

to achieve a regime change, I think he is dreadfully wrong.

Finally, the notion that Israel is going to attack anyway, so we might as well join in.

When you listen to these rationales, they change by the day. Who was designing this scheme, this plan, this strategy? Simply, it is easier to get in a war than it is to get out of one. The President is going to discover that, I am afraid.

I served in this Chamber during the Iraq war. I visited Walter Reed Hospital many times to see soldiers who had just returned from combat. In fact, my colleague and my close friend TAMMY DUCKWORTH, the other Senator from Illinois, was one of those casualties. I will never forget the rows of beds of young men and women with terrible injuries from roadside bombs and IEDs in the Iraqi war. Many of these brave servicemen are still grappling with the wounds of war, whether from traumatic brain injuries or PTSD they sustained in combat. That is the real cost of war—a war which this administration cannot explain the rationale for.

“When you go to war,” the President said, “some people will die.” Sadly, he is telling us the truth—the reality of war. We should remind the American people literally that this President promised that would never happen, and yet it has.

Americans are not asking for another foreign entanglement; they are asking for a President who puts the American people first in terms of the real challenges in the cost of living they face every day. President Trump has found billions of dollars—we are spending over \$1 billion a day in Iran to wage this war, but he cannot spare a penny to help Americans afford their groceries, mortgage, or health insurance. My constituents are already paying more on their gas and energy bills because of the chaos the President has created in the Middle East. That is likely to get worse.

There is no love lost between America and the Iranian regime. For decades, it has been a menace to the region and its own people. It is a worthwhile objective to prevent them from sponsoring terrorism and building nuclear weapons. But impulsive military attacks carry tremendous risk, uncertainty, and costs that may confront us and the region for months and years to come. That is a reality of war.

When I look back, there are three of us left in the Senate who voted against the invasion of Iraq. A recent article in the New York Times written by Carl Hulse asked Senators who voted for the war in Iraq whether they wish they had that vote to take over. Many of them said they did. They wanted to vote, as 23 of us did, against the invasion of Iraq.

As I said, and it is worth repeating, it is easier to get in a war than it is to get out. And in this circumstance, we don't have a clear mission or a clear commitment from our allies to stand by us.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BRITT). The Democratic leader is recognized.

IRAN

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, it has been a week—more than a week—since Donald Trump began his war with Iran without strategy, without an endgame, and with very little support from the American people.

Seven U.S. servicemembers have now been killed in the Middle East, one of them was killed in Saudi Arabia this weekend.

We also mourn the death of MAJ Sorffly Davius, a New York Police Department officer from Queens, who was deployed as a member of the 42nd Infantry Division of the U.S. National Guard. He died on Friday at a U.S. base in Kuwait. Major Davius was the rare kind of public servant, keeping New Yorkers safe here at home as a police officer and keeping Americans safe abroad as a soldier.

The Senate prays for all our servicemembers who have died since the start of the war. We pray for their families. And, as we pray, many of us also ask: One week into this conflict, what are the goals of this war? What does victory even look like?

We don't know. Donald Trump is making it up as he goes along. It is almost as if he wakes up each morning and decides right then and there what the strategy for the day is. Donald Trump and his administration owe the American people an explanation.

Secretary Rubio, Secretary Hegseth, and other senior officials must come to the Senate for public hearings and testify under oath as to why our troops are once again fighting and dying in the Middle East. The American people deserve answers. The Senate must hold public hearings—public hearings—with Cabinet Secretaries to get answers.

GAS PRICES

Madam President, now, on gas prices, here is one thing we do know: Donald Trump's war has sent gas prices skyrocketing through the roof. Brent crude rose above \$100 a barrel and spiked as high as \$120. Gasoline prices in the United States jumped more than 40 cents.

Let me say that again because we had a happy little fella up there or a girl—a fella it looks like—but he doesn't have to pay for the high price of gas on the pump as we do. So he is laughing.

But anyway, Brent crude rose above \$100 a barrel and spiked as high as \$120. Gasoline prices in the United States jumped more than 40 cents. When oil prices spike like this, it ripples across the entire economy. Airline tickets, shipping costs, and everyday goods go up, up, up in price. Inflation was already on the rise, and Trump's war just made it much, much worse.

That is why I am calling on President Trump to immediately release oil

from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to help bring prices down. The Strategic Petroleum Reserve exists precisely for moments like this. If President Trump cared about easing pain at the pump, he would act to release these reserves now.

But instead of acting, Donald Trump is lost in a sea of delusional thinking. As gas prices rise, here is what Trump says: “If they rise, they rise.” Tough luck, America. He says they are “a very small price to pay” and that “only fools would think differently.”

The over 180 million fools who need or depend on gasoline, they don't care about paying more of their hard-earned dollars? They are fools? That is what Trump is saying to you, America—what contempt, what cluelessness.

It is as if America is being led to war by Marie Antoinette. He has no clue what it is like to struggle to pay for gas, to pay for the rent, to pay for groceries. He is in a bubble. Yes, he is a billionaire. He doesn't have to pay for these things. The average American does.

I will add this: The longer this war drags on, the greater the risk it spirals beyond control.

Over the weekend, there were reports that Trump is seriously considering putting boots on the ground. That would be Americans' worst nightmare: boots on the ground.

Once our forces land on the ground, the hard part is getting them out. What begins as targeted operations could turn into open-ended fighting and turn into mission creep. Weeks turn into months, which could turn into years.

Americans simply don't want that, and the brutal Iranian regime knows we don't want it either. So they won't be incentivized to negotiate.

IRAN

Madam President, the longer war drags on in the Middle East, the more likely it will be that civilian casualties mount as well.

This morning, public reporting said a preliminary U.S. assessment found that the United States was likely responsible for a deadly airstrike that obliterated a girls' elementary school and killed nearly 170 people, many children. This is heartbreaking, and it was likely avoidable.

When Presidents launch us into a war without a plan, the stakes multiply. Civilians and servicemembers get hurt, and conflicts spiral out of control.

Americans don't want us in this terrible, costly, unnecessary war. But one week in, they fear that Donald Trump has dragged us into a war that is just getting started.

SAVE ACT

Madam President, finally, on the SAVE Act, yesterday, Donald Trump posted that he will not sign any legislation—no matter how important—until Congress sends him the SAVE Act—and a beefed-up SAVE Act at that.

The SAVE Act is nothing more than a Jim Crow 2.0. It is a voter suppression bill. It takes away vote-by-mail. It makes it harder for people to register and would require States to hand over voting rolls to election deniers at the Department of Justice.

The real damage here is not when you show up at the poll to vote and they ask for ID. It is the registration. They ask every State for their voter rolls, and a Musk-inspired DOGE voter ID, using AI, would be used to take tens of millions of people off the voting rolls, and they are not even told. They show up at the voting place on election day, and they say: Sorry, ma'am; sorry, sir, you are not on the rolls.

Why? Because of this DOGE thing.

It is outrageous. It is Jim Crow all over again.

And now he says he doesn't even want vote-by-mail. Tell that to handicapped people.

And to register—to register when they kick you off—you have to show up in person—only 5 percent do—and you have to show a passport or an original birth certificate. It is very hard for people to obtain. It is outrageous—outrageous.

And now, Donald Trump says he will not sign any bill to lower costs, lower rent, lower groceries, until Congress passes this bill taking away tens of millions of citizens' right to vote.

If Trump is saying he won't sign any bills until the SAVE Act is passed, there will be total gridlock in the Congress.

On the other hand, if the SAVE Act does pass, democracy will be in very serious danger. Donald Trump is saying, in effect, unless Congress helps him undermine democracy, he is prepared to hold the rest of the country hostage.

This is what he does. He is a thug. He is a bully. He can't ever argue on the merits. So he threatens.

And no bills to bring down gas prices, no bills to make groceries more affordable, no bills to increase housing, not until the SAVE Act passes—that is what Donald Trump is saying. Democrats will make sure that never happens.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

21ST CENTURY ROAD TO HOUSING ACT

Mr. MORENO. Madam President, I rise today to address a crisis that strikes at the heart of what makes our Nation exceptional: the American dream.

Like many who came before me, I came to America with my family to find my version of that American dream. For generations, the catalyst of that dream has been simple and powerful: the ability to graduate from high school, get a good job, get married, buy a home, raise a family in a safe community, send your kids to good schools, and retire with dignity.

I think of my father-in-law, who joined U.S. Steel straight out of high school, bought a nice home in a suburb

in Indiana. He raised a family of three kids, all on a single salary.

The question facing this body is: Does the American dream still exist and are we still willing to fight for it?

Ensuring this lives in America should unify all elected officials, regardless of political party. But for too many families—whether it is teachers in Ohio classrooms, nurses in Cincinnati hospitals, factory workers in Cleveland, or truckdrivers hauling goods across our State—that dream is increasingly out of reach. Home prices have skyrocketed. Starter homes have vanished, and entire neighborhoods are being built not for homeowners but for distant corporations to rent out indefinitely.

This is the explosive growth of a new industry called the single-family build-to-rent industry. Massive Wall Street firms, private equity giants, and institutional investors are constructing whole communities of detached homes, only to lock them up as permanent rentals. These aren't small landlords helping fill a gap. These are corporate empires turning housing into just another asset class, just a profit machine for themselves, while denying the precious supply of single-family homes from hard-working Americans.

In Ohio, this impact is real and painful. In Columbus, developments are rising as build-to-rent subdivisions. Families who could once afford modest three-bedroom homes now face monthly rents of \$2,700 or more, payments that build corporate equity, not the equity for that homeowner.

In Cincinnati, prime land that should host for-sale starter homes for young families is instead covered up in bulk for rental portfolios controlled by out-of-State investors.

And in the working-class, east side neighborhoods in my hometown of Cleveland, OH, institutional and out-of-State investors have snapped up nearly half of all home purchases, turning once affordable homes into profit machines while jacking up rents and neglecting repairs and slamming the door on working families.

Every home built for rent in Ohio is one less home available for purchase, fueling fiercer competition and driving up prices even higher for everyone else.

The facts are just undeniable. The share of new family homes built specifically for rent has surged to levels far above historic norms, 10 percent in some periods of all new housing starts. Those aren't scattered units; they are planned, large-scale communities designed for institutional ownership and endless renting.

By crowding out for-sale development, they reduce inventory for first-time buyers. They push prices skyward and condemn millions to a lifetime of renting—facing higher rent, endless fees, perpetual instability, and no path to building generational wealth.

The median age of a first-time home buyer in America is now 40 years old. That was 33 just 6 years ago—up 7

years in 6. Because of that, quite frankly, the ladder to ownership has been pulled up by corporate interests.

Home ownership is the cornerstone of the American dream for a reason. Equity grows over time. Forced renting means your hard-earned dollars line someone else's pockets. I know this firsthand. Without the equity that I built in my first home, I would never have been able to buy my first business. That equity gave me the foundation to take a risk, create jobs, give back to my community, and provide for my family—the exact opportunity we are now denying to millions of Americans.

And here is the bitter irony: The executives, the developers, the owners running these build-to-rent companies always own their own homes. They don't rent. They enjoy the stability, the pride, the wealth building that home ownership provides, while denying that same opportunity to working families that power our economy and built this country.

This crisis isn't inevitable. President Donald J. Trump recognized it early and acted decisively. As he said at last month's State of the Union Address:

Homes are for people, not [for] corporations.

He made it clear: We must focus on building Main Street, not Wall Street. That is why he signed the Executive order stopping Wall Street from competing with Main Street home buyers, directing Federal Agencies to restrict support from large, institutional investors buying single-family homes that families could otherwise purchase. He called on Congress to codify and strengthen these protections.

Here in Washington, DC, highly paid political consultants—so-called experts—at think tanks have spilled much ink opining why the GOP now and Democrats before have lost support from young voters. Here is a thought: Maybe it is because young Americans know they can no longer afford to buy a home and start their own families like their parents before them did.

Let's review some data. To start with, President Trump's plan is overwhelmingly popular. A recent poll found that 58 percent of the country support this plan, including 74 percent of Republicans and 58 percent of Independents. But that is not all. Poll after poll have found that President Trump is addressing a top priority for younger Americans. Sixty-seven percent of Gen Z voters struggle to cover their monthly housing costs, 74 percent of younger Americans say the cost of housing has reached a crisis level, and 73 percent of Americans blame large investors for the lack of affordable housing. The Republican Party would be fools to bury our heads in the sand.

So what does the other side say? Critics of this bill make two claims which, by the way, stand in direct contradiction. On the one hand, they claim that institutional investors don't buy enough homes to matter. This is a solution in need of a problem. On the

other hand, they claim that institutional investors are so crucial to the housing market that this bill would singlehandedly dry up all kinds of home ownership supply.

So you can't have it both ways: Either you don't matter, or you do matter.

Of course, the answer is, you do matter. And that is why you saw that 7-year drop in home ownership rates among young people over the period that this industry has boomed.

So I say to my Republican colleagues and to my Democrat colleagues: This moment is a test. President Trump proved that by breaking with decades of stale, establishment-driven orthodoxy, he could build an unbeatable coalition—a coalition made up of voters who have, for decades, abandoned the GOP and who the Democrats have now completely left behind, from Black men to younger voters, to Hispanics.

So the question now is this, Will congressional Republicans hear the American people and do what it takes to sustain that coalition? Will we deliver on the promises we made—President Trump's—on the campaign trail or will we continue to let the DC establishment swamp set our agenda?

With the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act, a bipartisan effort led by my good, dear friend Senator TIM SCOTT that includes critical provisions to limit large institutional investors from dominating the single-family market, we have a chance to deliver on what we promised these voters.

By building on President Trump's Executive actions—curbing their access to Federal financing and preventing them from crowding out individual buyers—we are putting families first; we are increasing paths to ownership; and ensuring more new homes are built for sale, not endless corporate rental portfolios.

It is time to get this done. New communities should be places where Ohio families and American families everywhere can own, not just rent from faceless funds.

The American dream isn't dead. It is just under siege. Thanks to President Trump's leadership—his clear vision that homes are for people, his fight to put Main Street first—we have a real chance to reclaim it.

So I urge all of my Republican colleagues, let's make home ownership attainable again for the hard-working men and women who built this country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. MORENO. I ask unanimous consent to waive the mandatory quorum call in relation to substitute amendment No. 4308 to Calendar No. 343, H.R. 6644.

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

The Senator from Ohio.

WAIVING QUORUM CALL

Mr. MORENO. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to vitiate the

previous action with respect to the substitute amendment No. 4308 and, instead, ask for unanimous consent to waive the mandatory quorum call with respect to the Rudd nomination.

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

The Senator from Oregon.

NOMINATION OF LT. GEN. JOSHUA M. RUDD

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, I rise to speak in opposition to the nomination of Joshua Rudd to be Director of the National Security Agency.

During his confirmation hearing, General Rudd demonstrated a lack of familiarity with basic constitutional rights, and that ought to be a bare minimum qualification for this extraordinarily important post.

His response to questions about privacy and transparency were simply unacceptable. For example, I asked the nominee if he would pledge to not secretly violate existing public guardrails on the National Security Agency surveillance. He refused.

For Americans trying to understand the incredible scope of the National Security Agency surveillance operations and the broad authorities under which the NSA operates, these practices are essential. The Agency plays a central role in conducting surveillance under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. That law is known as FISA. It gets a lot of attention from the American people and from Congress because it is public law. The Congress debates the reauthorization of FISA section 702 every few years.

But the NSA also conducts extensive intelligence and surveillance operations outside of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, and they do it pursuant to the Executive order 12333. And when NSA operates entirely under that Executive order, on this, there is no usual judicial oversight, not even from the FISA Court.

The bottom line for the President and my colleagues, congressional oversight is often dependent on what the Executive branch wants to disclose. The potential for abuse is staggering.

In 2005, the New York Times revealed that the NSA had conducted an illegal warrantless wiretapping program. For four years, the program had been hidden from the American people. By the way, it was also hidden from Congress. I was a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, and even the committee wasn't told about the program. This is one of those infamous decisions that you hear about in situations—what is called the Gang of 8—where the intelligence community informs only the committee's two leaders and instructs them not to tell other members or staff.

So when the committee's vice chair Jay Rockefeller was told about the program, he put together a handwritten letter to the Vice President—Vice President Cheney. He said he had concerns but that on his own, he couldn't even fully evaluate the program; and so the program continued for years—no

oversight, no opportunity for Congress to address it through legislation.

This history demonstrates what happens when the NSA's enormous capabilities are abused—abused by administration officials who are willing, unfortunately, to break the law. And, unfortunately, that is an accurate description of the executive branch and this administration.

It is indisputable that constitutional rights in America are under attack right now. For example, we only recently learned that 9 months ago the administration secretly decided that the government didn't need a judicial warrant to break into a private home; in other words, the administration thinks it can just ignore the Fourth Amendment.

And if the administration is going to ignore the Fourth Amendment to break down doors, what assurance would there be that they wouldn't also tap Americans' phones without a warrant? Why should anybody believe they wouldn't do it secretly and make sure that the public or the Congress or even full Intelligence Committees weren't aware?

When it comes to surveillance, I subscribe to Ben Franklin's principle. Franklin said:

Those who would give up liberty for security will lose both and deserve neither.

The fact is—and I work on this every single day—we need both. That is not a partisan proposition.

Refusing to promise to not violate the Constitution doesn't make us safer. That is why I was particularly focused on General Rudd's understanding of the constitutional limits on the operations of the NSA.

So I asked General Rudd whether, if he were directed to target people in the United States for surveillance, he would insist that there be a judicial warrant. And I told him in advance that I would ask this question. Then, at the hearing, I offered him the opportunity to answer with a "yes" or a "no." We still got no answers.

So I thought: Cut him some slack and encourage him to offer just some general thoughts on the matter. Still, we got nothing, and I did everything in my power at that confirmation hearing to allow him to demonstrate some understanding of the basic guardrails of the NSA's authorities. I only got vague assurances that he might be interested in the law.

Given the history of these NSA abuses and this administration's clear disregard for the Constitution, the general's inability to answer this question in a meaningful way would have really been enough for me to oppose the nomination, but there were other topics that were just as bad. He wouldn't associate himself with the NSA's previous commitment to not buy and use Americans' location data. Then-NSA Director Nakasone made this commitment in a public letter in 2023. General Rudd wouldn't stand by that public policy.