

matter and pass this very important matter, which is to extend temporary protected status for Haiti.

As my colleagues have said, temporary protected status—TPS—was established decades ago with bipartisan support because Congress understood then a very basic truth: When people cannot safely return to their countries of origin, we do not put their lives at risk by forcing them to go back. That is the essence of the protection in TPS, and that principle is worth defending today.

For years, hundreds of thousands of Haitians have lived and worked legally in the United States of America under TPS. They built their lives here. They have paid taxes here, including Social Security taxes. They started small businesses here. They are our neighbors, our friends, our colleagues. They are our community members.

They are deeply rooted in communities all over the country, including in my State of Maryland. Some have lived here for decades—again, legally—with this status. To rip all of that away, while the danger in Haiti persists, is wrong and it is cruel. And it does not align with the values that the United States claims to stand for, and yet that is exactly what the Trump administration is doing. And, sadly, it is what our Republican Senate colleagues just did in their motion.

And I do want to underscore what Senator BLUNT ROCHESTER and Senator MARKEY have said. They may be able to block it today in the U.S. Senate, but we will keep working on this matter because it is a matter of important American principles.

You know, last year, the administration moved to terminate Haiti's TPS designation, and that action was challenged in court. And the Federal courts temporarily blocked that termination.

Then it went to the Supreme Court, and on a devastating 6-to-3 decision, the Supreme Court reversed the lower courts and sided with the Trump administration. It was another—in my view—very bad decision from this Supreme Court that will have very harmful consequences for the Haitian community but, really, for all of our communities because now TPS holders face imminent loss of their legal status and of their work authorizations, the latter of which is slated to happen as soon as the end of this week.

So let's be clear about what that means. Let's just be clear about the harm that we are forcing these individuals to face. It means hundreds of thousands of our community members who followed the rules, worked legally, paid taxes, and built lives in this country will lose their ability to work legally and be forced to return to a country where it is not safe to return.

That is the reality right now. Anyone following the situation in Haiti knows it remains very dangerous. Indeed, as my colleagues have said, the State Department continues to warn Americans not to travel to Haiti because of crime,

kidnapping, terrorism, unrest, and other factors.

The country remains under a state of emergency, and the U.S. Government has extremely limited ability to provide any emergency assistance, even to our own citizens who are there now.

And the humanitarian situation there continues to deteriorate. When you are evaluating whether it is safe to force anybody back to their country of origin, we are supposed to look at whether the situation is getting better or worse. It is getting worse over a long period of time in Haiti. While there are some small signs of hope right now, the reality is, it is a very, very dangerous place.

In fact, 1.5 million people have been displaced from their homes. More than half the population needs humanitarian assistance. More than 5.8 million people are expected to face hunger this year. Meanwhile, armed gangs continue to control large parts of Port-au-Prince and other parts of the country.

A lot of these gangs are responsible for killings, kidnappings, sexual violence, and forced displacements of entire communities. And yet, by the decision the Republican Senator took to the floor, blocking this action, they are forcing people who have been members of our community for a long time—again, working here legally—forcing them back into imminent danger and harm.

You know, we shouldn't be doing this, colleagues. We should not be forcing anybody back into a situation of imminent harm, especially people who have been here and working legally and playing by all of the rules. And now we are changing the rules on them midstream because what had been a bipartisan law of the temporary protected status program is now having the "protected status" part of it ripped out by our colleagues. So this is really part of the Trump administration's mass deportation strategy.

You know, the President told Americans that they were going to go after the "worst of the worst." You know, we had a vote on this floor weeks back. I think it was a unanimous vote that, you know, folks who have committed crimes—people who are dangerous to our communities—yes, the worst of the worst should be essentially held accountable and deported.

But folks under TPS? These are people who are working legally in our country. These are people paying taxes. These are not the worst of the worst. In fact, they have to check in every single year and make sure that they continue to meet the requirements of the law. And yet these are the people—these are the people—that the President and now our Republican colleagues seek to uproot and send into certain danger.

Sadly, the Supreme Court—the Trump-stacked Supreme Court—went along with these decisions, but we have a chance in this body to fix that. And that was what we tried to do today with Senator MARKEY's motion.

Again, it was blocked by our Republican colleagues, but this will not be the end of this debate. It will not be the end of this discussion because the essence of TPS was, at least at one time in our country, a bipartisan effort. On a bipartisan basis, we agreed that it was wrong to send people back to their home country if they faced certain danger. And that is why we allowed these individuals to stay here. And many of them have made really successful lives here in our communities, working—again legally—paying taxes.

And so it is a very sad day when what once was a bipartisan consensus to stand by important principles that had made this country stronger are shredded by this White House and where we now have a rubberstamped Congress to go along with the Trump administration's mass deportation agenda.

So I regret the action that was taken today. I, again, thank my colleague Senator MARKEY for his efforts, and we will keep at it together.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ARMSTRONG). The Senator from Iowa.

PROTECTING AMERICAN TAXPAYERS ACT

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, we have all received that email from a wealthy Nigerian "Prince," asking us to wire him some money with promises that he will return the favor with a huge reward as soon as he can access his fortune, or we have gotten that phone call from an unknown number claiming to be the IRS, warning that an arrest warrant will be issued if we don't immediately pay off our outstanding tax debt, and, of course, everyone has been told that our extended vehicle warranty is about to expire unless we renew immediately.

Folks, we all know these are scams, and we aren't being fooled. Yet, somehow, government bureaucrats are being bamboozled by even less sophisticated schemes, except they are not giving out access to their own bank accounts but, rather, to taxpayer dollars and the U.S. Treasury.

Folks, I am not making this up. A Nigerian socialite actually submitted more than 100 fraudulent applications for unemployment and disability assistance that were approved. He finagled more than \$1.3 million of U.S. taxpayer money in this scheme. Some of the funds were intended to provide daycare services for disabled children, but he, instead, spent the money on constructing a luxury resort and nightclub in Nigeria.

This Nigerian "Prince of Fraud" was outdone by California prison inmates, who collected about \$1 billion in unemployment benefits by using names like "John Doe," "John Adams," and "Poopy Britches" while serving time behind bars.

Other con artists successfully applied for COVID cash during the pandemic by using the names of well-known celebrities and fictional characters, like "Charlie Brown" and "Nancy Drew."

Taxpayer dollars have even been handed out to phony businesses with such obviously made-up names that are so outrageous that no one could possibly believe they were real, such as “Satanic Lives Matter” and others that are so tasteless I can’t even say them.

Others uploaded pictures of doll faces to “verify” their identities on applications for government assistance and were still approved. Too often, the bilking is being done by the very bureaucrats who are overseeing the benefits. Over the years, I have documented countless examples of government employees who have been caught with their hands in the cookie jar—embezzling millions of dollars and abusing their positions for personal gain.

As a veteran, one particular example that really makes my blood boil involves a service representative for the Department of Veterans Affairs who was shaking down disabled veterans for bribes to “grease the wheels” to speed up the approval of backlogged claims. A \$3,385 kickback paid to him via Venmo was listed on the memo line as “crooked shit.” I apologize for my language, but that is what the Venmo actually said. We had to modify our chart today. So a VA representative was shaking down disabled veterans. This actually happened. That representative was caught and is being held responsible for shaking down our disabled veterans.

The problem in most of these cases is the money is going out the door before verifying if the recipient is legitimate. If fraud is later detected, then the government has to decide if it is worth trying to recover the stolen money. This pay-and-chase system makes it way too easy for scammers to take the money and run. It is like giving the cash advance and your bank routing number to the Nigerian “Prince” who promised you a financial reward for your help only for you to realize, later, you have been ripped off. Good luck getting any of your money back. It is the gift that keeps giving.

As a result, fraudsters are getting away with stealing more than \$1.4 billion in taxpayer money every single day. Every single day, folks, \$1.4 billion fraudsters are making off with. If gift were a government agency, the “Department of Fraud” would be the fifth largest. The \$521 billion going to fraud every year exceeds the individual annual budgets of the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Agriculture, Transportation, Homeland Security, State, and Justice. That is right, folks. Fraudsters are being better taken care of than our veterans and our farmers.

While hard-working Americans are struggling to make ends meet, fraudsters are living large on the loot that they are taking from the Treasury. Government grift and graft are endless, and so are the excuses for not stopping it, but the public’s patience isn’t.

So who is responsible for allowing fraud to continue?

Folks, the buck stops right here with Congress. Congress decides how much of your paycheck must be sent to Washington, and it writes the laws determining exactly how every one of those dollars is spent. But the haste to spend trillions of tax dollars as quickly as possible is resulting in outrageous amounts of waste, fraud, and abuse. From fake childcare centers in Minnesota to convicts collecting unemployment checks, fraudsters are blatantly getting away with treating the National Treasury like their own personal piggy bank.

At the request of Majority Leader THUNE, I have compiled a comprehensive package of proposals put forth by our Senate colleagues on both sides of the aisle to end fraud once and for all.

Specifically, my Protecting American Taxpayers Act will stop handing out quick cash with no questions asked, trigger automatic investigations when there are sudden and suspicious spikes in payment claims, ban convicted fraudsters from receiving taxpayer dollars, take back the money that was already stolen, and send scammers to the slammer. If enacted, this bill would save \$240 billion.

The choice is quite simple: Give this money to fraudsters or return it to the taxpayers.

The bill is now before the Senate, and every day we delay in passing it, grifters are getting away with stealing another \$1.4 billion. Allowing that to continue is the greatest fraud of all.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. YOUNG. Mr. President, I rise today as the son of a small business owner. I rise as someone who has seen how hard an entrepreneur must work to get an idea off the ground, to build a business, to keep it solvent, and to work year after year through ups and downs, to make sure one can put enough food on the table for one’s family and all of one’s employees’ families. And I rise today in support of Senator ERNST’s Protecting American Taxpayers Act.

You see, as chair of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship—a committee on which I proudly serve—Senator ERNST has really been relentlessly focused on and has been a tireless advocate for combating fraud and ensuring that taxpayer dollars are spent responsibly—responsibly.

So I want to thank Senator ERNST for her good work on this important legislation and for her ongoing efforts to shine a spotlight on waste, fraud, and abuse. I am especially proud that in this package is found my Assisting Small Businesses Not Fraudsters Act.

ASSISTING SMALL BUSINESSES NOT FRAUDSTERS ACT

Mr. President, you see, over 1.2 million Hoosiers are employed by small businesses. As you look across our Nation, small businesses are the backbone of our modern economy. In fact, the way to grow an economy is to figure

out how to get more people to start businesses and to grow those small businesses into larger businesses. Our Federal small business programs exist for that purpose—to help hard-working entrepreneurs grow their businesses and to create more jobs.

They don’t exist to reward those who have defrauded taxpayers. That is not why they exist. Unfortunately, during the COVID pandemic, some individuals exploited emergency Small Business Administration relief programs for personal gain. Their actions diverted resources away from legitimate small businesses in Indiana and across the country. They undermine confidence in these important programs, and they undermine confidence in government at a time when confidence is already low.

The principle behind my bill is quite simple. If someone is convicted of defrauding the Small Business Administration through certain COVID-era loan or grant programs, then that individual should not be eligible to receive future financial assistance from the Small Business Administration. It is that simple. They should not be eligible if they are a fraudster. Likewise, businesses controlled by those who are convicted shouldn’t be eligible for future SBA assistance.

This is the essence of the Assisting Small Businesses Not Fraudsters Act. It should not be—I would imagine it is not—controversial. This is something everyone should enthusiastically support. I would add that this bill only applies after a criminal conviction in order to ensure due process.

Honest, hard-working entrepreneurs and small business owners shouldn’t have to compete with convicted fraudsters for Federal opportunities. Every taxpayer dollar lost to fraud is a dollar that cannot help legitimate small businesses expand, hire workers, or invest in their futures.

Chair ERNST’s Protecting American Taxpayers Act advances that same goal across government by strengthening accountability, protecting taxpayer dollars, and ensuring Federal programs work as intended.

I urge all of my colleagues to support this package and my Assisting Small Businesses Not Fraudsters Act.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. YOUNG. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. President, just 2 years ago, we were a land of open borders, crime was surging across the country, and fraud was rampant. But today, the borders are secure; crime,