

needs of the real-life harm that Trump's agenda has done to our country.

Finally, there is one more thing I am looking forward to tonight—listening to my good friend Senator PADILLA, who will offer Democrats a Spanish language response. His story of what he went through in the past year, after being assaulted by Federal agents, and his larger story of how his family built something of themselves in this country is inspiring and admirable. I thank Senator PADILLA.

I thank Governor Spanberger as well, and I thank all Democrats who will spend time tonight correcting the lies that will waft out of the House Chamber from Donald Trump's mouth tonight. On Ukraine, 4 years ago the tanks, missiles, and infantry rolled in from Russian territory onto Ukrainian soil. Today my colleagues and I pause to honor the memory of the courageous dead in Ukraine. We reaffirm that the Senate and the American people stand with the Ukrainian people, even if our President's courage and resolve might waiver.

Today, I am disgusted that the United States made a mockery of itself for the whole world to see by voting to abstain from a resolution in the United States on a peaceful and just end to this war. Can you believe it? Putin brutally invades Ukraine, the whole world sees it and knows it, and Donald Trump, out of obeisance, sucking up to Putin, abstains from a resolution simply on a peaceful and just end to this war. What, does Donald Trump want the war to continue and more people to die? I guess so.

On this anniversary of the Ukrainian war, it is shameful that this administration has chosen to mark it by turning its back on the Ukrainian people at the UN. Let's be clear: Any peace that Donald Trump gives into, any peace made on Putin's terms, will be no peace at all. It would rather be a reward for Putin for his belligerence, a reward that autocrats around the world—including here at home—will take note of.

When I was majority leader, I led this Chamber to pass historic defense packages to help Ukraine defend themselves, and 4 years later, despite all the loss and bloodshed the people of Ukraine have endured, they have held the line, but the conflict, sadly, is far from an end.

American support remains indispensable and perhaps the most important factor to determine the outcome of this awful conflict.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California is recognized.

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. President, I request 30 minutes to address the Senate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there an objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. President, tonight, just down the hall, the President will

stand before Congress and the American people. He will paint a picture of strength, prosperity, and national renewal. He will claim credit for successes he did not achieve and deny responsibility for crises that he created. He will tell us that America has never been greater, but the American people deserve the truth. And the truth is that over the past year, we have not moved closer to forming a more perfect Union. Tragically, it is quite the opposite. Our disunion has only grown.

Our Founders understood something when they chose the words "a more perfect Union." They didn't contemplate achieving perfection. They envisioned something more realistic, more achievable—the pursuit of a more perfect Union, a constant effort to push the country forward, a grinding, slow and sometimes painful process. They recognized that America is not a finished product but a beautiful, ongoing experiment in self-governance that requires hard work and constant perseverance.

For 250 years, through wars and depressions, through slavery and Jim Crow, through periods of bitter division and hard-won reconciliation, Americans have honored our Founders' intention and moved the Nation forward. We have stumbled; we have fallen short; and at times, we have failed to live up to our promise. But we have always eventually bent the arc of our own national story towards justice, towards fairness, and towards a more perfect Union.

And yet from the moment he inflicted himself on our public life, Donald Trump has done everything possible to reverse that progress. By design, it appears, by virtue of the product of some defect of character perhaps, but in every way he can and every moment he can, he has sought to divide us. Today, in fewer words than the President will use tonight, I want to talk about some of the ways that President Trump has not only failed to advance our Union, but done so much to bring about our disunion.

Now, I have served in the Capitol for over two decades, and I have visited the capitols of our friends and some of our adversaries across the world. I have seen firsthand that, notwithstanding our possession of the strongest and most courageous military in the world, America's greatest strategic asset is not the might of our arms or size of our aircraft carriers; it is the strength of the alliances we have around the world.

The web of partnerships we built after World War II, NATO, our Pacific alliances, our hemispheric relationships, they are force multipliers. They help us keep the peace. They are the reason that a nation of 340 million people can project power and values across a globe of more than 8 billion. Yet, tragically, President Trump has systematically taken apart the advantage these allies give us. He has insulted the leaders of Canada, Germany, France, and the United Kingdom—our closest

democratic allies—not to mention countries like Denmark.

He has questioned whether America would defend NATO members under article V, the collective defense provision that has kept most of Europe peaceful for 75 years. He has treated longstanding security commitments as protection rackets, demanding payment as if our allies were vassal states rather than partners. And he has done all this while praising Viktor Orban, Vladimir Putin, Xi Jinping, and other dictators. The result? Our allies don't trust us, and our most powerful adversaries don't fear us, and that makes America less safe.

When the next crisis comes—and it will come, and it may even be precipitated by this President—we will find ourselves isolated in ways that would have been unthinkable just a few years ago. This weakens and endangers our Union. But the power of our Union isn't just about the strength of our military or our ties abroad. It is also about the strength of our intellect here at home.

I find myself thinking about an exchange from the television series on Chernobyl. A scientist tells a Soviet bureaucrat:

Every lie we tell incurs a debt to the truth. Sooner or later, that debt is paid.

This administration has run up a debt to the truth that will take generations to repay.

Over the last several years, the President of the United States suggested people inject bleach to cure COVID, that windmills cause cancer, that climate change is a hoax invented by China, that Tylenol use in pregnancy causes autism—the list goes on and on. And over this past year, we have seen systematic attacks on scientists at CDC, at NOAA, the EPA, and the NIH—career professionals driven from public service for the crime of publishing findings the President doesn't like, DOGE'd for speaking truth to power, for respecting facts and science, or simply—seemingly and perversely in this cruelest of administrations—fired for the apparent fun of it.

We have seen university researchers lose Federal funding, not because their work lacks merit, but because their conclusions contradict preferred political narratives.

We have seen attacks on vaccines and changes to our public health system that have caused needless outbreaks of disease. This President has most assuredly not made America great again, but he has managed to make measles great again. And when experts gently try to correct these falsehoods, they are attacked, doxed, and threatened. This is part of a deliberate cultivation of ignorance as a political strategy.

When you undermine expertise, when you treat all opinions as equally valid regardless of evidence, when you replace scientists with sycophants, you make people vulnerable to con artists and demagogues. You make democracy itself impossible because democracy requires an informed citizenry capable of distinguishing truth from lies.

The debt to the truth will come due. And when it does, our country will pay an enormous price.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. President, just more than a year ago, Los Angeles County faced one of the most destructive disasters in the Nation's history. Entire neighborhoods torched and torn apart by wildfires, the magnitude of which we haven't seen on suburban streets of the Southland. The loss of loved ones, of homes, of businesses, the precious memories—all gone in mere moments—still weigh heavy upon us.

Since then, I have talked to survivors of those fires who have gone on to rebuild, or tried to, only to see their insurance coverage dropped. With worsening drought and prolonged dry seasons, insurance companies are refusing to cover the same homes and businesses they covered just a few years ago. They are seeing what we are seeing; that this may not be the last of these tragedies in our hills in our lifetimes. This is the climate crisis in human terms, and this administration's response has been to make it catastrophically worse.

President Trump has rolled back fuel efficiency standards, withdrawn from international climate agreements, opened pristine Federal lands to more drilling, and—as we saw last week's repeal of what is known as the endangerment finding—gutted the EPA's authority to regulate carbon emissions.

A New York Times headline last month actually read "E.P.A. to Stop Considering Lives Saved When Setting Rules on Air Pollution." It sounds like parody but, sadly, these destructive efforts are real. All of this while summers grow hotter, some winters grow colder, wildfires rage, hurricanes intensify, and insurance markets collapse. The President calls this energy dominance, but dominance over what? the laws of physics? the carbon cycle?

Here is what has actually happened: We are sacrificing long-term prosperity for short-term profit. We are driving up costs for American families through higher insurance premiums, higher food prices, and higher disaster recovery expenses.

We are ceding global leadership in clean energy and technology—the defining economic opportunity of the 21st century—to China and to Europe. And we are doing it all while pretending that the house isn't on fire. Angelinos know better, so do millions of Americans living through droughts, floods, and heat waves that would have been impossible a generation ago. The climate doesn't care about your politics. The debt comes due whether you believe it or not.

Our change in climate is not the only threat our communities face in Donald Trump's America. In the aftermath of January 6, 2021, there was a brief moment when Americans of all political

persuasions condemned political violence. The attack on the Capitol was so brazen, so shocking, that even some of the President's allies momentarily found their moral bearings and said "count me out." That moment has clearly passed.

We now have a President who has pardoned January 6 rioters, calling them patriots, and brought them into his administration, including one caught shouting "kill them" at police officers that day.

We have an administration that treats White nationalist extremism as a core competency in the hiring process and an administration that focuses Federal law enforcement resources, not on violent offenders but on prosecuting political opponents, unleashing masked ICE agents on innocent people, and deporting children and grandmothers.

At the same time, we have seen the gutting of public health infrastructure that was built over decades to protect Americans from pandemics. We have seen emergency preparedness budgets slashed and the people who ran them driven out of government.

The message is clear: If you are a violent extremist who supports the President, you get a pardon, but if you are a public health official who takes your job seriously, you get a pink slip.

This makes Americans less safe from terrorism, from disease, from domestic threats that don't care about party affiliation. Security and attacks against police officers aren't partisan issues—at least they shouldn't be. But when the President treats loyalty as more important than competence, when he treats protection as something selectively offered to supporters rather than universally provided to the people, he fundamentally misunderstands the first duty of government. And the need to protect the public is certainly not the only thing he misunderstands.

From the birth of our Nation, our Founders were obsessed with preventing tyranny and the emergence of another King, another despot. They created checks and balances, separation of powers, an independent judiciary. They understood that the greatest threat to liberty wasn't foreign invasion; it was the concentration of power in the hands of one person or faction.

This President has systematically dismantled these safeguards in his second term. The Justice Department is supposed to be independent, pursuing justice without fear or favor, but under this administration, it has become an instrument of Presidential revenge, a sword and shield for the President launching investigations of critics and dropping cases against allies.

His Justice Department—and I say "his" because it no longer represents the public or justice but is run by his former criminal defense lawyers and represents only his personal interests—sought to indict two of my Senate colleagues for stating the plain truth that members of the military may refuse an illegal order. Indeed, they have a duty

to do so. Their oath, after all, is to the Constitution, not to the person of the President.

It is difficult to overstate what an abuse of power the pursuit of that indictment represents. The effort to jail one's opposition is a hallmark of dictatorship, not democracy.

Career civil servants from all across the Federal Government—people who have served under both Republican and Democratic administrations with professionalism and integrity—are being purged for insufficient loyalty to the person of the President. Inspectors general who uncover wrongdoing and expose corruption are fired; whistleblowers, intimidated. We are witnessing the conversion of the Federal Government from a public trust into a personal fiefdom.

Here is the thing that should terrify every American regardless of party: Once these norms are broken, they are immensely difficult to restore. Once you establish that a President can use the Justice Department to punish enemies, every future President will face that temptation—pressure, even. Once you establish that civil servants must demonstrate personal loyalty rather than professional competence, you have replaced the rule of law with the rule of one.

The Founders warned us about this. Their pursuit of a more perfect Union was dependent upon a calculated departure from consolidated power. Now we are living the fears of our Founders and seeing that threat expand rapidly.

With the President's weaponization of our institutions comes a parallel and equally disturbing trend. America has always had a secret weapon in global competition. We attract the best and the brightest from around the world. Nobel Prize winners, startup founders, groundbreaking researchers—they come here because America offers something unique: freedom, funding, and the belief in science. The ultimate intellectual melting pot. That is being attacked on a daily basis.

This administration has slashed funding for the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, and the Department of Energy's research programs. It has attacked universities as "indoctrination centers." It has made it harder for foreign students to get visas or stay after graduation and start a business.

I have spoken with researchers at Caltech, UCLA, Stanford—you name it—world-class institutions in my State. They tell me the same story: Graduate students from abroad are choosing to study in Europe or Canada, even China. Postdocs are leaving. Even American-born scientists are considering opportunities elsewhere because they can't count on research funding, because they are tired of political attacks, because they don't want to work in an environment where basic facts are treated with partisan hostility. America is now, for the first time, losing the race for talent, and in a knowledge economy, talent is everything.