, I have put forward an amendment to strip them from this bill, and I humbly, with all the conviction I am capable of communicating, implore my colleagues to support the amendment.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

H.R. 7148

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, we are considering an appropriations package on the floor this week, and there has rightfully been a lot of focus on the section of the bill that funds the Department of Homeland Security, a section that I and my Democratic colleagues continue to insist should be considered separately, as it was in the House, to secure essential reforms to end the Department's abuses, stop the killings, protect people's rights, and ensure real accountability. Any additional funding for this unconstrained, lawless operation at DHS is unacceptable as we witness executions of civilians in our streets, unaccountable and warrantless raids, and in my home State of Maryland, inhumane conditions at the Baltimore Holding Center even as ICE moves to set up a warehouse with the capacity to process and detain 1,500 persons. I said I would not support one more dime for Trump's lawless ICE operation, and I meant it—not even for 1 more day.

But I also want to take a moment to speak to the rest of that funding package, which includes the work of five other Appropriations subcommittees: Defense, State and Foreign Operations, Transportation and Housing, Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Financial Services and General Government.

I appreciate the work of the Democratic ranking members of these subcommittees and Vice Chair MURRAY, who secured some important provisions in the bill to reassert the congressional power of the purse with specific spend-

ing directives in legislative text. For example, the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education bill rejects the administration's effort to eliminate the Department of Education and cut Pell grants.

It also rejects the Trump proposal to cut NIH nearly in half and instead increases funding; and it successfully overrides the OMB directive that NIH fund more lump sum multi-year grants, which would otherwise result in fewer overall grants and less research activity. NIH, which is located in my home State of Maryland, is one of our greatest American success stories, where some of our brightest minds pursue treatments and cures to diseases that impact virtually every American family. This administration has spent the last year attacking the critical work of NIH, canceling grants and clinical trials and short-circuiting lifesaving research. I am glad this bill roundly rejects that and requires the administration to change course. At the same time, I am very disappointed that the bill does not reverse the rescission cut to public broadcasting, which provides critical services to Americans across the country, particularly in rural communities.

Indeed, while these bills make important investments and include some critical safeguards, I have serious concerns that they do not go far enough to protect the power of the purse and the Federal employees who carry out the programs we fund, particularly as the administration continues its efforts to strip away the protections that safeguard our nonpartisan civil service and hollow out Agencies. Without enhanced guardrails in this package, the administration will continue to wreak havoc on the ability of our dedicated, merit-based civil servants to provide critical services to the American people.

I also have deep concerns about the State foreign operations bill, now called the national security package. I know and appreciate the work of Vice Chair MURRAY and Ranking Member SCHATZ to preserve the legacy of U.S. foreign assistance in this bill after Elon Musk, Russell Vought, and their DOGE cronies took a chainsaw to USAID and the State Department.

The bill includes some new guardrails to prevent deeper cuts going forward, but it still reflects a \$9 billion cut from FY25 levels. The largest share of those cuts comes from humanitarian assistance and development assistance.

Foreign aid is not a giveaway; it is an investment in the world we all live in. When your neighbor's house is on fire, it is foolish to wait until the flames reach your own home. Conflicts, pandemics, and humanitarian collapse do not respect borders. Preventing wars from starting and stopping new diseases before they reach American shores costs far less than fighting those threats once they arrive here.

For less than 1 percent of the Federal budget, we can help save the lives of the world's most vulnerable children.

Cutting that support is not fiscally responsible; it is morally indefensible. A Lancet study estimated that Trump's foreign aid cuts will cost 14 million lives by 2030, including over 4.5 million kids. Thousands of children are already dying.

The bill also codifies an \$850 million "America First Opportunity Fund" for an administration that has proven itself to be a reckless and unlawful custodian of Federal funding. This risks becoming a political slush fund, untethered from evidence-based programs and longstanding safeguards that ensure taxpayer dollars are used to advance genuine U.S. interests, not pet projects and foreign ventures that serve the interests of the Trump family, Trump campaign contributors, and his billionaire buddies at the expense of America's national security interests.

The bill imposes a new cap on how much foreign assistance can be transferred to the Department of Homeland Security—an important check—but it still allows hundreds of millions of dollars to be transferred to an already bloated DHS for immigration enforcement. That is unacceptable.

I also object to the bill's \$3.3 billion in foreign military financing to the Government of Israel with no conditions or guardrails. The Netanyahu government has spent years openly flouting international law and disregarding U.S. interests, advice, and warnings, including concerns ranging from blocking humanitarian assistance and ethnic cleansing in Gaza to continued settler violence and mushrooming illegal settlements in the West Bank.

I made clear on October 7, 2023, the day the heinous Hamas attack brutally killed over 1,200 people and seized over 200 hostages, that Israel had a right—indeed a duty—to go after Hamas. But the Netanyahu government's response went way beyond targeting Hamas to imposing collective punishment on all the people of Gaza.

In Gaza, entire neighborhoods have been systematically destroyed. Throughout the war, more than 1.9 million Palestinians have been forcibly displaced, many of them multiple times, through military orders, bombardment, and the deliberate rendering of civilian areas unlivable. All of this has occurred with U.S.-funded weapons and equipment.

In the West Bank, 240 Palestinians, including 55 children, were killed by Israeli forces or settlers in 2025, according to OCHA. Even the IDF found that Israeli settler violence in the West Bank rose by about 25 percent in 2025. This violence happened with virtual impunity and in many cases with the complicity of Israeli forces in the area. Along with settler violence, Israeli settlement expansion continues to rise, with a record number of 9,629 settlement housing units being approved by the Israeli Government in 2025, more than the previous 6 years combined. This includes approval for construction

in the area known as E1, east of Jerusalem. Construction in E1 would effectively bisect the West Bank, preventing the development of a contiguous Palestinian state and sounding the death knell of the already diminishing prospects for a two-state solution. The Netanyahu government also retroactively legalized eight illegal outposts, half of which are located deep within the West Bank.

We should be using every tool at our disposal to ensure that the Netanyahu government complies with President Trump's stated objective of a "credible pathway to Palestinian self-determination and statehood" and end its slow-motion annexation of the West Bank, destruction of neighborhoods in Gaza, and displacement of the Palestinian people.

Conditions on foreign military financing and other types of assistance are not unusual; in fact, they are the norm. Other U.S. partners—including long-standing recipients like Egypt, Lebanon, Pakistan, El Salvador, Colombia, and Mexico—have had their assistance routinely tied to human rights, accountability, or other statutory benchmarks. Yet this bill provides the Netanyahu government with a blank check and no meaningful guardrails. That double standard weakens U.S. credibility and undermines our commitment to our core values.

I appreciate that the Defense title in this bill funds a pay raise for our servicemembers and makes investments to support military families and critical work at Maryland's military bases. But I am deeply disturbed by the way Trump has misused and wrongfully deployed our military, from our Active-Duty forces to our National Guard.

The Trump administration's abduction of dictator Nicolas Maduro wasn't a "law enforcement operation" or an effort to stop drug trafficking. It was about oil, seizing and controlling Venezuela's oil for the benefit of Trump's billionaire buddies. It is simply wrong to risk the lives of brave American soldiers to profit the Trump campaign's political contributors.

And Trump has deployed the National Guard to DC, Los Angeles, Memphis, and Chicago, manufacturing claims of emergency and chaos to use the Guard in domestic law enforcement and his mass deportation agenda rather than using Justice Department resources to work with local partners and keep communities safe. And as State and local leaders and courts have stood in the way of these deployments, Trump has threatened to invoke the Insurrection Act to bypass them and the restrictions of the Posse Comitatus Act.

Taken together, these abuses of power show an authoritarian administration using the military for its own ends, not for U.S. national security. These concerns only reinforce my existing reservations about the continued uncontrolled growth in defense spending, especially when the Pentagon con-

tinues to fail independent audits for 8 consecutive years.

Finally, I want to underscore a point regarding the financial services and general government portion of this bill, which funds the General Services Administration. GSA, together with the FBI, is responsible for the FBI headquarters project. This bill provides no additional funding for that project, but GSA has funding available from prior year appropriations. There are still significant outstanding questions about this project and a security assessment and construction plan is underway and must be delivered to Congress as directed in the CJS Appropriations bill. From the start of this project, Congress has expected that the building would meet Level 5 ISC security requirements to safeguard the FBI mission, and GSA has shared its expectation that this project will meet that standard, though the security assessment is not yet complete. In order to ensure adequate congressional oversight and use taxpayer resources responsibly, GSA should also pause activities until the plan is finished and Congress has reviewed it.

As a member of the Appropriations Committee, I recognize the challenges in negotiating these bills given the radical demands of the administration and the complicity of too many of my Republican colleagues in the House and Senate. I appreciate the hard-won investments and safeguards in these bills and the rejection of dozens of partisan House policy riders. That said, for the reasons I have outlined and because I believe more can be done to rein in this administration's authoritarian impulses, I oppose this package.

U.S. SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON ETHICS ANNUAL REPORT

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent, for myself as chairman of the Select Committee on Ethics and for Senator COONS, vice chairman of the committee, that the annual report of the Select Committee on Ethics for calendar year 2025 be printed in the RECORD.

The committee issued this report on January 31, 2026, as required by the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[Jan. 31, 2026]

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON ETHICS

119TH CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

The Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007 (the Act) calls for the Select Committee on Ethics of the United States Senate to issue an annual report no later than January 31st of each year providing information in certain categories describing its activities for the preceding year. Reported below is the information describing the Committee's activities in 2025 in the categories set forth in the Act:

(1) The number of alleged violations of Senate rules received from any source, including the number raised by a Senator or