

the RECORD this letter from U.S. Trade Representative Greer.

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THE UNITED STATES TRADE
REPRESENTATIVE

Executive Office of the President,

Washington, August 6, 2026.

Hon. RAPHAEL WARNOCK,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR WARNOCK: Regarding our conversation on §113, the legal basis to maintain, modify, or adjust the rate of duty specified in subsection (a) exists only where a country meets the description in subsection (c), including countries identified in subsequent determinations made pursuant to subsection (e). Absent this legal basis, such duties cannot be maintained.

Sincerely,

AMBASSADOR JAMIESON L. GREER,

United States Trade Representative.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Georgia.

TARIFFS

Mr. WARNOCK. Mr. President, this letter restricts the President's tariff authority under the Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act. This is a small but meaningful victory for all Americans who continue to suffer under this President's reckless tariffs.

Let's be clear: Putin is a war criminal, and his war machine must be stopped. But we should not have to choose between putting a check on Putin's aggression and putting a check on this President's tariff regime. That is a false choice, and it is one that I am not willing to accept.

And so I hope, in the coming hours, that we go further during the amendment process. I hope my colleagues will join me in stripping out any new Presidential tariff authorities. These are not normal times. This is not a normal President. If you give him an inch, he will take a mile. We don't have to imagine. We are seeing it in real time. And everyday people, as a result of that, are struggling—struggling to buy groceries, struggling to buy gas, struggling to buy their kids back-to-school supplies. They are the ones who are suffering the consequences of his reckless tariff regime.

But this commitment that we were able to get from Ambassador Greer is meaningful because if the President ignores the law, if he oversteps his power, we will see him in court.

I hope this weeklong process was the first step in Congress reasserting its role and placing guardrails on this President's tariff regime.

I urge my colleagues to go back home and talk to ordinary folks outside of the beltway. They will tell you that while they support any efforts to protect our national security—and that is what this is about. This isn't just about Ukraine. It is about our own national security. But we must do everything to protect our national security, while at the same time bolstering the economic security of everyday Americans.

So as we go back home, ask any parent you meet how much back-to-school shopping cost them this year. I can tell you as the father of two small children, that it is much more than they wanted to spend.

When we come back to Washington, we can fight for those parents and build on this work to check the power of this reckless President.

But I am glad that we have gotten as far as we have on this issue. I would like to thank my friend and brother Senator CASSIDY for your partnership in this amendment process, and I would like to thank Senators SHAHEEN and BLUMENTHAL for their efforts to find a solution and way forward to support Ukraine, to protect our national security and our economic security at the same time.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Louisiana.

NOMINATION OF TODD BLANCHE

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, I rise today to speak to the nomination of Todd Blanche to be Attorney General.

Over the last several days, I have heard from lots of people sharing their views on this nomination, and most of the time it is clear Mr. Blanche has become a referendum on how people feel about President Trump. If you don't like the President, you don't like Mr. Blanche, and if you do like the President, you do.

I have not approached it this way. This process should be about Mr. Blanche and how he will go forward in a difficult job and how the American people can be best served. I have a history with Mr. Trump, but that history does not matter one bit.

On the one hand, Mr. Blanche does not need to be Senate-confirmed. He can continue to serve at the pleasure of the President as Deputy Attorney General or even Acting Attorney General if this vote is pulled. On the other hand, I am told that Senate confirmation is important in interactions with the President, with others in the Cabinet, and is important to DOJ employees, in general. Being Senate-confirmed gives him greater leverage to push for things that should be pushed for.

This does not demean the Senate's role. Important issues have been discussed through this process, and Mr. Blanche has made commitments.

Now on to the specific nomination. Since Mr. Blanche passed out of Judiciary Committee on August 4, I have spoken to Mr. Blanche five or six times. We have texted many more. I just got off the phone with him. I have spoken multiple times to Senators MURKOWSKI, CORNYN, and TILLIS. Senator WHITEHOUSE shared his concerns. Additionally, I spoke with current and past administration officials, including a long conversation with former Attorney General Bill Barr. Late last night, I spoke to two U.S. attorneys from Louisiana: David Courcelle and Kurt Wall. Of course, there has been a lot to read and a lot to consider, and I slept on it overnight.

Let's start with the concerns. Mr. Blanche showed poor judgment in approving the anti-weaponization slush fund and exempting the President from IRS audits. No American should be unfairly targeted by the law, but no American should be above the law. Mr. Blanche said these were mistakes, and he has made efforts to kill the slush fund.

I am particularly concerned about episodes of apparent lawfare—DOJ bringing suits against political enemies. Presidents of both parties have been guilty of this. It must stop. It should stop now. A never-ending cycle of prosecuting political enemies undermines the rule of law, degrades the public's trust in our institutions, and makes our politics more extreme when we need to unite to solve the big problems of our time. I am not entirely satisfied where this is, and I have no doubts that I will have concern in the future. I will note that I have learned that some of the cases that are publicly reported to be under investigation by the Department of Justice have been dismissed or are no longer being pursued.

I am realistic that President Trump can be unrelenting on this, but this would be true no matter who the Attorney General is, and this is the rationale for having a Senate-confirmed Attorney General with more leverage to push back.

I will also note that Mr. Blanche is criticized for things over which he has no control. He points out that he has been criticized for Presidential pardons given to January 6 rioters, some of whom assaulted police officers. Many of us were here then. But this is a Presidential prerogative, and he is not the President.

He also points out that he can advise the President, but the President is not obligated to take his advice. That is the same thing that former Attorney General Barr said in a separate conversation. I can absolutely believe that President Trump, at times, would not take advice.

But even critics admit that Mr. Blanche knows the law and is a hands-on administrator. He has instructed U.S. attorneys to focus on violent crime, human and drug trafficking, and fraud in programs like Medicare and Medicaid. Mr. Courcelle, the U.S. attorney in New Orleans, said that when he needed extra resources, Acting Attorney General Blanche provided them to finish a big drug case.

Both Mr. Courcelle and Mr. Wall said the DOJ has accountability measures for each prosecutor in their office and that there are weekly calls between their offices and DOJ to review the performance of each prosecutor; that morale is high not despite the accountability measures but because of the accountability measures; and more cases were being processed and convictions being obtained. David Courcelle spoke of almost \$1 billion in fraud being recovered for the U.S. taxpayer from healthcare fraud.

Both men said that having a permanent, Senate-confirmed Attorney General was important. I cannot overstate Mr. Walls' and Mr. Courcelle's support for Mr. Blanche.

When former Attorney General Bill Barr endorsed Mr. Blanche, he said Mr. Blanche "will run the department as effectively as anyone could under President Trump." Some called that faint praise. I don't think that it is; I think it is a reality.

Barr specifically addressed the allegation that Mr. Blanche would be a yes-man for the President. He said that any attorney, to represent the client well, has to have tough conversations and confront a client with difficult truths; that because of his previous attorney-client relationship with President Trump, Mr. Blanche would be precisely the person to push back on President Trump but that ultimately—and here Barr echoed what I have heard from Blanche—decisions are made by the President.

Mr. Blanche is not perfect, and he will tell you this. But the choice is not between perfection and Mr. Blanche; it is between Mr. Blanche and another Acting Attorney General who may not run the Department effectively under President Trump and who, indeed, may not be as good as Mr. Blanche. This puts at risk the progress made fighting violent crime, human and drug trafficking, and fraud, and this does not serve the American people well.

This is not a referendum on President Trump; it is a decision regarding Mr. Blanche in very specific circumstances. All considered, I will vote for Mr. Blanche. I will be criticized for this vote—what is new?—but the people of Louisiana can be assured that I worked hard to understand the issue and to make the right decision.

With that, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Oregon.

RUSSIA SANCTIONS

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I fully support taking tougher action against Russia. They have waged a deadly, years long war on Ukraine, and the United States must do more to tighten the screws on the Putin war machine.

So I am fully in favor of strong sanctions, but this bill, despite its title, is not just a sanctions bill; it gives Donald Trump massive new tariff authority that he will use to threaten our trading partners and raise prices on the American people. I believe Senators will come to deeply regret voting to give Donald Trump this tariff authority. This bill gives Trump so much discretion that he can ultimately decide what countries to tariff or what countries to exempt. He can modify tariffs at his will.

Over the last year and a half, Americans have seen what Donald Trump will do with unchecked tariff authority. They have seen his tariffs raise prices for Americans and their families on everything from food, to housing, to health care. Americans have seen small

businesses and family farms shut down because they cannot afford massive new taxes on machinery and merchandise.

The Trump tariffs go on again and off again, disrupting supply chains and making it difficult for businesses to plan, invest, and hire. Our allies, including Canada and the EU, openly question the reliability of our nation and are looking to other countries for more stable trade relationships.

As Trump turns the tariff dial up and down to punish or reward countries as he likes, the process ends up being a corrupt taxing of the American people to settle Trump's personal political scores.

If Congress passes this bill with these tariffs, Members will be condoning the tariff chaos of the last year and a half and inviting more. This bill gives Trump clear authority to put tariffs up to 100 percent on the goods Americans buy from major trading partners around the globe. That includes 100 percent tariffs on things like food, medicine, machinery, and electronics.

Congress would even be letting Trump put tariffs on allies like Hungary, Slovakia, France, Belgium, and Japan. Donald Trump can pick and choose even more countries to tariff every 180 days. That is because there is no mechanism in this bill—none whatsoever—for Congress to roll back the Trump tariffs. Trump can increase or decrease tariffs just by notifying the Congress of his decision. He is not going to be constrained by any kind of paperwork or rules.

Colleagues, this body has been fighting tooth and nail to stop Trump from abusing the laws already on the books. Trump has shown us repeatedly he won't be limited by the spirit of the law. He will use any loophole to slap tariffs on our allies and make life more expensive for Americans. The Trump tariffs are now raising prices, hurting our alliances, and opening the door to corruption. This bill will further increase the cost of living for American families when they are struggling.

To all of my colleagues who have said "Look, we want to hold down the cost of living; we want to make life more affordable": this is not going to do that. This is going to increase the cost of living for Americans as we go into the next few months. It would be a nightmare for the Americans who want to see their government tackle the affordability crisis. It would be a dangerous mistake to sign our names on a blank check that gives Trump even more power to indiscriminately use these tariffs.

So I urge my colleagues this morning to support the Paul-Wyden amendment, which would strike this new tariff authority. It would make sure that we are not giving Trump power to tax our constituents for the things they buy from trading partners around the world. There is no need to include this new tariff in the bill, and the fact that the White House won't support the bill

without new tariff powers should scare every Senator in this room.

Trump has shown over the last year and a half that he can't be trusted with unilateral power on tariffs. Everything he has done suggests that he is going to abuse this power, and I urge my colleagues this morning to vote yes on the Paul-Wyden amendment to prevent this body from handing Donald Trump a new tool for inflation and corruption.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, increasing taxes on Americans will not end Putin's war in Ukraine. The drafters of this legislation, understandably, wish to punish Vladimir Putin and send Russian invaders back to where they came from, but this bill was written such that the drafters fail to see that it will not bring peace to Ukraine but rather will deliberately make American families poorer by increasing tariffs, which are nothing but a tax on imported goods.

To save Americans from what very well could be the largest tax increase imposed by a Republican Congress, I offer an amendment that strikes the authority to impose tariffs of up to 100 percent on an ever-changing list of countries. Mark my words, this will be the largest tax increase by a Republican Congress.

Why would Republicans, who promise you they want to lower your taxes, be voting to raise your taxes \$500 billion?

In addition, Congress should not delegate its constitutional duties to the executive branch.

Now, my amendment does not touch the broad sanctions that are provided by the bill, nor does it touch the specific tariffs on Russia because I see the strong desire among Members of the Senate to use economic warfare against Putin. But I object to economic warfare against the American consumer.

Once upon a time, Republicans were distinguished from Democrats by their persistent chant that the U.S. deficit was the result of a spending problem, not a revenue problem. Yet today, many Republicans have become the cheerleaders for more revenue.

The bill before us grants the executive branch the power to raise nearly \$500 billion in revenue—in taxes. I hope I am not the only Republican left in Congress who is horrified by a bill that proposes to raise taxes a half a trillion dollars.

In addition, there is the constitutional question: Can Congress delegate its article I, section 8 authority to lay taxes and levies—can they just give it away to the executive branch?

For 100 years or more, the Supreme Court has said we can't give away our power. And in what world would we want to give away our power? The power to tax and spend was given to Congress. Why would they give that to the President? What sort of feckless Congress gives away their constitutional power?